

DALLAS CONFERENCE MERITS "AVERAGE" MARKS

By Monroe S. Miller and Chad D. Eberhardt

It was an on-time, comfortable, even flawless flight from Madison to Dallas. The excitement of attending the annual GCSAA conference is something that remains with me, despite having gone through that gate 21 consecutive times before. The smooth trip seemed a good omen for the 1994 program.

Luck changed shortly after I was in a cab riding from the airport to the hotel GCSAA assigned me.

"Where y'all headin'?" the driver asked me in a drawl that made Jim Latham sound like he'd been a Badger his entire life.

"Dallas Grand," I replied. There was a long silence which quickly raised my suspicion.

Finally a reply came. "What y'all stayin' there for Pardner?"

It was a good question, one that ground on my nerves the entire time I was in Dallas. More on that later.

Declaring an event "average" means that some aspects were better than previous years, some things were worse and some were, well...average. Not good. Not bad. Just plain average. Here is a sketch of two individual opinions and impressions.

EXCELLENT

1. The Dallas Convention Center is not new or fancy or attractive. But it is big, functional and complete. Especially appreciated by me was a show floor open one end to the other, a much better arrangement than having machinery shown in several different rooms. The classrooms were really good, and the theater was an excellent venue for several presentations I attended there.

2. The Sixth Floor of the Texas School Book Depository. People about my age and older can almost always tell you

where they were and what they were doing on November 22, 1963 at about 12:30 p.m. The one thing Dallas most likely will always be known for is the Kennedy assassination. Although nothing to be proud of, Dallas has done an excellent job of presenting and preserving the sixth floor of the Texas Book Depository, the grassy knoll, and the surrounding area of Commercial, Main and Elm and Houston streets. The events of the sad day are well presented, as are the details of the subsequent investigations. It was quite a moving experience for me, and all others who visit the historical site, regardless of feelings about Kennedy's presidency or personal conduct. The Dallas City Hall where Jack Ruby shot Lee Harvey Oswald was across the street from our hotel.

3. The Environmental General Session with Dr. Burt Kross found an attentive (worried?) albeit small audience present to hear the preliminary results of the GCSAA pesticide exposure study. Why is it so few manage to attend a meeting so important? It was embarrassing, again, like last year. I mean, this issue is a matter of life and death, literally.

I took several things away from Dr. Kross' lecture, some of them troubling:

a. golf course superintendents (based on a group that died between 1970 and 1992) had higher rates of cancer overall than the general population.

b. incidence of lung cancer in that group was higher than in the general population.

c. the same was true for non-Hodgkin's and large intestine cancer.

d. brain cancer incidence was also higher.

e. prostate cancer was higher, but linked to possible machinery operation.

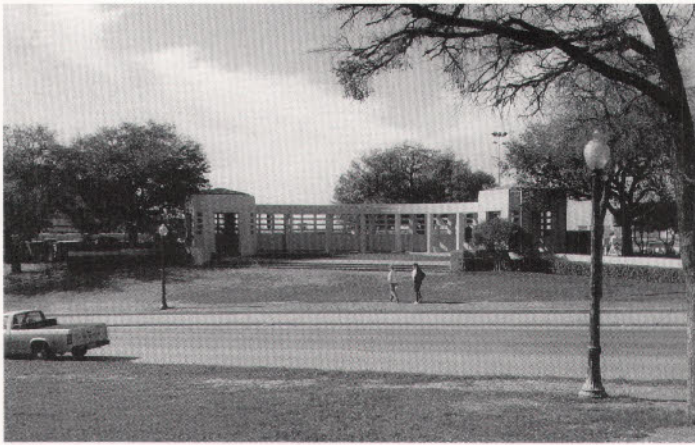
f. RESULTS DO NOT APPLY TO PLAYERS because of exceedingly low exposure rates.



Lee Harvey Oswald fired the shot that killed John Kennedy from the second from the top—sixth floor—window on right side of Texas Book Depository as you see it here.



Dallas City Hall building where Jack Ruby killed Lee Harvey Oswald.



The grass knoll today looks just like it did in 1963.

Clearly we must follow Kross' advice to expand the breadth of this study and continue it until we really know what is happening.

4. Equipment show is always excellent, and it was again this year. How could it be otherwise?

5. The weather was between ten and fifteen degrees above normal. 76°F. Sunny. Warm. No rain. Need I say more?

ABOVE AVERAGE

1. Selection of Byron Nelson as the 1994 Old Tom Morris Award recipient. I had a chance to visit with him at the Bentgrass Research Inc. breakfast, and he is a real gracious and grand gentleman. He was happy to give his autograph to any who wanted it.

2. Opening Session was pretty good. It was a fairly short and to-the-point affair this year, the way it should be. It is amazing how quickly things can move if you cut out the boasting, self-promotion and hot air. Zig Ziglar was no Terry Bradshaw or Bart Starr, but he was better than nearly anyone else I can recall. Good choice.

3. Dallas skyline at night is beautiful, if viewed from a safe setting.

4. Banquet and show were really good. The food was great, if you ate a big meal just before attending. The head table presentations were shorter than in many years past, and that is wonderfully good news. Byron Nelson was super, including his comment after reading a letter from Bill Clinton—"maybe if he keeps writing like that I might think 'bout voting for him someday." Crystal Gayle is a first class entertainer and gave a very good "banquet" performance. The Oak Ridge Boys were especially good at keeping the crowd involved throughout. Both mixed their music well, suiting even those who do not like hillbilly music. Overall, it was an enjoyable four hours.

AVERAGE

1. Education program had a few highlights, a few lowlights and a whole lot between. Since it is impossible to attend everything offered, I had to rely on friends for additional input. Same thing—average to mediocre overall although some lectures were excellent. I won't embarrass the bad lectures, although I should so they aren't invited back. But here were a few of the really good ones—Frank Rossi, Randy Kane, Bruce Clark, Bruce Branham, Randy Witt and Jim Beard (although he had little new data compared to last year).

2. Convention Center Chow was better than some places we've been and worse than others. Prices were gross as always.



Welcome sign from the huge Dallas Convention Center.

3. Here is a radical proposal: since the best part of the USGA Green Section Conference is always those parts presented by the agronomists, maybe Jim Snow and the rest of the staff should, some year, feature only these guys. Forget the obligatory talk by the GCSAA president, the PGA Tour player, and everybody else. They nearly always drag the program down. A half day with the best and most practical golf turf agronomists in the world would be tough to beat. We'd be relieved. And I think it would get the program back up into the EXCEPTIONAL category. The one exception I'd make would be the inclusion of a speaker KNOWN to be good and relevant.

BELOW AVERAGE

1. Some of the specific topics selected were absolutely foolish. Who in the world could care about a bunch of the subjects covered escapes me. I won't be specific. These were obviously excuses for some people to appear on the program, for whatever dumb reason. Politics maybe? Resume building? Poor reasons, whatever they were.

2. Shuttle service was poor. Took too long. Biggest hotels were often at the end of some routes and buses were nearly full when they arrived. Lots of griping about the shuttle service, and it was justified. How long and how much experience does it take to get simple things like this ironed out? Two lifetimes?

3. Dallas may be a good business city, but it isn't anything great for visitors. Spouses, too often, had nothing to do. And when locals tell you "don't even think about walking anywhere after 5 p.m.," you know this is a place you'd rather not be in. Hopefully the first time will be the last time.

(Continued on page 30)

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UNACCEPTABLE

1. Hotel selected for some members (including me) was irresponsible. There is no reason to include a dirty, poorly maintained facility on the list of hotels GCSAA assigns members to stay in. Not only were several of them fleabags, they were located in areas patently unsafe. Good God—some members had their kids with them. One hotel was located in the middle of what one resident said was the “meanest one block area downtown.”

I have a plan for next year. An officer or director of the GCSAA should be assigned to stay in every hotel a member might be assigned to stay in. That would put an end to closed eye choices. I can promise that the dump given me would not house an officer or director or staff member.

With a staff of 75 in Lawrence, it should not be too tough to scout the facilities in the host city, figure out the acceptable and unacceptable housing locations, and then put an elected board member in each.

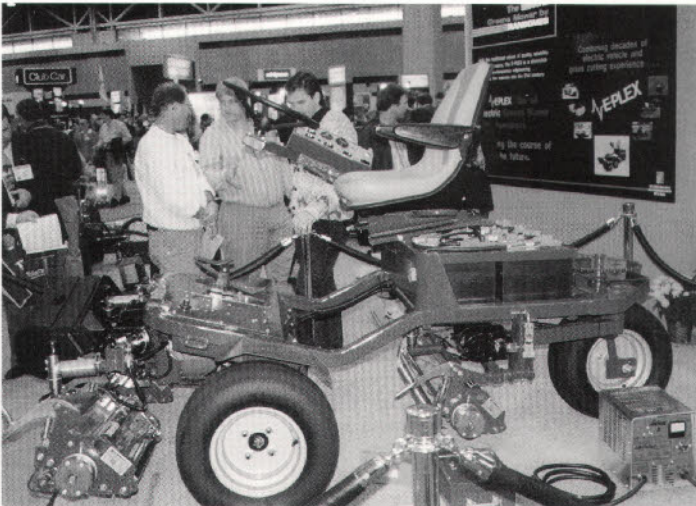
This hotel furor only amplifies the feeling some members have that too many GCSAA leaders are totally out of touch. And again, no O/D or staff were seen in any but the best and most expensive. Members feel, “if its good enough for me, it ought to be good enough for you.”

OF WORTHY NOTE

1. TWO new electric greens mowers were unveiled—Ransomes and Jacobsen. They shocked the turf world by showing the latest technology. Who knows—the days of hydraulic oil leaks from triplex greens mowers may soon be over.

2. Less talk about green rollers than I expected. I’m thinking some common sense is rising to the top here. Maybe these machines are destined for the back corner of the cold storage building, seldom to be seen again.

3. Rubberneck report: In addition to Byron Nelson, I also had a chance to meet Ben Crenshaw.



Side view of the Ransomes electric greens mower shows the simplicity offered by such a power plant.



Evidence that we were meeting down South in Dixie!

4. More and more bio controls are becoming available.

5. The environment and environmental responsibility as the two relate to golf are clearly more than a trend, as the case should be.

6. Best quote I read about Texas is attributed to General Philip Sheridan back in August of 1866 when he rode across the state on a horse: “If I owned Texas and all hell, I would rent out Texas and live in hell.”

7. Jim and Lois Latham are really going to retire and they own a lot near Whitley, Texas. It is only 15 minutes from Jim’s hometown of Hillsboro. Fitting that his last “official” GCSAA conference was in his home state.

8. I drove past the home of the Dallas Cowboys in Irving on the way to Dallas. Underwhelming; pales in comparison to Lambeau Field. It really does look like they forgot to finish the structure—no roof over the field! 🙄



Hot item—Jacobsen’s new Electric Greens King.

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