

# Superintendent or

*Although golf course superintendent is officially*

**By Bill Smart**

**A** few years before World War II, the National Assn. of Greenkeepers changed its name to the Golf Course Superintendents Assn. of America, thus changing the title of everyone in the trade from greenkeeper to golf course superintendent. In spite of the passage of over 20 years, the old

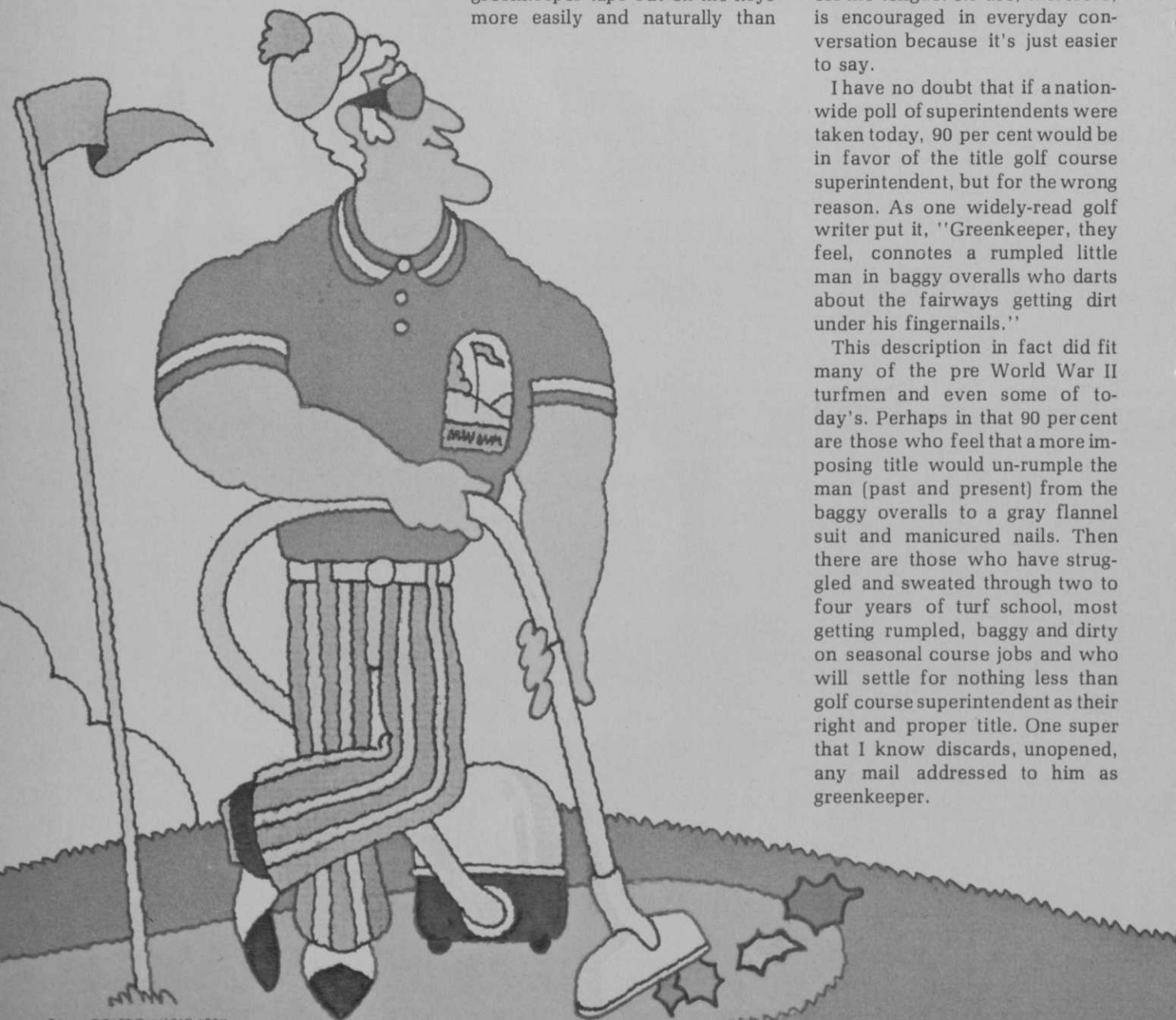
title still persists, to the delight of a few and the dismay of many.

Why has greenkeeper persisted instead of fading into the past along with the village blacksmith and the automobile crank? First and foremost, it continues because it is in both the written and the spoken language of the country. Any writer will admit that greenkeeper taps out on the keys more easily and naturally than

golf course superintendent—especially when it's coupled with an association's name such as Golf Course Superintendents Assn. of America or even my affiliate, the Hudson Valley Golf Course Superintendents Assn. By the same token, say the word greenkeeper in place of golf course superintendent and notice how lightly it trips off the tongue. Its use, therefore, is encouraged in everyday conversation because it's just easier to say.

I have no doubt that if a nationwide poll of superintendents were taken today, 90 per cent would be in favor of the title golf course superintendent, but for the wrong reason. As one widely-read golf writer put it, "Greenkeeper, they feel, connotes a rumpled little man in baggy overalls who darts about the fairways getting dirt under his fingernails."

This description in fact did fit many of the pre World War II turfmen and even some of today's. Perhaps in that 90 per cent are those who feel that a more imposing title would un-rumple the man (past and present) from the baggy overalls to a gray flannel suit and manicured nails. Then there are those who have struggled and sweated through two to four years of turf school, most getting rumpled, baggy and dirty on seasonal course jobs and who will settle for nothing less than golf course superintendent as their right and proper title. One super that I know discards, unopened, any mail addressed to him as greenkeeper.



# Greenkeeper-which?

*the title, the term greenkeeper still persists . . .*

Superintendent, The Powelton Club, Newburgh, New York

The remaining 10 percent who like the old term and the many who don't object to it have a broader view: Fundamentally the job has remained unchanged during the last half century—they are still the Keeper O' the Green (green meaning the whole course). While it may be true that supers must be more proficient in wider areas than the old-timers, basically the job functions are the same and have not disappeared as has the auto crank, or changed as the smithy was forced to do.

Greenkeeper is still a specific term for one trade (or profession if you wish) with no other value or use as a spoken word. The term superintendent, however, has been so widely adopted in other fields, that today there are literally thousands of superintendents of one kind or another: building superintendents, school superintendents, park superintendents, construction superintendents and on and on.

The one factor that has changed the image of the superintendent, if not the title, has been the end product, the golf courses of America. Thanks to the golf boom, brought about by increased leisure time, celebrity golfers, TV exposure and the adaptability of the game to any sex and age group, the golf course is the focal point of interest and admiration for millions of people. The course is where the supers' collective recognition begins and ends.

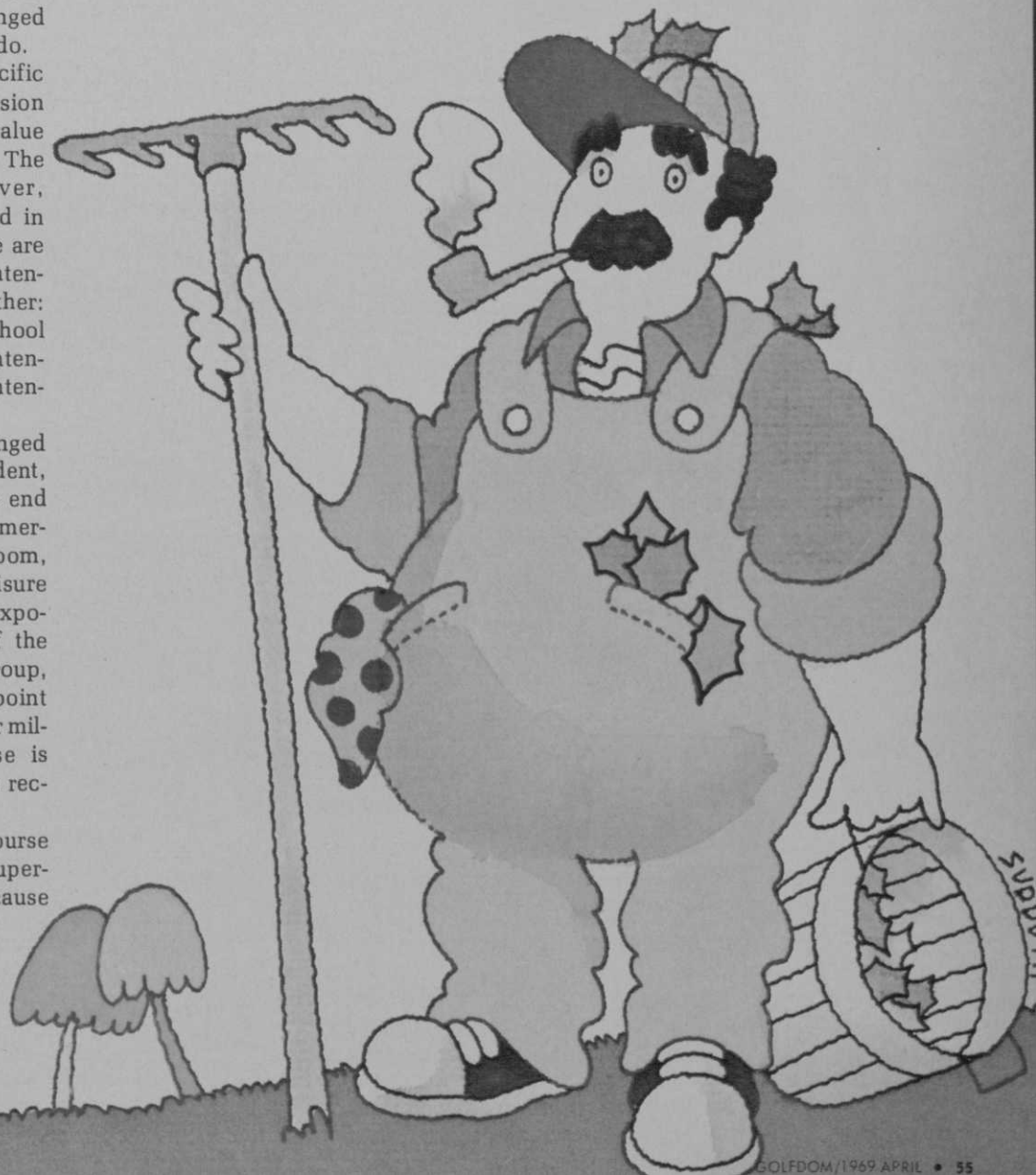
The Westchester (N.Y.) course that offered \$30,000 to one superintendent did not do so because

he dressed as well as the members or because his title was golf course superintendent. They did so because he maintained his course in such a manner that both it and the man commanded the respect of his membership.

I think we had something historically unique in the old term greenkeeper and in a sport where custom and tradition play such an important part, but it was dealt a

long, low blow in 1938 and hooked into the rough.

A lady golfer wrote a poem in honor of my dad, entitled "Ode to the Keeper O' the Green." Somehow I feel that it never would have been written if she had had to write: "Ode to the Golf Course Superintendent." □



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