

# 40th birthday for the GCSAA

*Founding fathers' foresight has given today's superintendents a strong, active organization.*

By HERB GRAFFIS

In reviewing their first 40 years the Golf Course Superintendents' Association of America can record in esthetic credit, if not in cash, a multi-billion-dollar contribution to the beautification of the United States.

In the summer of 1926, John MacGregor, then greenkeeper of the Chicago Golf Club, was asked to represent mid-western course men in forming a national organization. This plan was an outgrowth of the Cleveland Greenskeepers Association, which was started in 1923 with Fred Burkhardt as president.

In the Chicago area there was in informal organization of greenkeepers and pro greenkeepers. They usually came into the Loop or its periphery on Mondays to shop for pro shop supplies or golf course equipment and supplies. These golf business executives would have lunch, usually at a speakeasy. In Chicago, as in New York, now swanky bistros were grog shops during the Great Drought of the Twenties.

The best of the Scotch from the highlands of Cicero was made in stills that dumped their waste into creeks that ran through golf courses. When one knocked a ball into a creek and smelled a 90-proof

splash or saw a hiccupping cow in a pasture adjoining a course one knew that the Civil Rights of Lushes were being protected by reliable, accomplished and avaricious Sicilian pickets.

To proceed with history; this MacGregor was a tough, canny and accomplished greenkeeper. John Morley, greenkeeper of the Youngstown (Ohio) CC, was an organizer and a green-thumbed man. He had been national secretary of the Prohibition Party. MacGregor did not vote that ticket. He was a temperate man, and concerned himself with making grass better for golf. MacGregor's use of gasoline jabs from a tube to destroy dandelions was a pioneering job that if not wholly effective was much better than hand weeding.

At a session in one of the Chicago places where assembled the golf course customers of John Dee, the Worthington Mower man and J. Oliver Johnson, the Toro distributor, MacGregor and Joe Graffis, the founder of GOLFDOM, decided the Ohio fellows had a great idea. Joe, always looking ahead to the growth of golf as a business, saw how the Morley lurch of the National Association of Greenkeepers of America would fit into

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*The author, Herb Graffis, is shown here at left with his brother Joe Graffis, Sr. (right) and Robert J. Abramson, Associate Publishers of GOLFDOM, at meeting in Kansas City.*





*GCSAA Executive Committee (from left): Norman W. Kramer; B. Tom Leonard; Ben K. Chlevin; Walter R. Boysen, vice president; James W. Brandt; Edward Roberts, president; L. R. Shields; John J. Spodnik, secretary-treasurer; Richard A. McLaughlin; R. C. Balke.*

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the development of GOLFDOM, which already had been announced as the magazine of golf business. W. J. Rockefeller of the Inverness Club at Toledo, and Fred Burkhardt quickly came into the line-up of the founding fathers.

Morley's club gave him a leave of absence to explore national organization possibilities. He, Dr. J. W. Hartshorn who was chairman of the Green Section of the Toledo Golf Association, Burkhardt, Rockefeller, James Muriden of Ridgewood CC Cincinnati, MacGregor and several other greenkeepers attended a meeting September 13, 1926 at Sylvania CC, Toledo, as guests of the club. There organization plans were made.

Sessions were held in Chicago, October 22 that year at which the national organization outline were presented by Morley, MacGregor and Burkhardt. Western Pennsylvania greenkeepers gathered at Pittsburgh, Nov. 1, 1926 to hear the hopes of the founders. In both cases the assembled greenkeepers were for the idea and gave it regional backing by organizing, at Chicago, the Mid-West Greenkeepers Association and at Pittsburgh the Pittsburgh Association of Greenkeepers, with MacGregor as president. John Pressler of Allegheny CC headed the W. Pennsylvania assembly.

At that time New England greenkeepers were rather informally organized, very much for the good of golf, and around Philadelphia course managers were getting together and exchanging

information but hadn't reached the organizing stage. Although New England greenkeepers had a great deal to do with the technical advance of the profession, the group was not early in affiliating with the national organization.

One of the early, and sometimes bitter, problems the greenkeepers' national organization had to face was that of differences between greenkeepers and pro-greenkeepers. The greenkeepers organizations in numerous areas did not want pro-greenkeepers as members. It took some years before the specializing course managers realized that economics and not their personal inclinations dictated an organization table that called for the combination job. At many medium-sized clubs (and at more smaller clubs) a combination job meant that a man could make the kind of a living that would attract and hold valuable personnel in golf.

As a matter of economic reality the pro-greenkeeper realized acutely that the better the course was, the more play it attracted and the better business was for him. He was the fellow who sensed the comparative economic value of the course maintenance specialist before the greenkeeper did and, more importantly, before club officials did.

There were fellows such as Emil (Dutch) Loeffler, the pro-greenkeeper at famous Oakmont Club in Pittsburgh who had as officials the celebrated Fownes family. They were willing to go along with Dutch in experimenting with money, brains, trial-and-error in produc-

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ing a new highly sophisticated frequently harvested crop of grass for golf.

The British gardener influence came into the picture with founding English and Scotch greenkeeper association members. The Latin artistry came in, fortunately and strong, with such fellows as Joe Valentine of Merion and in the mid-west with Frank Dinelli, the padre Bertucci and Emil Mashie (Maschiotti), the latter the Onwentsia greenkeeper who led a qualifying round for the Tam o' Shanter World Championship one year. They brought a Latin feeling of beauty to the golf course.

The American element of the greenkeepers' organization was quick to emphasize the maintenance business picture's scientific and economic aspects. New England and New York Metropolitan district greenkeepers got together with the late Professor Lawrence S. Dickinson in getting the course maintenance school established at Amherst. Marshall Farnham at Philadelphia CC, a brilliant college graduate, pioneered as a scholastically high-ranking agronomist in golf course management. He got into this work as something that combined the pursuit of happiness and the opportunity for conspicuous achievement for the delight of many. I often have wondered how many of Farnham's lucky members got the intellectual and spiritual benefits from golf that he did.

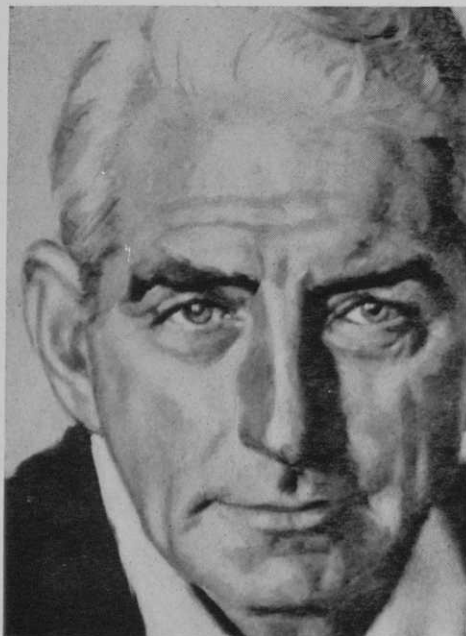
Bob Williams, son of a landscaping genius, the noted J. Ogden Armour, hired as America's Number One estate manager, was another but younger college-trained pioneer of the Farnham type. He has developed some of the top superintendents.

Rockefeller of Inverness was a notable educator. Among his star graduates was Joe Mayo who developed several of the great West Coast golf course managers.

The initial line-up of the greenkeepers' national organization had 24 charter members. Morley was president; John McNamara, vice president; W. J. Rockefeller was secretary and Alex McPherson, treasurer. Directors were John Presser of Allegheny; Joe Valentine of Merion; George Erickson of Minikahda; John

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GOLFDOM



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MacGregor of Chicago Golf; Mack Burke of Scioto; Hugh Luke of the Garden City Club; A. J. Allen of Druid Hills; James Dagleish of St. Andrews, Kansas City; and James Muriden of Ridgewood, Cincinnati. Dues at the start were but a mere \$5 a year.

Hugh Luke is the only one of that initial group of officials still alive.

Robert Power, Green Chairman of the Westwood CC in the Cleveland district, a good friend of Burkhardt, was in the printing business and he started an association organ for the original group. Gertrude A. Farley, an attractive and energetic young woman with some experience in writing and journalism, became the editor of the publication, then known as *The National Greenkeeper*. She did an excellent job considering the political and policy restrictions under which association publications must operate.

The close acquaintance of Joe Graffis with business interests in golf helped the greenkeepers' association get off to a good start with its first annual meeting and the "International Golf Show" which was held at the Hotel Sherman, Chicago, March 21-26, 1927. The golf show was the second affair of that sort and was put on by Spearman Lewis and A. R. Shaffer, former newspapermen. They cut the greenkeepers association in for a very small amount.

There were fewer than 100 at the first annual meeting of the greenkeeper era. The show didn't do too well and when Lewis collected on a record long shot at a Mimai track, the "annual" show was discontinued. However it lasted long enough for Fred Burkhardt to see possibilities in it. He and another Cleveland district greenkeeper, Frank Ermer paid a great deal of attention to the sale of equipment and supply space at the annual conventions and in that way gave the organization the money it needed to bring it through the ills of its infancy.

The association's solid and steady growth began in the mid-30's when the educational and organization influence of the agricultural college short courses and cooperation with regional groups of

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greenkeepers became a strong factor.

Massachusetts began the formal educational trend in the '20s with its winter short courses at Amherst under the direction of the late Prof. Lawrence S. Dickinson. Pennsylvania was early, too. H. Burton Musser, professor in the College of Agriculture at Penn State, together with the greenkeepers around Philadelphia and others began short courses, then inaugurated schools of turf management.

New York at Cornell, New Jersey at Rutgers, Michigan State, Illinois, and Indiana at Purdue, Iowa State, Texas, Rhode Island, Connecticut, California, Kansas, Oklahoma, Maryland, Washington, Minnesota, Iowa and a few other agricultural colleges and state experiment stations, plus the Coastal Plains Experiment Station at Tifton, Ga., helped the greenkeepers lift themselves out of mower-jockey-and-manure status to that of members of a profession.

What seldom is known is that the trend toward the college men in golf business began with the golf course managers. The Golf Course Superintendents Association for years has had administrations composed mainly of college graduates and the PGA and Club Managers Association haven't reached that point.

Paul Weiss, Sr. whose witty and compact story of the course managers' organization was a highlight of the GCSA 1966 meeting at Kansas City, referred to the academic entry into the program as "the time when the educated men whose courses showed they knew what, why, where and when to do something, were separated from the hard-headed old-timers who were trying to keep secret what they didn't know."

All of a sudden golf clubs, and the fee course officials, were reminded that management of their turf and outside plants, including landscaping, roads, etc., involved responsibility for huge investments and was not something that could be bought for farmhand or factory help wages. What came as a shock to clubs was that ads for professionals would bring many, many inquiries but advertising for a superintendent at a top grade

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metropolitan district course only brought a few responses. The college turf management graduates were going into other turf jobs that brought them more money. Only about half the turf management college men go into golf work now.

While the greenkeepers were growing up as businessmen they were giving golf a lot more than they got out of it. Eight to ten months a year regional groups of greenkeepers would go to each others' courses and play golf or have inspection trips and dinners and reviews and lectures that meant hundreds of thousands of dollars in maintenance savings and heaven-knows-what in improved playing conditions to golf courses.

Golf club officials who knew what the financial score was in golf business realized that the greenkeepers were doing more than any other group to improve golf business operations.

The greenkeepers themselves saw that in their off, unpaid Mondays they were doing more for their employers' plants than the men in charge of industrial plants of the men for whom the greenkeepers worked.

In response to the urging of GOLF-DOM the greenkeepers changed the name of their organization to the Golf Course Superintendents Association and made use of a public relations identification that quickly was reflected in clearer recognition of their value to golf and increased salaries.

In modernizing themselves from greenkeepers to golf course superintendents the superintendents identified themselves as industrial executives who accounted for a nationwide improvement in grass beauty and knowledge. •

## FORTY YEARS AGO

Jess Sweetser became first U. S.-born player to win British Amateur.

First professional match between U. S. and Great Britain took place at Wentworth, England. Britain winning, 13-1.

Walter Hagen defeated Bob Jones, 11 and 10, in Florida exhibition.

Jones won second U. S. Open at Scioto and first British Open at Royal Lytham and St. Annes.