

Mechanics groups hard to organize

WEST CALDWELL, N.J. — Golf course mechanics associations are not easy to organize; nor are they easy to maintain. Just ask Bob Lay.

Lay, the mechanic at Mountain Ridge Country Club here, incorporated the New Jersey Golf Course Mechanics Association (NJGCMA) in March 1991. The organization boasts 45 to 50 members, most of them in northern New Jersey.

"I feel it's been very helpful, but at times it's been discouraging, too," Lay explained. "Maybe it's because we're mechanics, but it's difficult to find guys who want to get involved. We get guys to join, but you need more than just members."

"The superintendents that don't pay these guys well are afraid they'll meet some of their peers and discover how poorly they're being paid. When it comes to attracting new members, my feeling is that's 90 percent of our problem."

"Some superintendents just don't want us organizing. Back when we started, they were afraid we were trying to form a union. What we're actually trying to do is get some education. I've been a mechanic for 20 years, but the day you say, I can't learn any more, you're kidding yourself."

"That's what we're trying to do, and if the superintendents realized it, they'd be more receptive."

Mechanics unite

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In January, when members voted not to create specific membership classifications for these technicians.

Indeed, the 1994 vote in Dallas mirrored another overwhelming electoral defeat at the 1993 GCSAA Show in Anaheim. Golf course mechanics can attain associate member status in GCSAA, but that is all.

Lucas, for one, saw writing on the wall back in 1990 when he started organizing his fellow mechanics in Massachusetts.

"The first time I came across the idea, I had gone out to a Jacobsen learning center," he explained. "A bunch of us were from New England. We talked between classes and learned so much from each other, I thought to myself, Why can't we do this all the time?"

"Little by little, I started to organize people. Every time I went to a dealership, I asked around and left my card. Then I started holding seminars, asking Jake and Cushman/Ransomes to put them on at my club. Kohler made a special arrangement to do a complete engine tear-down for us."

Lucas said he gathered invaluable information from a Chicagoland golf course mechanics organization. He also owes a debt of gratitude to Dr. Joseph Troll and his wife Lonnie, who run the Massachusetts Turf and Lawngrass Association and Show in Springfield. Early on, Lonnie agreed to put a sign in the window of the Springfield Civic Center advertising the new association.

The response was good and the organization has grown to 151 members in all six New England states. Dues are \$25 per year, and each seminar costs \$25 per members. Non-members are welcome, but admission is \$35. Students at turf-related university programs are admitted free with valid IDs.

"The meetings started out as just getting together for coffee," Lucas said. "But they would last until lunch, then 4 p.m. We could've talked with each other until 9 o'clock at night. It's starting to really pay off. We're exchanging parts more frequently and not competing with each other. We're working together to make our jobs easier."

Lucas said his national dreams are serious. If others share the same vision, Lucas would like to talk. He can be reached at 508-663-3299.

Dealers offer technician certification

AUSTIN, Texas — Saying the need to upgrade maintenance technicians expertise in the golf course industry is urgent, The Service Dealers Association (TSDA) is sponsoring OPE Technicians Certification Testing. The many recent technical changes in equipment will accelerate as government mandated changes take effect.

Since the first test was administered Oct. 31, 1992, more than 2,000 technicians have been tested on two- and four-stroke engines. A compact diesel engine test is available starting with the fall test period October through Dec. 15.

The electrical test is scheduled to be completed by early 1995. Drive train and generator should be ready by fall 1995. Those who pass the test receive an arm patch and certificate.

TSDA recommends two study resource textbooks as well as the individual study guides — *Small Engine Technology* by Bill Schuster covering two- and four-stroke engines, and *Automotive Diesels* by Edward Ralbovsky. Both publications as well as the study guides are available from TSDA.

For information contact Virgil Russell, director of certification at 512-443-7999.

Illustrated Turf Irrigation Manual updated

DALLAS — Weather-matic has announced availability of the 5th edition of its *Turf Irrigation Manual*.

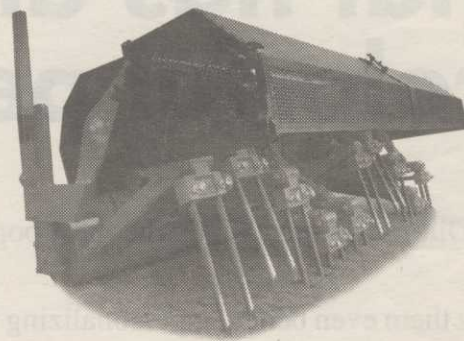
The author of the 5th edition is Richard B. Choate, director of training for Weather-matic's College of Irrigation Knowledge.

According to Choate: "The 5th edition takes a practical and useful approach to the myriad technological environmental changes which have occurred during the past 20 years. Each of these changes has dramatically affected the way we water landscape now and in the future."

The Turf Manual covers all aspects of design for all types of turf and landscape properties, including golf courses, residential and commercial.

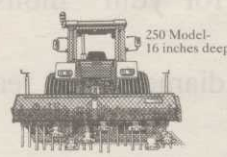
The new book includes more than 400 pages and 300 illustrations plus 42 reference tables.

The book is available from irrigation distributors; university, college and technical bookstores; and major industry associations such as the Irrigation Association, the American Society of Landscape Architects and the Golf Course Superintendents Association of America.



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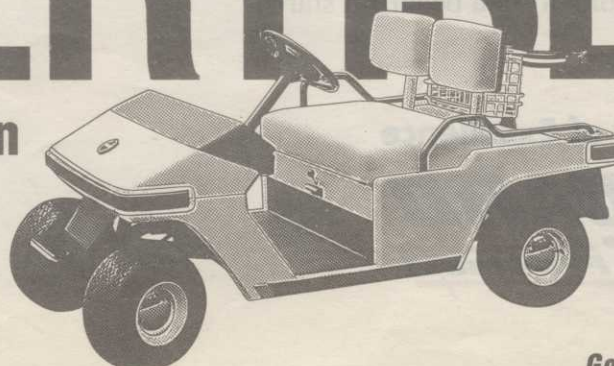
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