

# TOO EDUCATED?

By HERB GRAFFIS

Address at Iowa State College  
Greenkeeping Conference

*Are Greensmen Losing Out  
Through Short Course Knowledge?*

**T**HIS spring there are about 550 greenkeepers in the greenkeeping short courses at Iowa, Wisconsin, Massachusetts, Minnesota, Pennsylvania, Michigan and New Jersey. Although these short courses ordinarily run only two days, there is a well attended course for greenkeepers running as long as 10 weeks at the Massachusetts State college.

Without any stretching you can estimate the amount of greenkeepers' own money invested in these educational short courses for the good of their clubs at \$12,000 annually.

This year, greenkeepers spent, on a conservative estimate, \$7,500 of their own individual money in attending the educational conference and exhibits of the National Greenkeepers association.

The annual outdoor Green Section meetings eagerly attended by conscientious, studious greenkeepers, probably account for at least \$2,500 annually of the individual greenkeepers' own money paid out as educational expenses.

The indoor and outdoor meetings of the various sectional greenkeepers associations held at least once a month during the playing season account for an additional amount of \$9,000, at least, annually.

Lumping these sums you get \$31,000 that greenkeepers are spending each year, out of their own pockets, for the good of their clubs. That \$31,000 is a rock-bottom estimate; there is good reason to believe that the actual figures would be around \$50,000 a year.

## Education Has Backfired on Greenkeepers

Whatever the amount, it is primarily a contribution toward the clubs, and not chiefly an item of the greenkeeper's individual education, as the greenkeeper, in most instances, doesn't get paid enough considering his responsibilities, qualifications and work, to be justified in spending much in extending his own technical education.

Education, in one respect, actually has backfired on the greenkeepers. It has made some of them so good that they maintained their courses in a generally

better condition in 1935—a tough year—than they did in the midst of 1929's riches and with their maintenance budgets 40% under the 1929 figure. The 40% figure, I make haste to say, applies in a few cases. Everytime cost figures about greenkeeping are mentioned greenkeepers get scared to death for fear their officials will want to hack budgets some more.

Now, anyone who knows golf course management will realize that the cuts greenkeepers have made in costs during the depression, when made—without undue sacrifice of course standards—are the result of education greenkeepers have received from the college short courses, the Green Section, frequent and lively exchanges of practical information made at sectional greenkeeper meetings and through the columns of golf business press.

Retaining the standards of course condition while budgets were so severely reduced unquestionably has been a tremendous factor in bringing golf and golf clubs through the stormy seas of the depression. This achievement has been paid for out of the greenkeeper's own salaries, which usually demand some fancy juggling before they will cover the requirements of a respectable American family. Seldom does the golf club pay any of the greenkeeper's educational expenses, although the club ought to jump at the chance to encourage this exhibition of interest and fidelity on the part of the greenkeeper.

**Spend \$250,000  
And Are Worse Off**

Where do greenkeepers stand as a result of the educational expense of probably a quarter of a million dollars they have spent during the depression to help make golf more attractive and to put golf

course management on a basis of sound business and sound science?

In all except some conspicuous and isolated cases, they are worse off than they were before they spent a quarter million dollars of their dough for the good of golf.

And why?

A human failing is readiness to blame someone else for tough luck. God gets blamed. The chairman gets blamed. The board of directors and the member and the pro get blamed—all because the greenkeeper isn't getting his honest and deserved due, in money or recognition.

Like all other cases wherein humanity tried to pass the buck, the buck ends back where it started. So in this case the fellow to blame for the greenkeeper's plight is the greenkeeper.

The greenkeeper has been, with all his technical education, pitifully ignorant and uneducated in one of the most important phases of American commercial success—self-advertising.

I have heard greenkeepers referred to as versatile men. They are. I have heard it said that a greenkeeper must be a soils expert, a fertilizer authority, a seed expert, a machinist, a plumber, a civil engineer, a landscape gardner, a hydraulic engineer, an automotive expert, a road contractor, a painter, a concrete worker, a farmer, a cost expert, a section boss, an employment expert, a labor-training star, and heaven knows what all. That's right. He does.

#### Greenkeeper a Flop As a Press-Agent

But never have I heard mention of the vital fact that a greenkeeper also must be an active publicity agent for himself and his club.

And that is just where the greenkeepers have missed a big bet.

I'll make the guess that of the 550 greenkeepers who go to short courses on their own money this year, the officials of 400 of their clubs won't know that their men have attended. The members of at least 540 clubs won't know their man was spending his own money for their enjoyment and saving. I probably could make a safe bet that half the members of 250 clubs whose greenkeepers attend the short courses, don't know their greenkeeper's name.

This ignorance of the members is of course more serious at the better known and larger clubs than at the smaller ones, even though at the ranking clubs the cost

of maintenance per round is much higher. An annual maintenance cost of \$15,000 is not at all unusual at metropolitan district clubs where less than 15,000 rounds of golf are played a year. I have seen many clubs where a \$15,000 budget for 18 holes is actually so skimpy that the marvel is the greenkeeper can maintain such good condition, considering the governing factors. But, still that makes the greenkeeper's job represent more than a dollar a round at these clubs. The per-round cost for maintenance varies all the way from five cents to \$12.

My estimate is that the national average of annual maintenance cost is fifty cents per round of golf. Statistics show that the active golfer averages 42 rounds a season. That means that the average golfer has a \$21 yearly interest in the greenkeeper's work.

We all have heard golfers in terrific argument over a bet involving only a quarter. So when the golfers get into a sum like \$21 which is about 2½ times their average annual expenditure for golf balls, you would think that they would be paying a whole lot of attention to details of that item.

#### Greenkeeping Publicity Is "Ground Under Repair"

Can you figure out why the average golfer knows so little about the greenkeeper and his work? That question puzzled me for a long time until I finally concluded that the correct and simple answer is that the greenkeeper doesn't tell his story.

In one instance the attention of the greenkeepers was called to the fact that generally the only publicity the member sees concerning the greenkeeping department is notices displayed on the club bulletin boards—notices reading "Play winter rules" or "Play temporary green on number so-and-so".

Now figure what would happen if the same blunt and unsatisfactory publicity were handed to the greenkeeper. Suppose he came into his equipment barn and saw on a tractor a sign reading merely "On the bum", and his tractor man was not around to explain. The tractor man might be in town getting a repair part but that wouldn't exempt him from catching plenty of hell from the greenkeeper for the almost impudent brevity of his message advising that things were not right.

When we consider the frequency of these snappy bulletin signs telling the

members only that something is out of order and they won't get expected value for their investment in golf course maintenance this round, maybe we ought to wonder why the golf clubs haven't insisted that the greenkeepers do better jobs of publicity.

Lack of greens department publicity is an almost universal error of omission in golf club management. Take the metropolitan district golf club publications for proof of this statement. I have seen such publications from probably a hundred different clubs and in no instance have I seen the greens department receive more than a small fraction of the space devoted to pro department and house operation. It's something that not only is bad for the club members but it handicaps the work of the pros and the managers, whose operations are based on the greenkeepers results in making the course attractive.

Despite the sad status and the seriousness of the greenkeepers' publicity, the condition is one that can be corrected without great difficulty and without any demand on the greenkeeper for skill as a publicity man. All it needs is attention, common sense and persistent action. You may not have it register appreciably inside of a couple of years, but it is bound to give greenkeeping proper recognition and merited income before you get much older.

Everytime you refer to golf course maintenance costs you are talking about something that rarely can be compared course-to-course, due to widely varying conditions of design, soil, drainage, weather, use, and pests and diseases. Greenkeepers are scared absolutely silly when the maintenance costs of courses other than their own are mentioned, if the other costs happen to be lower.

Their fear in this matter is absolutely the result of their own deficiencies as publicists and educators to their own officials and members, so their own folks would have appreciation of the many factors controlling golf course operating costs.

### **Outlines Simple Greenkeeping Publicity**

In conducting a greenkeeper's publicity campaign I would make sure that the bulletins in the men's and women's locker-rooms had the monthly cost reports not later than the second day of the month following the month covered by the report.

Notes explaining in simple and illuminating fashion some main details of the

work would interest your players tremendously and at least let them know your name and that you are very much on the job.

When special work is to be done on the course, a bulletin explaining this work, briefly, should be displayed. When you discover sod webworms, for instance, attach one of them to a bulletin, say something about the worm, its damage and what you are doing to fight it. Or when you have any other trouble, let the members be informed by bulletins. Let them know that maintenance of a golf course is a constant battle requiring the long-hour services of a man who must combine skill, resourcefulness and versatility.

Even such routine jobs as topdressing might be explained by bulletins. Construction jobs, why you water when you do, fertilizing, fungicide application, arsenating—any of the hundred different operations in golf course maintenance—give you chances for frequent newsy bulletins that will win deserved recognition from members.

Enlist the cooperation of your chairman in this matter. It's his job to see that the members know what is being done in course maintenance work and why. They've made him their contact man responsible to them for the basic feature of a golf club. As long as you are willing to do the work of getting out the bulletins and all he has to do is to edit or approve them, he can't complain about this necessary and neglected phase of greens department operation.

Don't think that the publicity job is one that will take much time or require any literary talent. If you know what you are doing on the golf course—and why—and can read and write, you're competent to handle this greenkeeping publicity job. If you were not qualified by temperament and education to do this publicity job, you wouldn't attend a short course.

See to it that your local newspapers get club news concerning operations, although I wouldn't suggest sending the newspapers any bulletins on course costs.

You have been expecting the newspapers to come after you. They haven't done that because they don't realize there is a story in you.

Before very long thousands of homeowners will begin to get intensely interested again in having fine lawns at their city and farm homes. Who knows as

much about lawn-making and maintenance as the greenkeeper? Discuss this matter with the editor of your local newspaper and tell him you'll give one of his reporters the dope so it will make a story—or a series of pieces in the paper under your name. That sort of publicity builds you up with your members and is a community service. In the larger cities several greenkeepers could supply the facts to different papers or get together with the managing editor so each greenkeeper could supply data on various phases of lawn-making and care, and all share in the publicity.

Of course there'll be some work, some nuisance, some study and unquestionably disappointments and rebuffs while you are conducting your publicity campaign. You'll find this in every advertising and publicity campaign, from the General Motors and General Foods and Schenley liquor multi-million dollar campaigns down the line. Just like you have to keep after growing grass, so you have to keep at this job of growing public appreciation and more pay.

### How Sportswear Fits Into Pro-Shop Merchandising

By FRED E. NEWMAN  
Pres., Jackman Sportswear Co.

**I**MPORTANT changes and developments are taking place in the business world and our mode of living these days, and it is interesting for those of us in the business of golf to check up and see how well we are keeping pace with the modern trends.

Old movie houses that once were nickel-odians suddenly have their faces lifted and become attractive showplaces. Store windows and interiors are undergoing im-

provements everywhere. Apartments and homes take on new and fresh appearances. Railroad trains, airplanes, motor cars, speed boats—all down the line we find America going modern!

Methods of selling and displaying merchandise have also changed with the new order of things. Goods are placed where people can see and feel them. Nothing is left to the imagination, yet selling appeals are highly dramatized. The old "drummer" who handed out cigars freely is far outmoded today by the salesman whose firm offers what the public wants, and dishes it out to the tune of a snappy radio program. "Planned promotions," too, are the order of the day.

All of these modern developments are important to the business of golf and pro-shop merchandising. But have we taken any real steps to keep up with the procession? Do we really appreciate the potential possibilities in this great market, and what is taking place all around us? We need an awakening, for the time is ripe to do big things.

A study of American business history reveals that some new industry or field of endeavor, which has long been in the stages of development, suddenly comes into its own.

The entire field of pro-shop merchandising is in that "budding" stage today—a sleeping giant with tremendous potentialities for development in the modern American markets. But we need a modern, scientific approach. Hit-or-miss methods that belong to the old days will not awaken the giant.

### Big Opportunity for Sportswear Sales

Typical is the opportunity for increasing the sale of sports apparel in pro-shops. There is nothing new in the idea.



Newly remodeled display room of the Jackman Sportswear Co. offices, 218 S. Wabash ave., Chicago, designed as a modern pro-shop. Walls are knotty pine, stained honey color. The floor is of asphalt block tile. Upper walls are craftexed to lend an outdoor atmosphere, and the office entrance is built like a country club doorway.