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CIRCLE NO. 101

Golfdom

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BY LARRY AYLWARD

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OCTOBER

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Corpus Christi, Texas
www.gcsaa.org

16-20 ITODA Annual Meeting
St. Thomas, U.S. Virgin Islands
www.itoda.org

16-17 GCSAA Seminar: Plant Nutrition and Fertilizers
Tamuning, Guam
www.gcsaa.org

21-27 23rd International Irrigation Show
New Orleans
www.irrigation.org

22 Northern California GCSA and Sierra Nevada GCSA's Joint Meeting
Lincoln, Calif.
www.gcsaa.org/cgcsa

22 GCSAA Seminar: Financial Essentials for the Superintendents
San Diego
www.gcsaa.org

22-23 Eastern North Carolina Turfgrass Association's Fishing Tournament and Meeting
Pine Knoll Shores, N.C.
www.cgcsa.org

24-26 Irrigation Technical Conference
New Orleans
www.irrigation.org

NOVEMBER

2-5 Georgia GCSA's Annual Meeting
Biloxi, Miss.
www.ggcsa.com

4 GCSA of New England's Monthly Meeting
Whitinsville, Mass.
www.gcsane.org

4-5 Northern California GCSA's Superintendents Institute
Boulder Creek, Calif.
www.gcsaa.org/cgcsa

4-5 Northern California GCSA's Holiday Party
Monterey, Calif.
www.gcsaa.org/cgcsa

4 Karsten Turf Challenge
Scottsdale, Ariz.
www.cactusandpine.com

4 GCSAA Seminar: Developing a High-Performance, People-Oriented Golf Course Maintenance Staff
Hudson, Ohio
www.gcsaa.org

4 GCSAA Seminar: Golf Course Safety, Security and Risk Management
Little Rock, Ark.
www.gcsaa.org

5 GCSAA Seminar: Advanced Weed Management
Bowling Green, Ky.
www.gcsaa.org

5 GCSAA Seminar: Annual Bluegrass Management
Novi, Miss.
www.gcsaa.org

5 GCSAA Seminar: Sustainable Golf Course Landscape Design – Enhancing Aesthetics, Function and Maintenance
Little Rock, Ark.
www.gcsaa.org

6-7 Kansas GCSA's Seminar and Annual Meeting
Andover, Kan.
www.kgcsa.org

6 GCSAA Seminar: Maximizing Turfgrass Disease Control
Andover, Kan.
www.gcsaa.org

7-8 Intermountain GCSA's Annual Conference
St. George, Utah
www.igcsa.org

7-8 Central California GCSA's Annual National Meeting
Tehachapi, Calif.
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Let us know about your events. Send information to Frank Andorka at 7500 Old Oak Blvd., Cleveland, 44130. Fax information to 440-891-2675 or e-mail to fandorka@advanstar.com.

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Going Postal

■ WE'VE GOT MAIL

Reader Reacts to 9/11

Was there a silver lining to 9/11? If there was one, it was the coming together of our nation in the name of the more than 2,000 people who died and the thousands of people whose lives were affected by the tragedy. Maybe we've learned to care more.

The other silver lining is that 9/11 probably led to the discovery of all the financial tomfoolery that has been going on for decades. Maybe people are beginning to see the connection between people, money and repression. Is there a difference between the people with the biggest bank accounts running the world vs. the people with the biggest muscles running the world? The answer is, no, in my opinion.

So what about golf? Ten to 20 years of golf's greatest growth just occurred. More money was poured into the game during that time than at any other time in history. And what did the greenkeepers end up with? I'm sure studies would show greenkeepers lost ground financially.

It's my hope that [as a result of the current economic situation], the people who sacrifice their bodies to maintain and improve golf courses will move closer to the spotlight and receive some sort of recognition and the proper compensation that every individual should receive to live properly. I know I will do all I can to see that happen and keep encouraging the GCSAA to help greenkeepers.

**Bob Taeger, CGCS
Village CC
Lompoc, Calif.**

Thoughts on "The Other Half"

I would like to respond to the article entitled, "The Other Half" (July).

I've had many different jobs in the golf industry while trying to provide for my family. I can sympathize with all superintendents and their workloads. I was a superintendent in the transition zone through the dreadful summer of 1995, and I worked countless hours to keep the course in shape and/or alive.

Having completed the task that summer, I ended up in the hospital with a stress-related illness, while my wife tended to our newborn child. Financial difficulties for the course began the following year, and I was out of a job. Was [my hard work] worth it? No.

Please try to keep your priorities straight. Family and religion must come before our jobs. Missing your children grow up and forgetting the obligations of Sunday (so the golfing public can enjoy the Augusta experience) have helped put our profession where it is today.

**David Schingel
Project Manager/Agronomist
Lohmann Golf Designs
Chicago**

I hope that players at clubs read this so they know that the folks that keep their courses in such great shape also have families.

A big thank you to those people would go a long way.

**Bud Welch
Golf Professional
Rock Hill, S.C.**

Feel like going postal? We want to hear from you. You can e-mail your letters to Frank Andorka at fandorka@advanstar.com, fax to 440-891-2675 or send them via snail-mail to: 7500 Old Oak Blvd., Cleveland, OH 44130. Make sure to include your name and phone number for verification. Letters may be edited for length or relevance.

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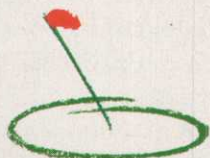
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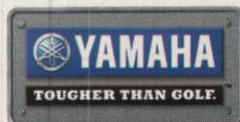
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SOLUTIONS, IDEAS & OPINIONS

So I'm standing in the middle of a huge corporate greenhouse in Germany attempting to converse with a TV broadcaster from China whose cameraman speaks a little French.

A French farm magazine writer attempts to translate for me. I ask Ms. Wu, "Have you ever played golf before?"

After two minutes of furious back-and-forth between the three of them, the French journalist turns to me and says, "She say she like American football very much." So much for overcoming the language barrier.

The occasion for this surreal cultural exchange was a tour of Syngenta facilities in and around Zurich, Switzerland, for agricultural journalists from around the world. I was tapped for the trip because they wanted to bring in someone from the turf media and, just by chance, I'm currently the president of the Turf & Ornamental Communicators Association. (Finally, volunteering for an association leadership post pays off!)

Despite the fact that turf and golf are a relatively small part of Syngenta's — or any other big crop protection company's — global focus, the trip was nonetheless fascinating. Here are a few highlights and observations:

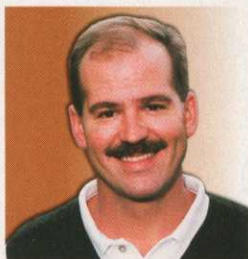
■ Even though Syngenta's overall crop protection sales were down 2 percent in the first half of the fiscal year, professional products, which represent only about 10 percent of the company's global revenues, were a bright spot, jumping 7 percent. When I started a question to CEO Michael Pragnell by saying, "Even though you probably don't wake up in the morning thinking about the U.S. turf market..." he interrupted me with a smile and said, "Oh yes we do." In short, our little piece of the pie is relatively profitable and growing at a time when ag sales are down or flat worldwide.

■ During a tour of Syngenta's massive research campus at Stein, Germany, we learned that chemical companies typically sift through more than 200,000 compounds to bring one new one to the market.

It's largely done with computer modeling to speed the process, but our lab coat-clad

Tour Illuminates Chemical Business

BY PAT JONES



DID YOU KNOW

MOST COMPANIES

SORT THROUGH

MORE THAN 200,000

COMPOUNDS TO

BRING A NEW ONE

TO MARKET

German tour guide, who spoke pretty good English, still described it as "looking for a needle in a hay heap."

■ The next time someone questions the safety of the pesticides you use, remember these figures I heard during the tour: Before a chemical is registered by EPA, it's been through at least 10,000 individual tests over 10 years at an average cost of \$150 million. Concerned golfers or soccer moms should rest assured that this is no fly-by-night process.


■ Meridian, the new insecticide product Syngenta has been trying to bring to market for some time, is still being held up in the United States and Europe for "Risk Cup" reasons. The Risk Cup is the new, ridiculously complex standard for pesticide registration set up under FQPA. The company is optimistic but it's still unable to say for sure when Meridian will be available in the United States. Curiously, the only country to approve Meridian for turf is Japan, which has historically been very slow to register anything.

■ On the nonbusiness side of the trip, I was a bit shocked at how many Europeans view President Bush as a warmonger. One Irish journalist was in my face for an hour about how Bush is leading the world into nuclear Armageddon.

■ If you go to Zurich, you sure as heck better like veal. These people must have starved during the Mad Cow disease scare.

All in all, it was an excellent and educational adventure. I'm hopeful that other companies will see the value of these tours, particularly if their factory is in, say, the Virgin Islands.

Pat Jones is the publisher/editorial director of Golfdom. He can be reached at 440-891-3126 or pjones@advanstar.com



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CIRCLE NO. 105

I often hear that being a superintendent is like being the head football coach of an NFL team. You're glorified when your course is in top shape or your team is in first place in early December. But you're vilified if your course is in lousy shape or your football team is in the basement come playoff time. The bottom line: Your job is never safe and you're prone to being fired more than in other professions.

Nobody knows that more than Fenn Clarke, former superintendent of Statesville CC in Statesville, N.C. He was fired *twice* from the same course in less than two years.

In November 2000, Clarke was fired near the end of his 10th year as superintendent of the track. "I was told they wanted to bring in someone who could take the course to the next level," the soft-spoken Clarke said of the reasoning for his firing.

"To the next level," of course, is the standard and murky cliché a person uses today to explain the reason for firing someone. Of course, the one doing the firing rarely defines "the next level." Clarke said that occurred in his case.

Fortunately for Clarke, the members of Statesville CC rallied around him. More than 250 people, about half the club's members, signed a petition to reinstate him. Clarke, inspired by the support, fought for his job. Three days before Christmas, he won it back. Clarke felt redeemed and vindicated. It was a wonderful life, indeed.

But two months ago, it all came crashing down again. Clarke was fired for a second time and for a different reason. This time Clarke said he was told that the course looked fine, but he was being released for not completing other projects on time. This time, Clarke decided not to fight to save his job. He knew it was time to move on.

Clarke didn't rip the people who fired him. For the most part, he humbly accepted his termination.

Clarke was fired on a Friday. I reached him at home the following Tuesday. He was down, but not out. He said the weekend after his firing was good. His stress level decreased, and he was happy to be away from the course. But

Down But Not Out After Being Fired

BY LARRY AYLWARD



"MY CONFIDENCE IS HIGHER THAN IT HAS EVER BEEN," SUPERINTENDENT SAYS

Monday morning came hard. A working person is supposed to have a place to go then. Clarke didn't, and it hurt.

"Oh man," he said faintly, followed by a deep sigh. "I have that unemployment feeling."

That "unemployment feeling" is fearful and lonely. The "unemployment feeling" is dangerous and can drag you down. It can make you bitter and feel like a failure. It's painful and can depress you.

Clarke is aware of the damage the "unemployment feeling" can cause. He's careful not to let his myriad emotions get the best of him.

It's strange, but it's comforting to Clarke to know he's in a business where superintendents are often fired even though they're capable employees and individuals. Even though Clarke says he feels beaten, he doesn't doubt himself or his ability to grow grass.

"My confidence is higher than it has ever been," he says. "I was in a game I couldn't win."

Clarke chuckles when he repeats what he was told as the reason for his second dismissal: that the conditioning of the course had nothing to do with his firing.

"That makes me feel a lot better," he says. "I can leave on terms I can be proud of as far as the golf course goes. That's all I want to be evaluated on anyway."

Clarke describes himself as a no-frills superintendent who doesn't like to play politics. He wonders if that philosophy hindered him in his dealings with members. But he has no regrets about being forthright.

"You can get a superintendent that feeds you BS all day long or you can get one who grows grass," Clarke says. "I just grow grass."

Amen.

Editor Larry Aylward can be reached at 440-891-2770 or laylward@advanstar.com.