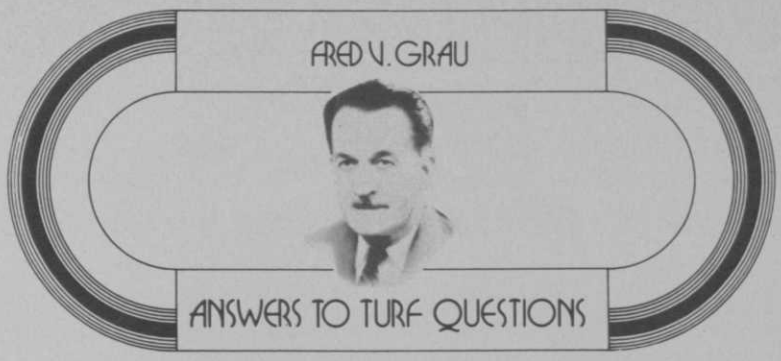

Not so new after all

In searching for a lively topic for these editorial comments, I chanced to come across a copy of GOLFDOM for July, 1936. That was my second year as extension agronomist for Penn State, some 35 years ago.

On page one there is a full-page advertisement for Worthington Mowers, Stroudsburg, Pa., which pictures the Overgreen Tractor with three putting green mower units. The long control handles allowed the greensman to walk without stubbing his toes. The price, complete, was $550, but the ad said, "Saved . . . $2,000."

Why did the Overgreen fall from grace? It seemed like such a good idea. It was best operated in a circular pattern which eliminated the "striping" that is so familiar when single units go back and forth. Did the units tend to "float" and allow thatch to develop? Long after the triplex idea was discarded the tractor units were being used to rake traps. Some still exist in private storage, probably in someone's attic.

Now, some 30 years later, the three-gang principle has been revived for mowing putting greens. The excellence of the engineering is evident on all three manufacturers' machines. The cost runs considerably in excess of $550, but no one complains because the new triplex machines save time and labor, both of which translate into money!

The modern triplex putting green mowers bring economies, but perhaps more important to many people, they permit the time-honored "striping" of the greens. The triplex is somewhat akin to the golf car. At first they were mistrusted; dire things were predicted for them; cost was too high. Now, for both outfits, we know that they are here to stay.

We salute the engineering genuis of the firms that have developed these remarkable machines for turfgrass.

Prices reasonable, hopefully

Q—*We are considering reseeding our fairways this fall to a Pennstar-Merion-Fylking-Pennfine combination. What do you know about the possible cost of such an undertaking? Are prices on the way up like most everything else or might they be a bit more reasonable?* *(Ohio)*

A—In very recent conversation with Mr. Herron, one of the top seedmen in the country, I learned that prices might be expected to be more reasonable (downward trend) this summer. One thing we cannot predict in advance is the potential of the 1971 crop of seed which now is ripening in the Pacific Northwest. I cannot in all conscience place a dollar value on your reseeding program—too many imponderables. You will be well advised to reduce seeding rate-per-acre to about half of that which you normally would budget for using ordinary bluegrass and ryegrass. The use of a modern scarifier-seeder is a must for a satisfactory job. And don't forget to include some slow-release nitrogen to lend assurance to your stand.

Q—*On our golf course the irrigation water has a high pH; as a result, our soils stay at pH levels of 7.4 to 7.9. We apply aluminum sulfate twice a year and fertilize almost exclusively with ammonium sulfate, but we cannot bring the soil pH any lower. What do you suggest?* *(Pennsylvania)*

A—From what I understand you have excellent turf, so I suggest that you keep right on doing what you've been doing. There is nothing wrong with pH values of 7.4 to 7.9 for turf. Research has showed that most cool-season grasses do well at even higher pH values, as long as the nutrient supply is adequate. I would see to it that the source of potash is sulfate of potash so that you maintain the sulfur levels.

Q—*Has anyone in your knowledge contemplated a system of "exchange superintendents," whereby there could be developed an exchange of knowledge and experience between nations? For instance, I would like to become more familiar with American grasses and techniques by working side-by-side with one of your top superintendents. Then I would accord an American superintendent the same privilege to work with me on my course. Any comment would be appreciated.* *(Australia)*

A—So far as I know you have opened a blank page in the golf book—but a page on which "International Cooperation" would make a fine heading. At the moment I can offer no opening, but you may be sure that this item will be read by many. Who knows, someone may become interested in your idea and offer to open negotiations. It gives me particular pleasure to give voice to your proposal and to help promote it.

With the current interest in Penncross in South Africa, there might be some interest there also in sending an "exchange superintendent" here to learn more about the grass.

Q—*Drip irrigation seems to be working very satisfactorily for a number of crops in the West and up to 60 per cent savings of water are reported. Does D.I. have a future for turfgrass?* *(Colorado)*

A—So far as we can tell, the drip method has not been adapted to turf, nor do we think it will be adopted soon. Off and on we've seen sub-irrigation trials here and there, but nothing of a practical solution has been devised. It seems very much worthwhile to pursue the subject hoping for a breakthrough. We need to find ways to conserve water because soon we will have a "balanced water economy"—*i.e.*, we will be using it as fast as it can be accumulated. □