

'Simple' oftentimes achieves what you want

NEW ORLEANS — Surrounded by high-tech, Star Wars-type innovations that are already rocketing superintendents into a futuristic realm of turfgrass maintenance, I found inventiveness and down-home wisdom in an interesting session at the 71st International Golf Course Conference and Show here. "What To Do When Your Budget's Not the Big Easy" featured guys from nine-hole golf courses, from the middle or low-end of the spending spectrum — and by the end of their session, the level of respect in the room for these men had soared.

Here, in the flesh, were represented the old phrase: "Necessity is the mother of invention."

✓ Here was Gerald Aisenbrey of The Briarwood Country Club in Billings, Mont., a former farmer who takes a cutting torch and welder and transforms long steel rods into aerifier tines, and sheet metal into tee and distance markers.

✓ Here was John Baker of Pinecroft Golf Course in Gillett, Pa., who said: "I associate with geniuses and steal every idea I hear."

The best managers, Baker added, include everyone on the team. "Remember, the guy with the shovel will dig a lot harder if he is part of the decision to dig the hole."

✓ Here was Mike Evertsen of Traer (Iowa) Country Club, who with six other nine-hole course operators who couldn't buy a salesman's time" have co-oped to cut costs. "We represent more golf holes as a group than anyone in Iowa," he said.

The seven-course group also leases and rents specialty equipment together, moves a mobile reel grinder from site to site and even share some equipment.

"I saved enough money last year," Evertsen said, "to buy a new sprayer."

✓ Here was Dan Whitcomb of nine-hole Claremont (N.H.) Country Club, where Presidents Wilson and Coolidge were members, telling his colleagues how he had cut his expenditures on labor from 70 to 50 percent of the total, giving him 20 percent to use for new equipment. He is on a five-year rollover program on all his equipment, "and our dues have not increased in five years," he said.

✓ Here was Tom Russell, a certified superintendent who took charge of construction of Marias Valley Golf and Country Club in Shelby, Mont., and found ways to cut costs — such as creating burn piles, consolidating them into one, and then burying it. His suggestion: "Work out a compensation package up front. Then the 15-hour days, back-breaking work, etc., won't seem so bad."

✓ And here were superintendents presenting solutions to the nationwide plague of finding seasonal help.

From Whitcomb: Check firemen, medical technicians, ski patrolmen and instructors. who work four days on, four off.

From Evertsen: Check with the state regarding "special needs" people. "The state pays my guy. It costs me nothing," he said, adding that the person is an excellent worker.

It all points to the old refrains "Simple is best" and "Think outside the box."

That is what has set the profession of golf course superintendent, whether "old-school" or new, apart from so many others. It was good to see that characteristic is still alive and well.

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Brent Wadsworth, who for a long time was an editorial advisor for Golf Course News, was a stitch in his speech accepting the Don A. Rossi Award from the Golf Course Builders Association of America. The man who formed Wadsworth Golf Construction Co. in 1958, virtually creating the course building business, said that when he started in the industry there were real sand greens that were oiled and flat so the ball could roll smoothly; there was no testing of greens mixtures; galvanized pipe was run from the water source to greens and tees only; and there were no electronics, no irons, no hybrid grasses.

"But best of all," he said, "there was no EPA, no INS, no OSHA, no Corps of Engineers, or archaeological inspection requirements. In fact, no permits for anything. It was a wonderful world!"

Giving a jab to his course architect friends, who a few years ago honored him with the Donald Ross Award, Wadsworth said: "My wife, Jean, has always been very frugal. She proved that when she started wrapping my lunch in golf course plans — because I had told her 'plans don't mean a darn thing.'"



Mark Leslie
editor

International Summit needs participants to improve impact

For me, one of the most interesting sessions to cover at the Golf Course Superintendents Association of America International Conference & Show has been the International Summit.

Basically, a dozen or more individuals representing superintendent and golf associations from around the world sit at several tables and, in turn, summarize what has happened in the golf industry during the past year in their respective countries and where they see the future of golf going.

For the participants, there is usually a wonderful exchange of ideas and suggestions. For me, there usually results a notebook full of story ideas to chase down for issues of *Golf Course News* and *Golf Course News International*.

Usually.

For some reason, this year's Summit drew representatives from only a half-dozen countries — less than half the usual number. Those in attendance recounted the past year's events in record time, heard a GCSAA presentation regarding educational possibilities over the Internet, and then seemed to look at one another, wondering what to do next.

Finally, one of the German representatives asked the obvious question: "Where the heck is everybody?"

Germany, Ireland, Sweden, Norway, China and Canada were there. But where were representatives from South Africa, England, France, Malaysia, Japan, Argentina, Chile, Italy, Indonesia and other countries that had taken the time to attend past International Summits?

Undoubtedly, some were on the trade show floor. One representative mentioned that the scheduling conflict may have kept several people away. GCSAA representatives promised to research alternate times for future summits.

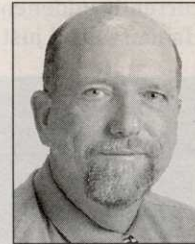
Another representative wondered if the lack of a more formal agenda might be a reason for the poor attendance. A few heads nodded in agreement.

Still.

Every year, GCSAA provides this forum for those in the golf industry to find out what is happening on this ever-shrinking globe. To pass up such an opportunity seems a shame.

Canadian Golf Superintendents Association Executive Director Vince Gillis offered to help put together next year's agenda and invited input from those interested in making the International Summit a more useful tool.

Anyone interested in the future of golf worldwide should give Vince a call. He can be reached at 905-602-8873.



Peter Blais
managing editor

Just returned from the GCSAA conference, Jack is catching up on his paperwork when...



"Boy, do I envy you! All the golf you must get to play!"

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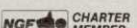
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