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## Course Maintenance Costs Compared Over A 26 Year Period

By HERB GRAFFIS

"The figures tell the story of what has happened in golf course management. Maybe they also point to what is going to happen." This reflection of a supt. of a prominent midwestern metropolitan district club was made as he went over his annual operating costs from 1937-38 through the club's fiscal year, Nov., 1963—Oct., 1964.

In the 20 years reviewed, maintenance costs of the course ranged from \$12,600 to \$69,000. Both figures are exclusive of the supt's salary.

This supt's course almost invariably is in perfect condition. Last summer when many courses in the area were hard hit by disease, his course suffered only minimum damage. It gets continual heavy play from a demanding membership.

Budgets and actual figures, and various notations on the various annual reports show that the supt. generally has had understanding and cooperative green chairmen. It also is evident that the club has had a most resourceful and dedicated supt. as his performance in the lean years of the late '30s and during World War II, plainly reflect an able man doing the work of three, and ingeniously cutting corners to save money while preserving a high standard of course condition.

### Supt Never Got "Fat"

During the depression and war years, the supt. took a cut in a salary that had been \$2,400 a year. That sum is less than now is paid for labor in December when a foresighted work program keeps key men busy in an off month.

The labor portion (exclusive of the supt's salary) of 1937-38 maintenance costs was 43 per cent. For 1962-63, labor costs (not including the supt's sal-

ary) ran to approximately 64 per cent.

August was the big month for labor cost in 1938, amounting to \$1,200. August also was the top labor cost month of 1963 at \$5,200. The low month for wages in 1937 was November when \$150 was paid out. The December, 1962, payroll was lowest of the fiscal year, at \$2,500. The jump in winter costs over 25 years is accounted for not only by the increase from approximately 50 cents an hour to \$1.95 per hour in the wage rate, but the necessity of a winter work schedule enabling the club to keep good men steadily employed cleaning, repairing and painting equipment.

### Show Where Money Goes

In the earlier reports, "Grounds," "Tennis," and "Landscape," were separately listed. Now all outside work, except on the clubhouse and pool, is included in the maintenance expense roundup. In 1937-38 when the course expense was \$12,600, about \$1,200 was spent on tennis courts and \$1,200 on landscape.

Items reported in the 1937-38 maintenance expense summary:

Labor, fertilizer, seed, disinfectant (now listed as fungicides, herbicides etc.), equipment maintenance, equipment repair, electricity, water, phone (\$75 a year), ice (\$100-May thru Sept.) gas and oil and sand.

### Didn't Work Out

Going back beyond the period mentioned here the 1931-32 budget showed a venture in theory that can be laughed at now but was a headache then. The greenkeeper's salary was cut and a "turf expert" at \$50 a month was engaged. The "expert" did not perform expected miracles. The greenkeeper had to work long hours at back-breaking labor. The next year the club decided its own man was the "expert" it needed. So, he got his pay cut restored and the "expert" went elsewhere.

Today the budget and summary of expenses show "Renewal of Equipment" listed for depreciation and replacement as a regular expense to be considered taxwise. Such work as course alterations and other new jobs are listed in footnotes as capital improvements.

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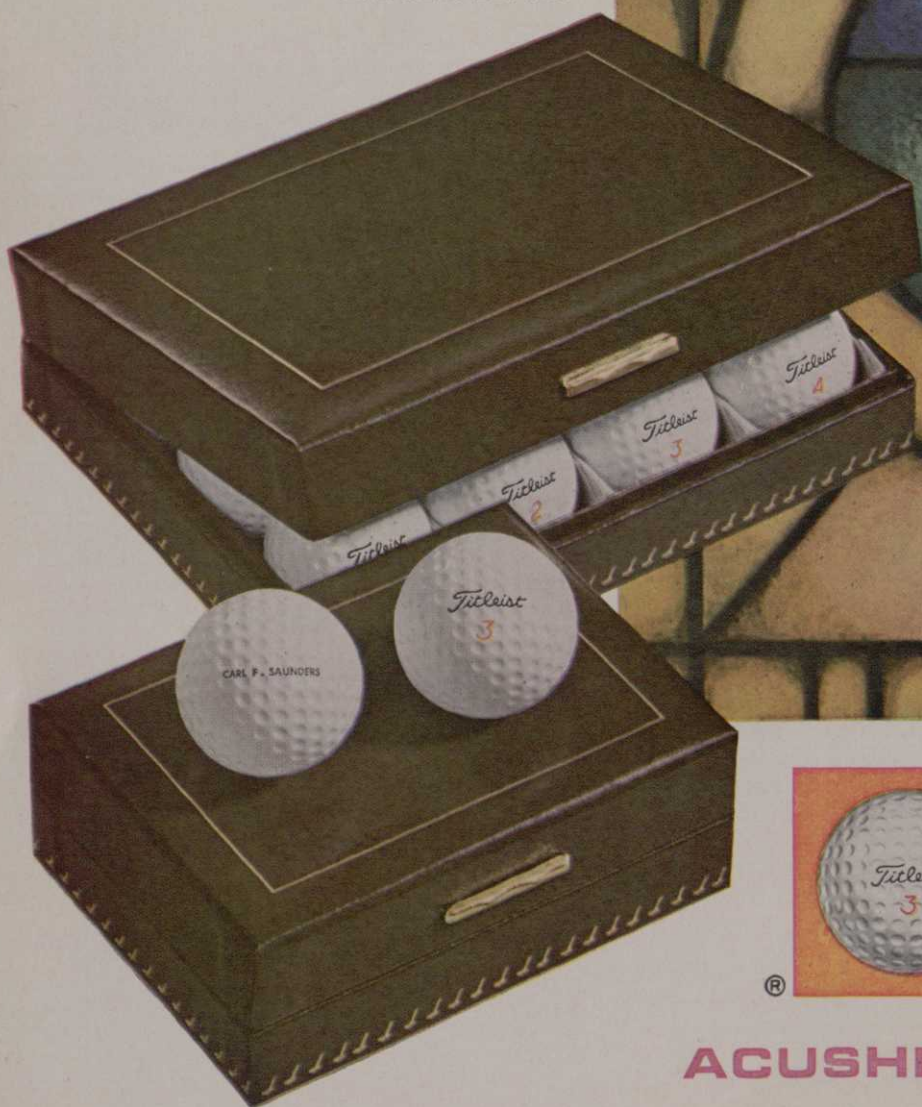


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Sunset Oaks' maintenance building is located in the lower right sections of this photo. Parking lot is between it and the clubhouse area.

## *Put Maintenance Building in the Front Yard*

**Gordon Brinkworth persuades officials at Sunset Oaks to build beauty into the superintendent's workshop and put it up in the vicinity of the clubhouse**

**BY DON CURLEE**

**T**hey built the maintenance building across the parking lot from the sumptuous clubhouse at Sunset Oaks GC in Rocklin, Calif., right where all the golfers and visitors can see it. Not only do they like what they see, but the facility has smoothed out the mechanics of maintenance for the supt., Bob Umland.

Designing an attractive maintenance facility and putting it where it can be appreciated was the brainstorm of Gordon Brinkworth, Umland's predecessor in the

supt's job and now assistant director of club operations for Sunset International Petroleum Corporation, owners and builders of Sunset Oaks and the surrounding 12,000-acre real estate development.

Brinkworth's promotion to the home office indicates that his ideas, including the radical design criteria for Sunset Oaks' maintenance building, are appreciated. He is now responsible for club operations at six similar golf-centered community developments being built or planned by Sunset, all of them in California. The Sun-

set-Whitney ranch, located about 15 miles from Sacramento and the site of Sunset Oaks, is the largest of the six. Plans call for it to eventually include four separate golf courses.

### Uphill Fight

But Brinkworth's idea about a location for the maintenance building was not always appreciated. "It was an uphill fight all the way," he recalls. The owners favored alternate sites toward the back of the property and away from the main access area. If they had held out against Gordon's persuasive pounding they could have scrapped the handsome exterior he specified and saved themselves some construction dollars.

Brinkworth offered solid arguments for his preference. One of the alternate sites would have necessitated constant equipment traffic past the pro shop. And, since cart repair is part of the maintenance performed by Uhland's crew, it seemed desirable to be within reach of the pro shop.

Placing the maintenance building on the front of the property, Brinkworth reasoned, would be encouragement for keeping it neat and orderly. Furthermore, the location is central. He took advantage of the luxury image that the entire complex seeks to create and won his argument that the shop should be in keeping with the rest of the development.

### Finished in Redwood

The result is a handsome structure of redwood siding and wide-spaced battens, 100 by 40 feet, with 20-foot-wide, covered shelters for the equipment extending 100 feet from each end in a U-shape. A six-foot redwood fence joins the two shelter fingers, enclosing a quadrangle and adding a measure of security to the entire area.

The shop building includes Uhland's comfortable office, air conditioned against the 100-degree plus summer weather. Two 16-foot overhead doors open from the quadrangle to the main shop area, which includes high bins with cart replacement parts, a spacious working area, fertilizer and chemical storage, clean rest rooms and work benches facing the windows.

The roofed equipment storage area is more than adequate for all the rolling stock and mowing and spraying machines

and can serve as a convenient outdoor work area whenever the weather allows — and that is most of the time. In the center of the rectangle is a concrete slab with a drain, an ideal wash-down area.

### Organized by Departments

The building is organized into departments. At one end are the hand tools, neatly hung against a peg board where they are handy for use. In an adjoining area mowers and other pieces of equipment are sharpened and repaired and other course equipment is serviced. Near this



Gordon Brinkworth (r), assistant club operations director for Sunset International, which built Sunset Oaks, dusts off sign bearing Bob Uhland's name that has just been installed opposite the superintendent's office.

is the cart repair center, with parts and accessories stored at one side in vertical bins. A second vertical bin holds spare and replacement irrigation equipment and fittings. These departments take up about two-thirds of the length of the building.

The other one-third is set apart by a partition and doorway and is used for storage. Most of the space is occupied by chemicals and fertilizer, but course maintenance tools, equipment and hoses and spare parts are also kept here.

Entrance to the courtyard from the outside is by two gates at either end of the



Golf cars, mowers, tractors, etc. are stored in roofed sheds located within the maintenance department compound.

building. Uhland's office is just inside the gate that faces the course and the clubhouse. Here he can feel that he occupies something resembling a control tower, in a position to see everybody who comes and goes. Although his office opens to the outside only, it is joined to the main garage by a sliding window.

Brinkworth has estimated the value of the shop equipment at approximately \$8,000. Course equipment represents an additional \$35,000, and the cost of the building, the roofed equipment sheds and the fence total about \$28,000.

At the other end of the building is a "back gate" access to the refuse pile and to the bins of sand, aggregate and bulk mixes.

Brinkworth, who describes the maintenance unit as, "very adequate," adds, "I haven't been on a course yet that wouldn't envy our setup." With almost sympathetic lament he says, "Most of them expend their funds before they get to the maintenance building."

#### Not Free of Problems

Sunset Oaks, though, is not without its maintenance problems. "In the first place," Brinkworth points out, "the course is not consistent with conventional design, inasmuch as it makes allowance for a good percentage of the development's 3,500 residential building lots to adjoin it." Course architect William Bell was urged to let the holes ramble as much as practical so the building sites could be tucked around them wherever possible.

This feature in itself has complicated maintenance in that it requires turf management on about 40 acres that are not actually part of the course, but have esthetic value to homeowners. At one time Uhland's crew was responsible for maintaining the elaborate landscaping that adorns the main access road to the real estate development more than a mile from the maintenance building. He was able to chop his crew from 33 to 13 when that responsibility was transferred.

Perhaps nature's toughest obstacle for Uhland to overcome is the soil, mostly decomposed granite. Water penetration is almost impossible, and the two evils between which Uhland has to choose are dried out or drowned out spots on his fairways. Supts. who have been blessed with good soil would hesitate to trade places with Uhland because of this.

"Ten or 15 years ago," Brinkworth says, "if I had seen the soil where Sunset Oaks now stands I would have condemned it for golf course use." But as Gordon points out there has been a forced swing to construction on poor soil, and the need to use inferior water supplies — in some cases sewer effluent.

*(Continued on page 74)*



Bob Uhland holds handle of mower while a maintenance department employee makes a minor adjustment.



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# Look Up Occasionally; See What's Going On

By **ROBERT V. MITCHELL**

Supt., Sunset CC, St. Louis, Mo.

Many supts. work so hard that they don't take time to attend monthly meetings of their groups or read the ads and promotion literature put out by suppliers. If they were to do both they would make their jobs a bit easier.

In the last three years I have started using a half-dozen products that are supposed to inhibit growth when desired, or promote it where wanted. All have given medium to good results, but most important have freed several maintenance department employees for jobs that are more important than such things as weed cutting. In addition, we have purchased a utility vehicle that is used almost exclusively in the fairway spraying operation. This has made the difference between finishing the work with comparative ease and never getting it finished on time. A new edger that is used for keeping the traps groomed produces about the same result. I probably wouldn't have bought either of these pieces of equipment or the supplies if I hadn't read literature describing what they can do.

As for monthly meetings of GCSA chapters, a fellow isn't smart to pass them up. He usually brings home an idea or two that he can use. Just this spring I found out that some supts. preserve their hoses by looping half-hitches around the ends and letting the loop drag rather than one end or the other. At another meeting I learned that a brush made of street brooms and attached to the front end of the Park Special we use for the operation, does a fine job of working in top-dressing.

I suggest, too, that supts. keep an eye on the turf research work that is going on in their sections and for that matter, in others. Many different types of Bermuda are under observation at our Missouri Valley GCSA plots. One of these may prove to be sturdier and more disease tolerant than U3, which doesn't hold up as well as we'd like. If that happens, our jobs will be just a little easier for it.

# 6

## More for the Maintenance Idea Hopper

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*Keeping an eye on turf research work . . . Getting help from kids on cleanup jobs . . . Cutting down on employees' walking time . . . Improving drainage . . . All add up to better ways of getting things done out on the course*

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*Some other ideas that supts. have used in improving operations at their clubs were described in August GOLFDOM (page 23).*