

# you were there... what does it mean?

By Herb Graffis

Parading up and down the aisles at the Fontainebleau peering at what the technical guys have dreamed up over the past year, some of the nice guys who make that green turf stay green buttonholed me and filled me on some of the things that are on their minds and what is happening in the world of turf management. Can't say I remember who said what but it seems to me the comments came approximately in the following order and this is what seemed to be the ups and downs of the supers.

1. Anything that will do the job to a high standard and reduce labor requirements and expense is worth the money at a first class course.

2. Labor problems actually are causing nervous crackups of competent conscientious superintendents. Then other course troubles pop up.

3. Despite costs of modern watering and other expenses of progress, labor costs continue to be between 60 and 70 per cent of private and public courses all over the country, just as it was 30 years ago.

4. Chemicals and fertilizers and the turf scientists are coming up with better answers to their problems than the experts are to the labor recruiting, training and management headaches.

5. Golf course equipment is too well built; it lasts too long. Much of equipment 15 years or older in golf course maintenance is obsolete and could be thrown out and replaced with equipment saving

enough time and payroll to make it a bargain.

6. Heavier play calls for more and faster equipment.

7. Gang greens mowing is coming back. The almost forgotten Worthington Overgreen has some interesting successors of various types. Superintendents and architects will be arguing about this equipment. Eventually the players will awaken to the problem.

8. Looks as though crabgrass control is here; providing you have well-trained men to apply the right amount of the pre-emergent treatment at the right time at the right temperature. And *Poa-annua* control with the same "Ifs" looks possible.

9. Topdressing is here again.

10. If your watering system is more than 10 years old, it probably isn't what you want these days.

11. Newer, or even different, strains of grass rather than chemical or watering and drainage treatments may be the answers to fairway problems that continue to baffle superintendents.

12. Lend-lease of equipment to do important intermittent jobs at courses is growing fast. Mid-Atlantic area supers for several years have been borrowing and using equipment under a program organized by a few superintendents. They have been getting excellent results on their courses at savings.

Manufacturers who may worry about lend-lease beating them out of sales learn it's a demonstration that makes sales as each first class club wants its job done right now

—and weather doesn't allow much leeway in course operation. Smaller clubs which otherwise wouldn't have a chance to see the value of lend-leased course maintenance equipment are given ideas of improvement and buying.

That was the same sort of program that taught acceptance of modern agricultural machinery.

Many times we have been criticized by manufacturers for running stories and pictures of devices from ingenious supers that now have become almost standard equipment and which manufacturers later made, in quantity, and better.

13. Modern standard operating procedure calls for vacuum-cleaning, leaf sweeping, trash collection, neatness of course accessories and smart layout and construction of golf car paths just as much as for the comparatively modern procedures of aereating and verticutting. Golfers expect supers to present a scene where every prospect pleases.

14. Some of the newer equipment shown at the GCSAA exhibition at Miami Beach, superintendents said, looks very useful, but is too heavy for use on new courses, which seldom are finished before they are put into play. Unsettled naked fairways, erosion, bad contours and rocks aren't for the great new machinery.

Most of the new courses are short of money when they're opened and the equipment buying program is choked from the start.

15. There are so many elements in the act of buying golf course equipment, no wonder the programs are as loose as they are. The super, changing green chairmen and other officials, the officials of public courses and parks, the owners of fee courses and real estate development-golf projects, the architect and even members who think they are agricultural experts want to influence buying. That's an old story, but it's a story that confounds the vast problems involved in buying golf course maintenance equipment.

Good thing for GCSAA revenue from sale of exhibit space and for us in selling advertising space that buyer education in golf is an everlasting job. □