



## Courage Of Conviction

By Roger Bell



Recently I had the opportunity to travel east and make a whirlwind history tour of Monticello (Thomas Jefferson's home), Colonial Williamsburg, Jamestown, and Washington, D.C. I was impressed by what I saw and learned about our past.

A visit to their monuments in Washington reminded me that men like Jefferson and Lincoln faced tremendous problems in their lifetimes yet risked everything to deal with those problems firmly, without reservation and with eloquence.

In Williamsburg, I could practically hear that hot-head Patrick Henry speak out with his radical voice. He seemingly had no fear of reprisals from the omnipotent English crown.

At Monticello, I saw evidence of Jefferson's interest in architecture, horticulture, music and art. He had plenty of interests to pursue on top of his little mountain without risking it all by speaking out against injustice.

At Jamestown, I saw the site of the first permanent English settlement in this country. The original colonists chose the Jamestown site in 1607 because they could keep their ships in

the deep water harbor there, ever ready to serve as an escape route back to England. What they hadn't counted on was the problems associated with such a site — 90% of the original colonists died the first year. The governor of the colony recorded in his journal that he felt many of their problems at Jamestown were due to the lack of good water for many of the wells produced only brackish water.

This message is not intended as a history lesson, however. We can all learn from our past though. Our problems today may yet plague us the way they did Jamestown. We, too, want the security of having our escape ships awaiting us in deep water in case of problems. Everyone wants a guarantee and who isn't afraid of a lawsuit these days?

But as the colonists at Jamestown soon learned, such a safety valve can have too big a price tag. They recognized their mistake and moved the colonial capitol upriver to higher ground at Williamsburg in 1699.

Today, we need more Thomas Jeffersons and Abe Lincolns and Patrick Henrys — people of conviction and

courage. Have **you** given serious consideration to how you think we should handle our environmental concerns? Are you too afraid of stepping on someone's toes to speak out with conviction? Are you attending our annual business meetings and speaking your views on where our association is headed? Do you back-bite and bicker instead of confronting a problem by directly addressing the person who can rectify the situation?

Of course, most of us don't have the eloquence of a Thomas Jefferson or Patrick Henry, but we can have the conviction and determination of the Williamsburg colonist — willing to leave the safety of our ships to move up the river and speak out against that which we consider wrong. We need to be more visible, more vocal as an association and as citizens. The risks involved outweigh the disaster that will certainly befall us if we sit back and let the government bureaucracy do it all for us. Likewise, our association needs input from its members in order to chart the proper course for us to take.

Thomas Jefferson and his friends will surely be on our side should we be willing to speak out and again declare our independence — from indifference.

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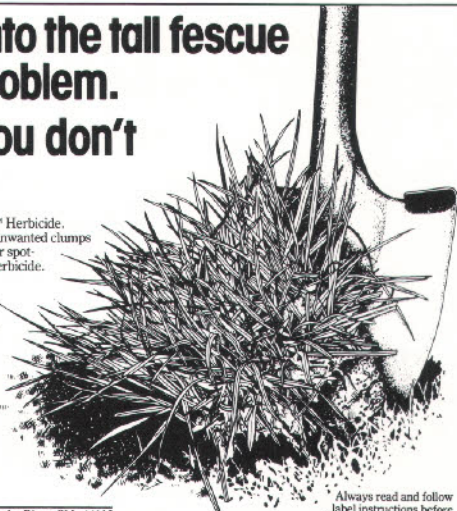
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## THE SPIRIT OAK

By Monroe S. Miller

It was 15 years ago when the old burr oak that guarded the fourth hole died. All of the golf holes at our club were named when the golf course was built nearly 70 years ago. The fourth was called "The Spirit Oak" after the beautiful old oak tree that stared at players as they teed up.

Vincent and I were working in the southwest corner of the course on that day — June 10, 1974. It was a very cool and overcast day, well below normal in temperatures. The wind was calm. We went in for lunch at noon and when we returned to our work, we were startled by the sight. The old Spirit Oak had fallen over, tipped down to the ground to the south.

The sight of this enormous ancient old tree on its side was awesome, albeit depressing. The root system, which had anchored the tree in a dark silt loam soil for so long, simply gave out. It was broken cleanly at ground level; a woodsman could hardly have cut it more neatly. Although we kept the tree trimmed and removed any dead wood in the crown, there were some signs of decay in the trunk section. What obviously was less evident was the advanced decay and decline of the root system. We estimated the weight of the green wood at around 15 tons, enough to require a healthy and formidable root system.

The members of our club were as saddened as Vince and I were. I guess all of us just expected this old tree to live forever. After all, it had been part of the landscape for generations.

Of course, after the initial shock of its loss had softened, speculation about the age of our beloved "Spirit Oak" was a favorite topic of discussion around our club. Vince and I had enough sense to carefully cut three full diameter sections from the trunk of the tree, each about six inches thick. Through the interest and kindness of our only surviving founding member, Mr. L.J. Markwardt, we took one of those sections to the USDA Forest Products Laboratory here in Madison on the west end of the UW campus. Mr.

Markwardt was a world renown expert on wood products and spent his career on the Forest Products Lab staff. The experts there counted the annual growth rings of the Spirit Oak for us, and made other measurements of the rugged old oak tree. The diameter breast high (DBH) was 46.5", giving it a circumference of 12'2". Its age — 227 years. The average rate of growth over its lifetime was 9.72 growth rings per inch. That's the same as saying our "Spirit Oak" grew one inch in radius and two inches in diameter each 9.72 years. By the way, we took the other two sections and soaked them in a preservative (polyethylene glycol). One was made into a table and is still in the clubhouse today.

The task of cutting up this tree was no small one. Like so many farmers his age, Vincent grew up and lived his early years with a heavy dependence on wood. It was heat for homes, lumber for buildings and was cut for sale. We started "working up" the tree from its top toward the trunk. Limbs and branches were removed first and gradually we got to the larger body wood. I was thinking, all this time, of how much history the old tree had lived through and of the innumerable storms it had survived.

When we'd gotten to the trunk and decided to remove and save entire cross-sections, I sensed how each cut of the saw bisected a chronicle of our past that was recorded in the wood. That history was brought out by the raker teeth of the saw, as sawdust and bits of wood. The saw cut its way through time so quickly.

Vince started the cut and it exposed events and times in my own life; just beneath the bark was 1973, the year I started at Blackhawk Country Club. 1969 came quickly — the year I entered the Army, went to Vietnam, and the year of the impossible dream of actually seeing Neil Armstrong walk on the moon. Right after that was the sad year of 1963 and John Kennedy's assassination, and 1960, the year my hero Arnold Palmer won the U.S. Open.

1958 was when Arnie won his first Masters Tournament.

The saw bit through time: 1946, the year of my birth, and 1945, the end of World War II. Then we were in 1930 when the WGCSA was formed. Soon it was 1926, the time when the GCSAA was begun. The blade bit into the ring of 1921, the year our club was founded and the golf course was built. In no time we were in 1917 and the first World War.

The saw was sharp and cut through the turn of the century. Even then our tree was 153 years old.

The heavy drone of our ancient Homelite saw told us how it was laboring heavily through time — 1894 and the founding of the USGA; 1889 and the start of the College of Agriculture at Wisconsin; 1888 and the beginning of golf in America; 1865 and the assassination of President Lincoln. 1862 was important for Lincoln's signing of the bill introduced by Senator Morrill that created the Land Grant Colleges and another bill that created the U.S. Department of Agriculture; 1861 and the start of the Civil War. In no time we passed through 1850 when the first class at the University of Wisconsin convened in old North Hall and down to 1848, the year of Wisconsin's statehood.

The kerf widened as we cut deeper and deeper. Our oak was ninety years old in 1837 when Madison was settled. Five years before that, in 1832, the

*Continued on page 5*

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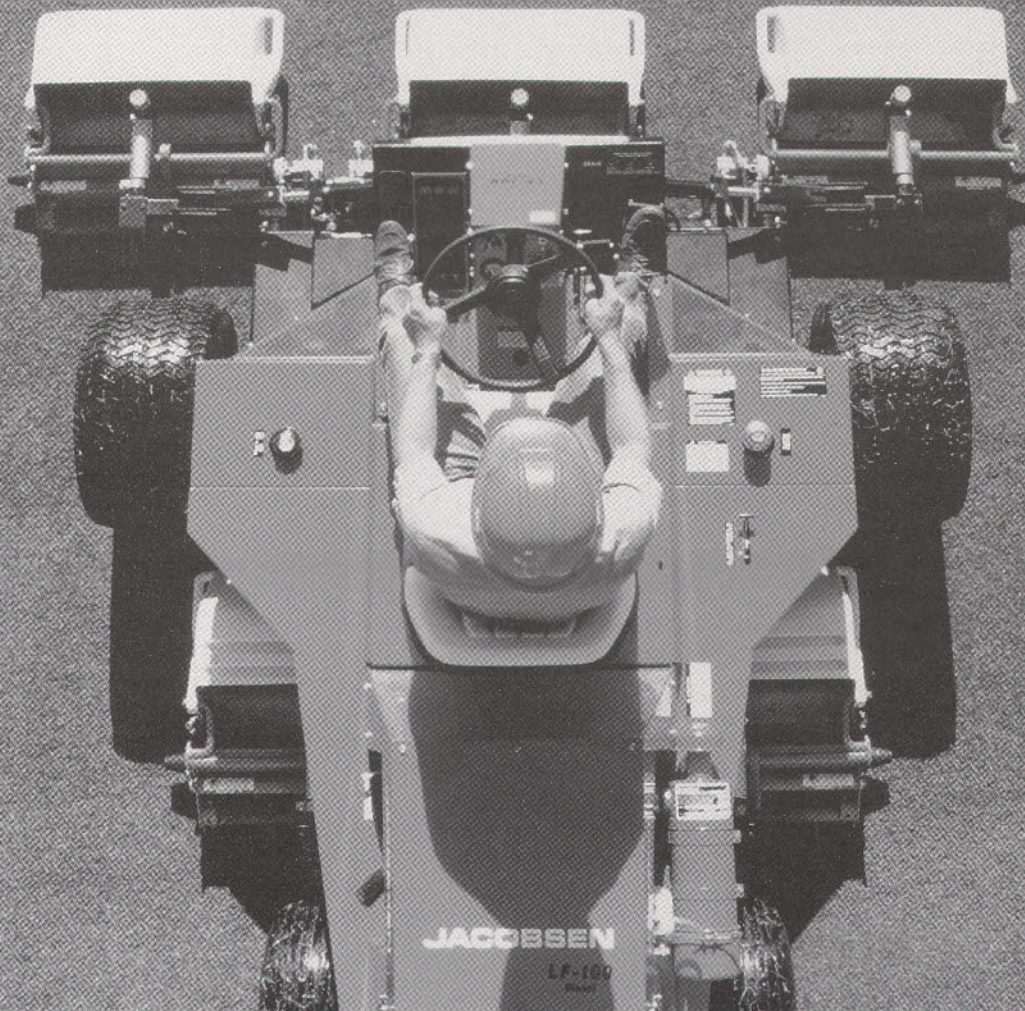
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Blackhawk War was fought. The saw cut down to 1821, the year Tom Morris was born in Scotland. We sliced 1814 when Francis Scott Key wrote "The Star Spangled Banner", and 1812 when we went to war with the British again.

Small pieces of wood from the turn of that century fell beneath the saw. I remember thinking how incredibly long ago that was. 1796 — Washington's famous farewell validictory to the American people. 1790 — the first census of our country. 1787 — the constitutional convention approves a document to send to the states for their approval. 1783 — the British recognize the impossibility of conquering the rebellious American colonies and sign a peace treaty with us. 1776 — the most famous year in American history because of our Declaration of Independence. Our Spirit Oak was only 28 years old on April 18, 1775 when Willie Diamond's drum summoned the men of Lexington to the village green after being warned

by Paul Revere of the British march from Boston. And I would guess that this venerable old tree was probably not much bigger around than my thumb when my grandad Lemuel Monroe was born in 1757.

Vincent and I rested when we reached dead center. It was 1747 when a small root pushed out from an acorn to begin life for a tiny seedling that was to become an old and beloved tree. It was the same year John Paul Jones was born in New England.

As we cut through the trunk that remained, we traced our history in the order that it had happened. Many of the same thoughts occurred again.

There are remains of the fallen trunk of the Spirit Oak still on the golf course. A pin oak was planted adjacent to our old tree, to carry on. For me, the falling of this tree was a reminder of the mortality of all living things, even those that are among the longest lived, like trees. And I was surely impressed by the outpouring of sentiment by our members.

Near Arlington, Vermont is a marker on a sign post. It commemorates the majestic State Seal Pine of Vermont, which fell victim to old age and high winds on May 9, 1978. The tree, which was visible from the home of Vermont Governor Thomas Chittenden, was used as a model by Ira Allen (Ethan's brother) in designing Vermont's official seal of government. It was a huge tree then, in 1778, when he made his design. As word spread that day in May in 1978 when this massive landmark had fallen, a steady line of traffic moved by to see it. The tree was made an official state historic site. It was extremely important to Vermonters.

And so it is with the Spirit Oak. The members of Blackhawk, with the leadership of L.J. Markwardt, placed a granite boulder near the trunk of the fallen tree. The boulder is faced with a bronze casting that tells of feelings these people, in this time, had for a single solitary tree. Hopefully it will remain there for centuries, just like the old oak tree it gives tribute.



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# Let All Things Be Equal

By Rob Schultz

Some of the finest folks in the world work at golf courses. Some work hard, tell a good story and can drink and swear with the best. Those are four good reasons why sportswriters like folks who work at golf courses.

But many golf courses, like many newspapers, still have a management style that is better suited to when Grover Cleveland was president — during his first term.

Now I can't chase after newspaper management. I'd like to, but I'll get fired and that would upset my wife, who wants to tile the kitchen floor this summer.

But I'd be remiss — even though I may lose some good drinking buddies because of this — if I didn't chastise many of this country's, and this state's, fine private courses for continuing the archaic practice of banning women from the course at certain times of certain days.

The main reason why this absolutely ridiculous practice is still invoked today is history. Ask any pro. They'll tell you that's the way courses always have done it. It goes back to the days of our friend, Grover Cleveland. It's the "If it ain't broke, don't fix it" theory.

Wake up, fellas. It is broke. You'll notice that after you're subpoenaed by some hotshot woman member who files a lawsuit against your club. Her lawyer will make you wish you had sold life insurance for a living. Count on that happening. It's already started at many courses around the country and is sure to be a hot national issue by the end of this summer.

Private clubs are a bit like Iran and the Ayatollah. In the south, we still have problems with blacks getting accepted on some courses. For instance, Wade Houston, the new coach at Tennessee, is not being allowed to join Knoxville's exclusive Cherokee Country Club allegedly because he is black. Everyone is aghast. They should be.

Discrimination just seems to be par for the course at many private courses. The country clubs in the Midwest have come far enough to allow blacks, but they still put the clamps on women.

Hey Mack, just keep 'em barefoot and pregnant and off the course. And if a few women sneak through and want to play a round of golf, well, the men say it's OK if they play when they're not there. The main quote heard around the clubhouse goes like this: "When I'm there, they better be home. I don't want to see any broad on the course when I'm playing."

That is, in simple terms, a private club's attempt toward equality. Create a men's day and a women's day. Just make sure men's days are better and that the men get Saturday morning, too.

Such bent-noodle logic may have worked back in the days of Grover. . . OK, let's say Eisenhower, even Kennedy. Those were the days when the men worked and the women stayed at home with the children. Call it the June Cleaver Era.

But what many men have failed to come to terms with in these days of equality is that many women have good jobs now. Some women are actually executives with quality businesses. Some are doctors and lawyers. Some have enough money to join a private club without the help of a rich, sugar-daddy husband. Some have handicaps less than 63. And some, many of whom aren't married, want their private clubs to be like most every other place in their lives; a place where men and women are treated equally; a place where they can play golf whenever they want.

Clubs argue that women know the rules before they join. That's one argument in the clubs' defense. But don't blame the women when they target those discriminatory clubs for boycotts. Such boycotts could force corporations to take their business lunches and outings elsewhere. The bottom line will be a bad bottom line.

Golf is no longer just a man's game. Women are taking it up in record numbers. We have to make room for them. If care is taken when women learn to golf, they'll understand etiquette and will respond to requests to play in four hours or less. I may sound sexist here,

but women seem to understand stuff about etiquette better than most men.

I'll admit, I've shuddered at the thought of playing behind a foursome of women, especially when I'm in a hurry. But when I think of the slowest rounds of my life, men are always to blame. And in recent years, as more women play golf, I've seen fewer slow women.

It once took me 7½ hours to play 18 holes at The Springs in Spring Green.

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At that time, I wished there were some around.

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# ELECTRIC DREAMS

By Dennis Thorp

At the GCSAA Anaheim convention, I finally got to meet a number of people who, up to that time, had just been disembodied voices on the telephone. It was an exceptional and emotional experience. It was also disturbing in a lot of respects, but I'll get to that later. Peter Cookingham, Duane Patton, Dale Gadd and Jon Scott are of particular interest to those of us trying to promote the use of computers by golf course personnel.

Peter heads up the Turfgrass Information File (T.G.I.F.) at Michigan State University (MSU). TFIG is funded by the USGA and has been available "on-line" to any interested party since August of 1988. The USGA Green Section personnel had a booth at Anaheim right next to the TGIF booth and both had computer links back to MSU so interested convention goers could sample the data base in person. I had to physically drag some people over there. Some came reluctantly, became fascinated as Peter or one of the Green Section personnel found information in the file that was useful to them, and they left even more reluctantly than they came.

The whole process was disturbing to me for a couple of reasons. First, the USGA has put a lot of money into TGIF, getting it off the ground and on-line, for all of our benefit, but at this point, the number of subscribers isn't large enough to ever begin to make the service pay for itself. TGIF is funded at 1.5 positions (Peter is the half) and they haven't even begun to enter the potential mountains of information that could be in there. I saw one man get an answer to a question, in minutes, that he had been researching for months, and he had previous "free" access to the TGIF system (but never used it!). This man is an experienced computer user and telecommunications expert. If people like this haven't been utilizing TGIF, what use will the average superintendent make of it, and how long will the USGA continue to be able to afford to fund it?

The second thing that I found disturbing was the fact that there was only one account listed with TGIF for the whole state of Wisconsin, and that is an inactive one. When I talked with the holder of the account, I got a vague "someday" kind of answer, and this person is another experienced computer user. Personally, I would like the WTA and the WGCSA to take a closer look at this situation and possibly make the service available to the researchers at UW-Madison. Maybe we could get Peter to come over and make a special demonstration, because our people weren't able to get to Anaheim. And from what I have been reading in the papers, funding for the UW College of Agricultural and Life Sciences is not what it was a few years ago and valuable extension people are being lost because of that funding situation. By the way, Peter's background is in library science, rather than turf management.

I attended the Computer Special Interest Group meeting at Anaheim, along with 100 other people. Duane Patton, of Lawrence, Kansas, headed this meeting, along with Dale Gadd, of *Golf Course Management* magazine.

Peter was there, as were USGA people and vendors of specialized software for golf course use, as well as interested superintendents.

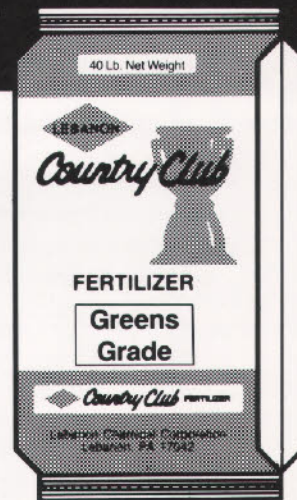
Duane demonstrated "Turfbyte", the electronic bulletin board for golf course superintendents, by golf course superintendents. We had a spirited discussion about computer use on the golf course and the ability to share information with each other. About 20 of us signed up with "Turfbyte" on the spot. I met a number of people who have been following my articles with great interest and made friends in Texas and Georgia, as well as Kansas. Several vendors were giving away demonstration copies of programs they had written, and Duane made "shareware" copies of a communications program for all interested parties.

I cornered Dr. Joe Vargas during a recent meeting and asked him about the Envirocaster. He wrote the program for it and I asked him about the availability of that program in software. He said that the program is now in the public domain, as he published it in "Phytopathology" and offered to send me a copy of the article. As of now he said that one of the irrigation companies had expressed a little interest in the program, but not a lot was being done with it. I saw the Envirocaster demonstrated at Anaheim and was intrigued by the potential but not the machine, at least right now. Too expensive and not flexible enough, in my opinion. However, that is the typical evolution of computers, as I've seen it happen several times before.

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The program is written on an EPROM (Erasable Programmable Read Only Memory) chip and the microcomputer that runs the system is "dedicated" to that one task. It won't run any other program, unless the EPROM is changed. Most superintendents would be unwilling to do this themselves, even though the average computer is easier to work on than the internal combustion engine, and service personnel would have to make a trip to the factory to replace the chip when and if the program is updated. Since this is very expensive, it doesn't happen very often. Also, the irrigation companies are primarily interested in software that makes their hardware run more efficiently, even though environmental monitoring is part of that process. Researching the many factors that go into disease development is not their specialty and they would naturally tend to be more interested in the irrigation and water usage work being done in California than in *Pythium* research in Wisconsin and Michigan.

What I would like to see happen, as I explained to Dr. Vargas, is someone take his program and get it to run on

the MS-DOS IBM compatible machines and make it work either as a stand alone program or part of the irrigation management software. If the superintendent could either enter microclimate information manually or have it done automatically from remote sensors, it would then be a valuable tool for disease management and more accessible to the average superintendent. If the sensors could be put in at the same time as a new irrigation system, so much the better. But it also should be able to exist as a stand-alone system, with its own independent system of wires and sensors. Then, superintendents could send their results to Joe and he could refine the program from actual results in the field. With hundreds of field trials going on all over the country, updates and improved versions of the program would keep coming out and be sent to the users, who could simply update their software. My feeling is that the first company to field something like this is going to make a lot of money. In case it ever comes to the point where we have to justify every pesticide application to the EPA and/or the WDATCP, a computer pro-

gram like that would go a long way toward satisfying any such regulatory requirement. "The computer told me to do it!"

There is an excellent article in the March issue of *Golf Course Management* on inexpensive alternatives in computer software. I highly recommend it to all of you who might be looking for software for your new computers. However, I want to add two comments on your consideration: The very reason Dale doesn't like the top-of-the-line software packages is the reason beginning users should get them — they come with extensive dealer and end-user support and beginners are going to need that support. He never says that they are any more difficult to learn than the inexpensive versions, because most of them aren't. Secretaries have been mastering them for years, and if they can handle them, I don't see why the average superintendent can't handle them. Also, Dale talks about "downloading" programs from electronic bulletin boards. I would contend that anyone who can do this qualifies as an experienced user, which most of his and my readers aren't.



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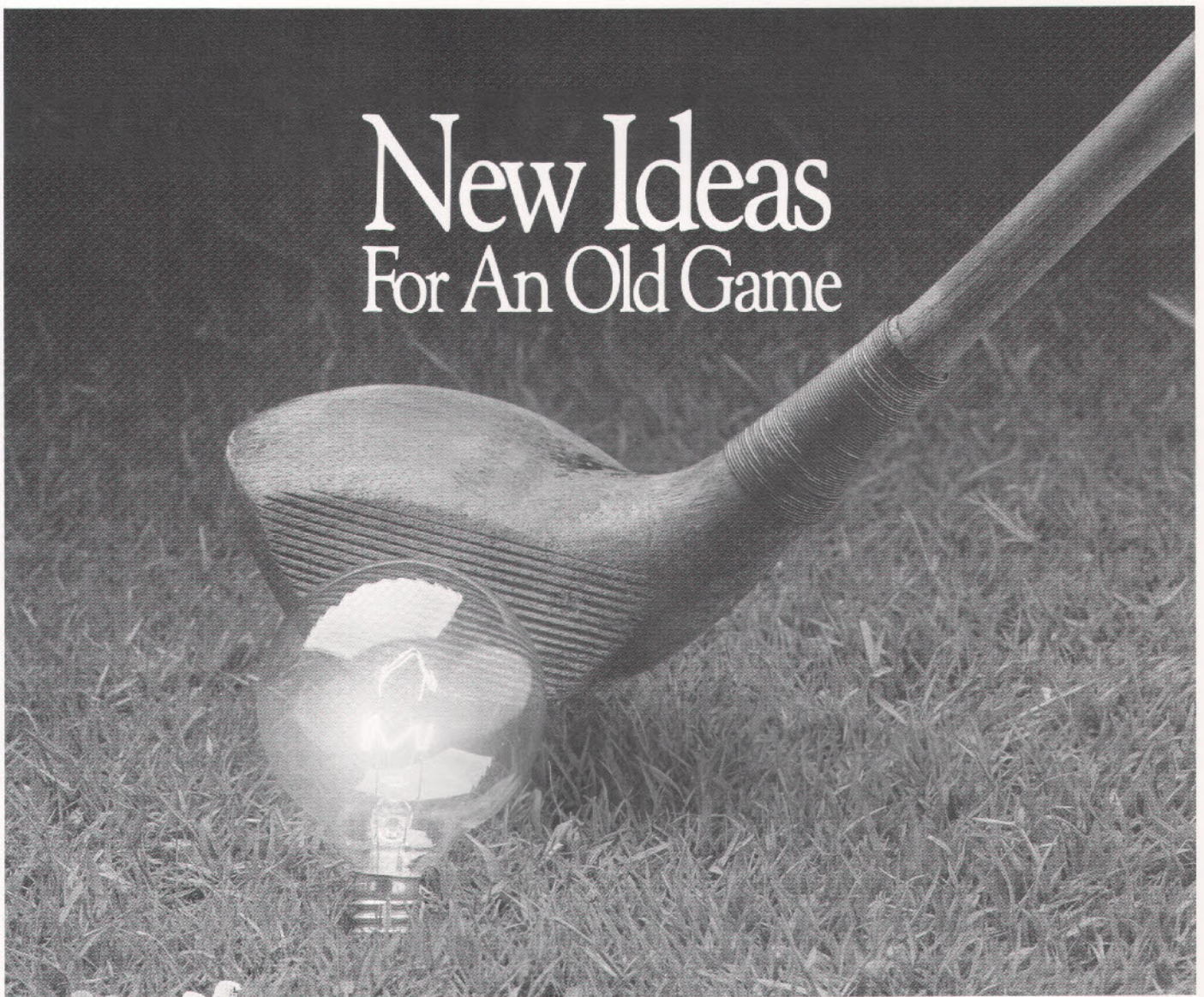


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