

## Formalized Turf Training

# Prof. Dickinson Dies In Amherst at Age of 77

Lawrence S. Dickinson, 77, retired professor of the famed Turf Management school at the University of Massachusetts, died in Amherst on April 21.

"Prof." Dickinson, as he was known by perhaps 1,000 men who attended the Winter School he established at the U. of Mass. in 1927, or the two-year Turf Management course he set up at the same school in 1947, was presented the USGA's green section award for distinguished service to golf through work with turfgrass in 1962. He was the second man to be so honored.

A native of Amherst, Prof. Dickinson, after being graduated from the U. of Mass., became supt. of the campus grounds, a job he combined with an instructorship in Horticulture. A few years after he assumed the dual position, the University started sponsoring an annual agricultural equipment exposition and conference. This first to attend were park and estate supts. who came to Amherst by horse, carriage and train. The exposition was the forerunner of a general horticulture show that, by 1920, was attracting 2,500 to 3,000 people to the Amherst campus. By 1957, when Prof. Dickinson retired, attendance at the annual show had increased to 20,000.

### Sees Need for Formal Training

Around 1925, Prof. Dickinson decided that course supts. needed more formal and better coordinated training than they were getting. The way for them to acquire it was through a short course in turf management that would last approximately ten weeks. The 100 or so golf

clubs that he contacted in the New England area were quite enthused about the idea of sending their greenkeepers and foremen to school, although there was some opposition to formalizing turf management and teaching it at the equivalent of the college level.

### Short Course Started

In 1927, the short course was started with the new students studying a curriculum designed by Walter Hatch, also of the Horticulture school. Prof. Dickinson added refinements to the course and adapted whatever practical methods that were necessary as he went along. The school operated continuously, except for the World War II years when it was closed, for three decades. In 1958, after Prof. Dickinson retired, the school was temporarily abandoned because of the heavy enrollment of regular students at the University of Massachusetts. However, the short course was resumed in 1959 and has been functioning since that time under the direction of Joseph Troll.

### Two-Year Turf Major

In 1947, Prof. Dickinson, sensing the explosive growth that was to come in golf, and seeing the need for training more turf managers for other fields, persuaded the University to set up a two-year turf major in its Stockbridge School of Agriculture. Students attend the school for approximately nine months and then are free to work in the turf field during their vacations. Graduates of the Stockbridge turf school have a reputation of being eagerly sought by country clubs and other seeking managers of large turf areas.

Many sons followed their fathers to study at the Winter School that Lawrence Dickinson established. The "Prof" never dabbled to any extent in research, preferring to teach. He did not downgrade research, but always maintained that it was of little value unless men were trained to apply it practically. The role of a teacher, he said, "is to fill the gap between the researcher and supt."

### Light on Theory

Students admired Prof. Dickinson because he never allowed theory to over-



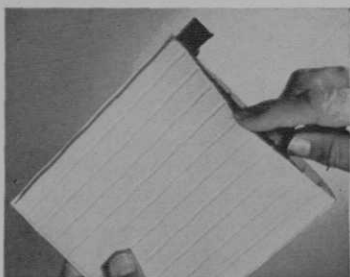
Prof. Dickinson

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whelm the practical approach. His teaching tenets were not based on the understanding and application of cultural turf practices alone. He emphasized that business management of fine turf is just as important as cultural management.

### Great Asset

"It is good practice," he once said, "to lay away a bank account of healthy turf. This is the greatest asset in times of depression. To determine whether this account is growing or shrinking, all turf on the course should be inventoried regularly."

Prof Dickinson received many honors and citations during his life, but according to those who knew him best, the one he treasured most came in 1958 after he had retired from 45 years of teaching. The Northeastern Section of the CCSA, which he helped to organize in 1932, held a "Dickinson Day" in his honor at Mohawk GC in Schenectady. Toasts were lifted, gifts were presented, but what pleased the Prof most was that many of the old U of M turf grads were able to get back to see him.

## Torture Testing

*(Continued from page 54)*

lyzed. Indicated improvements were made in seven new prototype golf cars manufactured with actual production parts.

The improved vehicles then underwent Phase 2 testing. This included continuous operation for 16 hours a day and even more grueling punishment than was inflicted on their predecessors.

### Gave Them the Works

Deliberately, the test drivers banged their golf cars into ditches, threw them into sharp turns, gunned them at maximum speed over long distances, and did all the necessary wrong things in an effort to twist frames and axles and figuratively drive the vehicles into the ground.

The dawn-to-dusk battering continued for two months. The test program racked up more than 6,000 hours and 40,000 miles of driving — equivalent to 20 years of normal driving, based on average use on a course.

Again, throughout Phase 2 testing, ex-