

Mitchell retires from Greenbriar

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another nine-hole facility. In 1958 he left for a 12-year stint at Sunset Country Club in St. Louis. It was here that he and other colleagues started the Missouri Valley Golf Course Superintendents Association and the Missouri Valley Turfgrass Association, both of which he served as president. He also served a term as president of the Midwest Regional Turfgrass Foundation, which is centered around Purdue University.

Becoming active in the national GCSAA and elected as an officer in 1967, Mitchell moved to the influential Portage Country Club in Akron, Ohio, in 1971, and a year later became president of the GCSAA. It was, as past president in 1973, when he was preparing to captain the GCSAA golf team against their British and Scottish counterparts, that The Greenbriar came calling to persuade him to join them in bringing back life to the Old White Course, and later rebuilding The Greenbriar and Lakeside (now Meadows) tracks.

"The Greenbriar," Mitchell said, "is staggering. The job got bigger and bigger, and today it's quite huge."

Besides the three courses, the property includes 60 to 70 acres around the hotel and a number of homes, and the grounds crew is responsible for landscaping all of it. Mitchell employs 31 on his golf course maintenance crew and 29 on his grounds unit.

With Jack Nicklaus as the architect, The Greenbriar was rebuilt in 1976 for the 1979 Ryder Cup. "And almost every year the first 10 or 12 years they added buildings at the hotel and landscaping had to be done for each one of them," Mitchell recalled. "We doubled greenhouse space and added so much landscaping that it is utterly staggering."

In 1984 Mitchell was made executive director of golf and grounds, a position he held until Robert Harris was hired as director of golf, and Mitchell could devote full time to his true love.

"The job has gotten more strenuous," he acknowledged. "But the camaraderie of superintendents hasn't changed. I've never seen more friendly and helpful people."

"I've seen [an evolution to] more dedicated people in taking care of golf courses, doing a better job financially, getting paid better, too, and spending money more wisely. The tenacity with which they have gotten down together for golf is fantastic."

Mitchell said the demand for lower-cut greens and disease-resistant grasses has not always started with the golfer, but often with the superintendent.

"The superintendent wants

something better to maintain — not easier, but better," he said. "We don't make grass grow, God does that. But we are taking a plant out of its natural environment and doing things to it to make it good for golf. When you do things like that you have to make all kinds of concessions and do whatever is pos-

sible to make it live."

Over the years, Mitchell has been recognized for his contributions to the profession. He received the 1995 Scotts Tradition of Excellence Award, established by The Scotts Co. to recognize "outstanding achievements among superintendents in advancing the science of course maintenance and in making golf the best it can be."

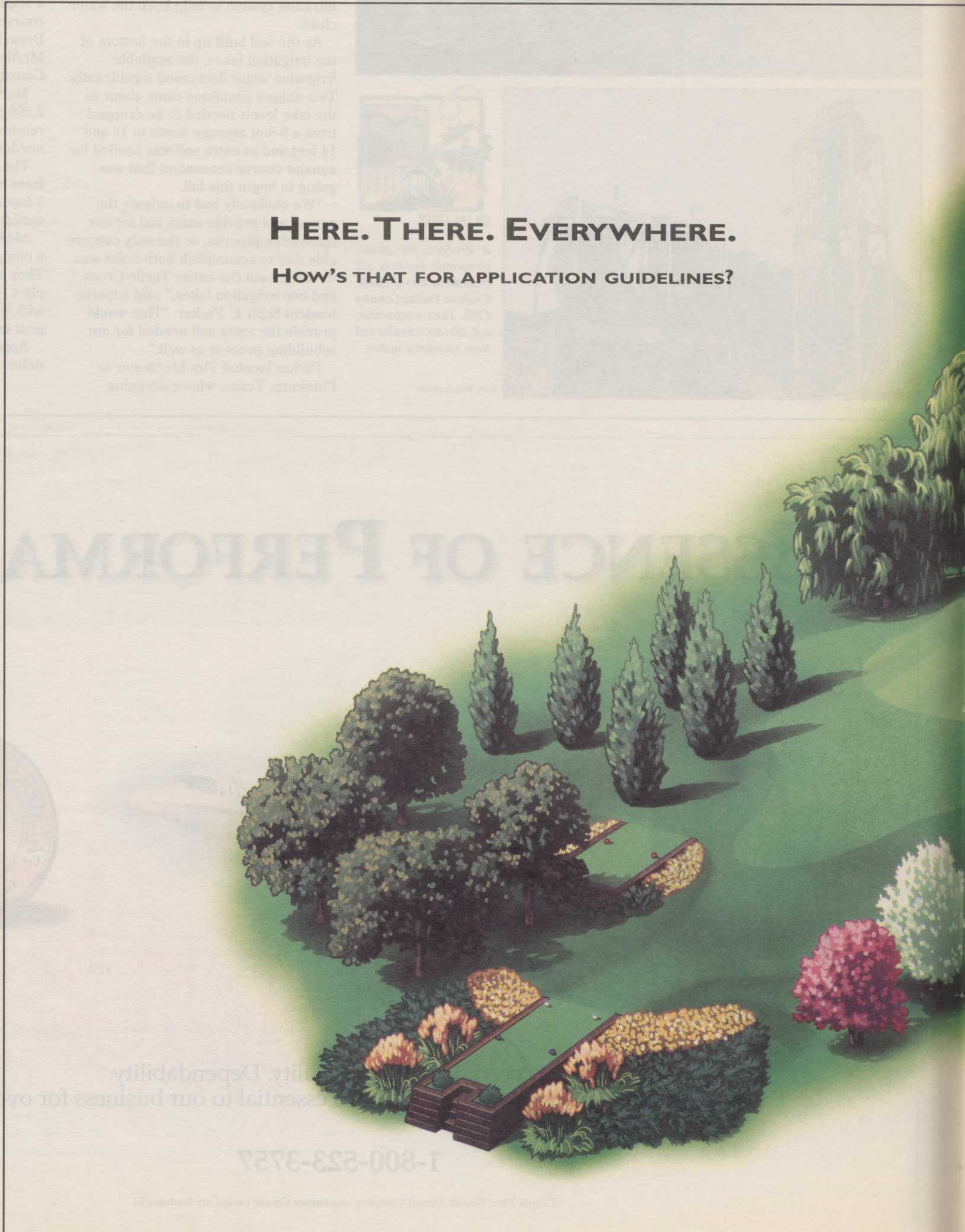
Asked if he had any advice for turfgrass students entering the field, Mitchell said: "I've always preferred country clubs over public courses. By and large you're under the gun more and stress is higher. But you are more appreciated. At the public course you're just one of them. Golfers don't have the same appreciation, it appears to me, although I enjoyed that part of my life."

DESERT GREEN CONCLAVE SET

HENDERSON, Nev. — Desert Green, a two-day conference focusing on the challenges faced by turf and landscape professionals in the arid Southwest, has been set for Nov. 12-13 at Henderson Convention Center. For more information call Bob Morris or M.L. Robinson at the Cooperative Extension at 702-222-3130.

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