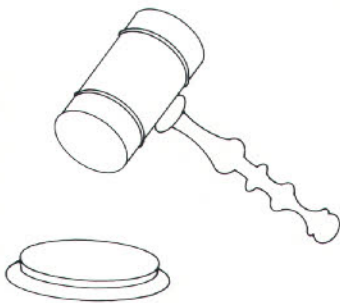


President's Message



By Bill Roberts

I have a file in my desk at the office labelled "Groundwater". I started this file about five years ago when, with increasing regularity, I would read accounts in our local newspaper about a growing concern relative to nitrate concentrations in groundwater in the Central Sands of Wisconsin. This concern gradually, and then quite suddenly, developed into an anxiety over the concentration of aldicarb in that same groundwater.

I've used this same file as a focal point for newspaper clippings dealing with the "Agent Orange-2,4,5-T" debate including the current "off-shoot" that has brought intense scrutiny to 2,4-D, an effective, proven and, now, questionable product. The file has continued to grow thicker with industry news and media examination of Daconil and Diazinon. We've seen Cadmium threatened and we've seen Acti-Dione vanish in recent months. Thiram may or may not require a "re-entry" qualification and speaking of "re-entry", I had to start a second file in order to keep abreast of the controversy in Wauconda, Illinois and the battle over "posting" and "pre-application notification". Even Wisconsin's own Milorganite has been subjected to a careful examination in the media and, in the long view, may become an even better product because of it.

Now we, as Golf Course Superintendents, have met our part of this challenge. We have, time and time again, produced aesthetically pleasing playing conditions on golf courses used by some 15 million players each year and we have done it with a sense of environmental responsibility personified by continuing education and skilled decision-making balanced in terms of cost-benefit.

We have fulfilled our roles as disciplined environmentalists by developing new, safer application techniques in the field and transferring a wealth of accumulated knowledge into Integrated Pest Management programs which have impacted the entire turfgrass industry. We have trained our staffs. We have designed and installed safe storage, loading and disposal structures and have made the golfing public aware of the intricacies of golf course management because we believe it is in everyone's best interest to communicate such information.

We have accepted the scrutiny of the scientific community and cooperated with various regulatory agencies as new knowledge regarding these materials has come to light. When products, by a process of valid scientific research, have been found to be unsafe, we have insisted that safe products be developed as alternatives and we have abandoned the harmful for the responsible. We respect precise, developed, insightful discovery and we utilize such a discipline to everyone's benefit.

But then...we run into someone named Bob Condor, who has written something called "Killer Courses" for something else called "GOLF" magazine. Mr. Condor, whose credentials in either, or both, the scientific community and/or the golf turf industry, have yet to be established, uses space in a national golf magazine to offer such precise observations as "Daconil 2787, a common fungicide sprayed weekly at the Army-Navy course to control brown spots on greens". Brown spots? Brown spots on greens? I have yet to meet a Golf Course Superintendent who programs his pesticide program to control "brown spots".

Further, Mr. Condor cites an exam-

ple that includes "a chemical similar to Daconil" that "allegedly killed a Florida family after it was used to fumigate their house". Not only has the specific cause escaped Mr. Condor thereby negating any potential benefit in terms of preventing such a tragedy in the future but he has also, somehow, made the dubious correlation between a "closed environment" such as a house and an open golf course and between a "chemical similar to Daconil" and Daconil.

Mr. Condor goes on to quote a certain Dr. Samuel Epstein, environmental toxicologist at the University of Illinois Medical Center. According to Dr. Epstein, "a golf course is essentially a hazardous site, and it's time golfers realize they are captive to an industry that is indifferent and ignorant about public health."

Excuse me...Pardon me...Just a damn minute, Mr. Condor and Dr. Epstein, but, how dare you accuse me and my fellow professionals of such "indifference and ignorance"? I have enumerated the on-going measures, the training that we, as Golf Course Superintendents, pursue. Formal education as background does not imply ignorance. Years of practical experience will not allow for indifference. Mr. Condor, your premise is insulting. The Golf Course Superintendent has a deep respect for the land he is entrusted with and a genuine affection for the people who use it. Those two feelings do not allow for "ignorance and indifference".

"Writers" and "toxicologists" who make unsubstantiated charges, whether directly or by implication, are guilty of so much more. By choosing the unscientific, the undisciplined, the exaggerated route, one becomes associated with irresponsibility and disservice and that choice is the one made by the author of the article in question.

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