

Able Green-Chairmen Are Club keystones

By "OLD SOD"

IN THE YEARS I have been in charge of the grounds at my club, which is one of the better known ones in the east, more than a quarter million dollars have been spent for maintenance. I think the waste has been at the minimum. Possibly ten per cent of that money has been thrown away on work that later had to be corrected, but even some of that was spent for experiments which, if they had been successful, would have saved money for the club, so I think of that loss as a necessary risk of the business.

Without trying to evade responsibility for my own mistakes I am sure that at least 75% of the preventable waste has been the result of action taken at the insistence of my chairmen. Despite that I am sure that I have had better green-chairmen than you could have found at 80% of the first class clubs in this country. They all have been very successful businessmen. It wouldn't be wise, and probably not fair, for me to make it possible to identify them. That is the reason I don't want my name or that of my club mentioned in this article.

Their mistakes have been made in the conviction that they were doing something very much for the good of the club. They seldom got any favorable mention for the many hours they spent working for the club for nothing so it wouldn't be justice to show them up for their mistakes. Besides I want to hold my job, and even any suggestion of a paid club employee correcting or criticising an amateur club worker for the club would be a dangerous violation of the formalities.

But, as I review how few mistakes we have made in view of the fads that have swept golf course maintenance I have a great respect for the conservatism of the chairmen I've had. Many chairmen are so eager to make a showing they rush into enterprises that they can forget after they finish their terms, while the greenkeeper

has to stay on reaping the harvest of trouble until he finally loses his job and has a blot on his record for something that he had to do under protest.

At the present time good greenkeepers are hard to get. There are many clubs that need men to replace fellows they have lost to war industries at higher wages and year around employment. But about the only way a good experienced greenkeeper can be secured now is to hire him away from another club at more money, and the greenkeeper as a general rule is not in the habit of changing jobs. From talking to quite a few greenkeepers who are making good in war factory work, getting more money for fewer hours, less worry and simpler and more certain conditions of production and job-holding, I have learned that the only thing that will bring their valuable experience back into golf is their liking for outside work.

Also from these greenkeepers who have been working in war factories, I have learned that the greenkeeper-chairman relationship after the war will have to be different than it often has been. The green-chairman is going to have to know more about his job.

Already the green-chairman has a job requiring more specialized knowledge than any other unpaid club official, and a responsibility that is the foundation of the whole club. If the golf course isn't attractive then the club hasn't much of a chance to succeed. It is asking too much of a businessman who takes on green-chairmanship as a sideline to devote much time to getting even an elementary knowledge of modern turf maintenance methods. Greenkeepers have tried their best to get chairmen to attend greenkeeper educational meetings but seldom have much of a turnout of chairmen.

Consequently, about the best that can be expected in the greenkeeper-green chairman relationship is to have the chairman

confident of the greenkeeper's ability and judgment, to encourage the greenkeeper to speak freely, and to see that the grounds maintenance gets proper consideration in decisions made by the club's board.

But is that really the sound situation for a club that has an investment of from \$500,000 to nearly a million dollars, as many of the better clubs have? Is the sharp limit placed on the greenkeeper's authority in getting needful work done with the unlimited responsibility he has to accept for the conditions of the course?

In my neighborhood are two clubs that were about the same class. One of them had a greenkeeper I think was one of the most competent, hardest working men in the profession. He was an agricultural college man and kept right up with the developments in greenkeeping by spending his own money going to the conventions, meetings and short courses and by reading everything he could having to do with turf culture, landscaping, tree care and machine and business management methods he could apply to his course.

But he had the bad luck to have self-important chairmen who thought that because they shot in the high seventies and were doing very well in their own business, had to show their superiority over the greenkeeper in everything. He wore himself out and became discouraged trying to tell his chairmen what the course needed. He knew what was coming so he moved to an important and well paid job out of golf before the course condition got miserable.

At the other club there was—and is—a greenkeeper who's a good man but who readily admits that his former neighbor knew more about course maintenance and did better on less money. However this other fellow had the good fortune to have two fine men as chairmen during the past six or eight years. They were men who were smart enough to know that they didn't know much about turf management and they'd talk over things thoroughly with the greenkeeper. The greenkeeper is a cautious man and the chairmen would have to draw him out and encourage him to make a decision. But when the decision was reached, they'd carry it through the board and see to it that work was continued.

The course where the better qualified greenkeeper was now requires a major operation of weed eradication and needs to bring its greens back to former condition. That work is going to call for a lot of time and money. The other course has been getting better every year even during the war.

The course where they had bad luck in appointing green chairmen has been able

to keep its membership roster in fairly good shape because it is very conveniently located. But there has been a steady turnover of members and the class of members has steadily deteriorated so that my guess is that about three-quarters of the members are people who are war-rich and who wouldn't have been solicited as members of the club before the war. The other club—the one that has been getting its course in better shape—has a waiting list and it still has class. Regardless of what changes there may be in society as the result of the war you can bet that class will continue to be a strong selling point in club membership.

Figuring the loss the deteriorating club suffered in having to eliminate transfer fees and in reduction of initiation fees during the past five years, it is reasonable to assume that the slump directly resulting from the course getting worse, was around \$60,000. The income situation of the wisely-maintained course in initiation fees, green fees and other items that could be credited to the condition of the course, showed a five-year improvement of around \$40,000.

So in the case of two courses that could be fairly well compared you have a difference of \$100,000 that is accounted for by a difference in green-chairmen.

This way of looking at the importance of getting the right green chairman isn't original with me. It came out one night when my chairman and I were talking things over and got on the subject of how we could work together and handle our respective duties for the best interests of a club which, like other clubs, is composed of members who don't know the first thing about the job of course maintenance.

I told him that greenkeepers were making a lot of progress with the mysteries of grass, disease, insects, fertilizer, weeds and weather but that the chairmen still were as much of a mystery as ever to the majority of greenkeepers. Therefore, I told him, I didn't know what to say to him about selling our story of what the course needed, to the board. We always get along well because we don't try to tell each other what to do; me because I don't want to bother him any more than I have to, and he because he will get all the money he can from the board for doing the job.

He told me that he had got a booklet about what the club official should know concerning the pro job. The pro job, he said, is mainly a personality and selling performance and does not directly involve much of the club's money, inasmuch as the pro generally is paid a moderate guarantee and has to make the rest of his income by lessons and shop sales. So, according to my chairman, it isn't difficult

for a man who has been a club member or official for years to know what pro is or isn't doing a good job for the club.

But, he continued, the greenkeeper is responsible for the spending of from \$8000 to \$18000 of a fairly good club's money for course maintenance a year, and if the course isn't in good shape its bad condition is quickly reflected in a drop in all departments of club revenue.

And, to make the greenkeeper situation still more important, there are very few chairmen who can tell before it's too late whether or not a course maintenance department is operating as it should.

"What golf needs now and will need even more after the war ends" is more education of the green chairmen in what the fundamentals of the greenkeeper's job are, and how the green chairman can best fit in," said my chairman.

That checks with what a former greenkeeper now in a war factory told me last winter. He said, "If the superintendent of our department didn't know any more about his job than my chairman last year knew about his, the government would take a beating in our plant. If I ever get back into golf I am going to try harder to get my chairman interested in knowing something about greenkeeping, even if he is doing his job for nothing."

I am afraid that this article won't do much good in improving the chairman-greenkeeper situation, for the chairmen who are very valuable to their clubs are doing what they can to learn what course maintenance is all about, and the chairmen who know it all, can't be told anything. Their clubs will simply have to wait until these chairmen get tired of their jobs and won't stand for re-appointment.

Chicago Event Aims at 50Gs for Veterans

★ Chicago DGA has set financial par for its Victory National championship at Edgewater GC, June 28 through July 2 at \$50,000, with wounded veterans of World War II being beneficiaries. Pres. Lowell Rutherford of the CDGA and his aides have been hammering at the \$50,000 target so strong that if it isn't reached it won't be missed far.

Distribution of the proceeds is to be made through the American Women's Voluntary Service and Bundles for America. Rutherford says:

"Inasmuch as we plan to use the net proceeds for facilities not provided by the government budgets for recreational facilities for wounded veterans of the armed forces both the AWVS and the Bundles for America who are familiar

with the needs of these men will be of great assistance to the committee. Their work takes them into the hospitals in this area and they know the recreational needs of the returned soldiers."

In 1942 the Chicago District Golf Association, together with the PGA and the USGA, raised \$22,500 which was equally divided between the Navy Relief Society and the United Service Organization. Money raised at last year's Chicago Victory National championships at Beverly is being expended for putting greens for the veterans of Hines and Downey hospitals. This work is now underway through the cooperation of the Midwest Greenkeepers Assn. whose members are devoting their time without charge to the supervision and construction of these putting greens.

Watch Trees' Effect on Drainage System

★ Alex Campbell, Sunnyside CC, Waterloo, Iowa, in telling about the value he's received from short courses in solving the difficulties of wartime course maintenance reminds greenkeepers to look to trees in many instances where they're having drainage trouble.

Campbell says "From the height and spread of a tree you can pretty well determine how its root system is, and in numerous cases you'll find that drainage trouble is caused by roots plugging your tiles." Alex adds his authoritative testimony in support of the opinion of many that short course ideas have benefitted clubs so greatly that expense of short course attendance should be an item of every maintenance budget.

Fruit, Poultry, Eggs, and Pigs Are Club Sidelines

AN OLD ORCHARD acquired when Alderwood CC, Portland, Ore., acquired its property, was put into shape and now yields a yearly crop of pears and apples bringing in from \$250 to \$800 annually. Members get first preference on purchase of the fruit. Fifty more fruit trees were planted this year so members in the future may eat fruit as they play.

Last year the club bought a brooder and 700 day-old Rhode Island Reds. They kept the club supplied with poultry. Mgr. A. H. Craig says the club gets from the pullets it kept as many as 140 eggs daily. This being more than the club can use the remainder is sold to members.

The club also raised a few hogs last year. It now has about 20 adult rabbits among its live stock.