



It's the Season for Reading

By Mark Keinert



When do you find the time or make the time to read and get caught up with the literature? Are you comfortable taking time out of your day to sit back in your office and read? Or do you find that there are too many distractions at work to concentrate on the technical stuff? If you are like me, most of the items I want to read rest in a nice messy pile beside my desk just waiting for a cold winter day in the "off season." This is one reason that I enjoy being a golf course superintendent in Wisconsin; we have an off season to confirm by reading all that we have heard about through conversation with other superintendents and sales reps.

Reading is the most important of the three R's for golf course managers. But, for me, it is the most neglected. I find that it is just too difficult to read during the working day when there is so much happening out on the golf course. Even on those infrequent "rainy days" there are too many distractions coming from out in the shop to allow for uninterrupted reading. I recall a letter that I received from Jim Latham, the former United States Golf Associations Green Section Agronomist and true friend of the WSGCA, when responding to a question that I posed him regarding career paths, responded by saying "read my friend, read." One of my earlier positions as golf course superintendent for a "union shop" allowed only supervisory responsibilities; it provided me with ample time to read. As my reading IQ grew, so did my waistline as I gained over twenty pounds due to the "desk job" that I had.

I feel that the most successful of superintendents make time for reading during the course of the golf season. But it is always of question of "when". In my case, and I'm not kidding, when I tell you that the temperature in my office is well over ninety

degrees on an average summer day; this is not conducive to good study skills. I'm aware of colleagues who spend an hour or two during Saturday or Sunday just to keep even with the pile of reading materials that fill to their file baskets. There are still others who make time even during the cold days of winter, to venture to the office to commit one or two hours of time for reading. Others take time at the end of the day, after the distractions of a day's work are completed and the crew has left.

Many of us find that we have a large pile of unread letters and magazines stacked next to our easy chair. If you are like me, it is too easy to get caught up in some television show and that stack gets taller and wider. I have found that reading in bed does not work for me; too quickly my eyelids get heavy. As I have gotten older,

I have found that during periods of insomnia, I have been able to catch up on some articles as the wall clock sounds a dismal 4 a.m.

Oh how I wish I had the courage to throw away those unsolicited pieces of "junk mail." One of my modest resolutions for 1997 will be to restrict further my television viewing and devote that time to reading. I hope to read more than just the professional stuff, something light and enjoyable to keep my reading skills sharp. I have always wanted to invest some time and money into taking a speed reading course or two. Maybe this is something in professional development that the WGCSA could offer.

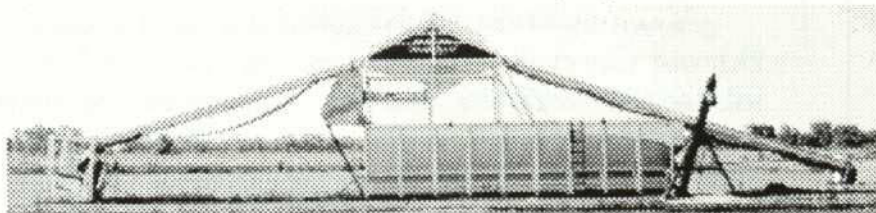
The key here is to make time for reading the periodicals. One of my favorite duties was to calibrate the
(Continued on page 5)

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(Continued from page 3)

timing mechanisms of irrigation time clocks. It was during that time that I was able to do two jobs at once. You could easily read and concentrate on the job at hand as clicking of the electro-mechanical motors worked in the background. Even on those days that I found myself without anything to read, a dictionary always provided a great read. I have used this reference before, but one of Hawkeye Pierce's great lines in a M*A*S*H episode was when he was asked what book he would take to the front lines with him. He responded that he would take the dictionary as all the great works of literature were in there!

I had a mechanic once who hit the nail squarely on the head when he made mention of the fact that reading periodicals had the most current information you could ask for in your day to day operations; he was right. Many of you will clip articles to study at a later time, when things slow down. Some even make photo copies of articles just to organize their reading times. Some manage to keep file folders of information available in a small library that come in

extremely handy when planning for some special project. Some of you manage to keep reference files of GOLF COURSE MANAGEMENT in the office to make use of the information when it is needed. I too kept files, saved close to twenty years' worth of periodicals only to get tired of trying to dry them out when the basement toilet, possessed by demons, would fill our basement with two inches of unwanted standing water, saturating box after box.

As I write this, I have over three years of GOLF COURSE NEWS that I have saved for one reason or another. I made sure, after throwing out the last twenty years' worth to save the last three years of LANDSCAPE MANAGEMENT or GROUNDS MAINTENANCE for the simple purpose of removing articles that will have pertinence to my job. Each year, I seem to find myself on yet another mailing list, with one more journal beginning to demand equal time with my standards. THE GRASS ROOTS is still the only publication that I anxiously wait for and will read from cover to cover when it arrives in my mail box. I have at least

three distinct piles of letters, promotional sales material and correspondence from GCSAA of which I plan to sift through. But for some reason, year in and year out, I find myself in a new season with a new reason for not to getting to the bottom of it.

My bookshelf has become too small for the information saturation that we have been bombarded with. Why do we keep these things? The fear of being left behind without the benefit of some small seed of knowledge lost if I do not make the time to read each is my guess. I smile when I recall the stacks of term papers, newsletters and articles that used to bury Dr. J. R. Love's office desk. So I know that I'm not alone and in good company and that my paper affliction does not just affect golf course superintendents.

So my message is simple, as simple as the three R's preached to us so many years ago in grade school. Read, read, read. Take the time in the "off season" to catch up on the literature of our profession. Make time during the season to stay up to date. And remind me to budget for an office air conditioner! ♣



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