

ASSOCIATES' CORNER

FROM AIRCRAFT TO TOP DRESSERS

By Scott Kaercher
Turfco Mfg. Inc.

Turfco Mfg. Inc. is the result of a chain of events that started during the mid 1920's when Frank Ditter designed and built an airplane in a North Minneapolis garage. He called this business adventure Federal Aircraft Works. Upon completion this airplane was taken to Wold-Chamberlain Speedway for its initial test flights. The tests were conducted by Speed Holman. The plane was very advanced for the time. It was the first aircraft in this area with an enclosed cockpit. Unfortunately, one night a tornado swept through the Speedway and destroyed many of the airplanes stored there, including "Federal Aircraft 1".

After this financial setback, and at the request of the other pilots, Frank started manufacturing skis for landing aircraft on snow. This phase of the business sus-

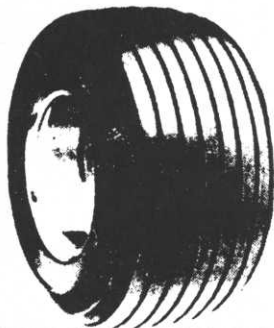
tained itself until the end of the depression when Frank moved the company to its present location at 3456 N. Washington. During World War II Federal manufactured many items for the war effort, including engine hoists for servicing aircraft. The most notable accomplishment of Federal Aircraft Works was the design and manufacture of the skis for the aircraft used by Admiral Byrd for the North and South Pole Expeditions. One of Byrd's "R4D" Aircraft is in the collection at the Naval Air Museum in Pensacola, Florida. The skis are still intact.

In 1953, Frank Ditter decided to diversify Federal Aircraft into another market by collaborating with Olaf Rogneby on the design and manufacture of a sodcutter. The "Professional" sodcutter was the first product of the SodMaster Division. Later, in cooperation with Art Cohrs and Bennett Larson of the Minneapolis Golf Club, SodMaster introduced the first Mete-R-Matic topdresser (1961). Between 1961 and 1964, SodMaster also introduced the Bantam Sodcutter, the Edge-R-Rite Sandtrap Edger, and the Pipe Piper Oscillatory Pipe and Wire Plows.

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During 1964, Frank Ditter fell into ill health and sold the company to John Kinkead (of the National Mower Company) and Jim Trunk. John and Jim immediately sold the Aircraft Ski portion of the business and continued solely as a turf equipment manufacturer under the name of SodMaster.

After five years the company was sold again, this time to Jacobsen Mfg. Company. Jacobsen then chose Bill Kaercher to be the General Manager of the SodMaster Division. Bill had joined Federal Aircraft as a design engineer in 1946 and was instrumental in the development of all the SodMaster products. SodMaster remained part of the Jacobsen family until 1978, when Bill Kaercher and John Kinkead purchased SodMaster and changed the name to Turfco Mfg. Inc.

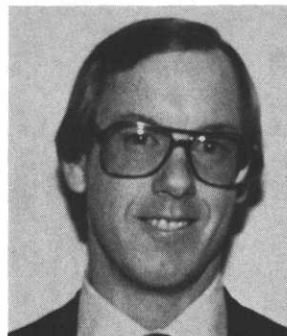
During the past few years Turfco has continued to develop new products. The Meteor-Matic II Tow Type Topdresser, introduced in 1981, has greatly reduced the time and work involved in the topdressing process. The new Model "A" Turf Cutter, introduced in 1984, greatly simplified the approach to sodcutting for landscape and turf repair applications.

Turfco equipment is used worldwide for the maintenance of golf courses and sport fields. Bill Kaercher devotes most of his efforts to new product development.

Scott Kaercher manages the sales and manufacturing activities.

Today, in spite of the many changes that have taken place over the past 45 years, many of the same people are still working in the same building on Washington Avenue, manufacturing specialized turfcare equipment.

EDITOR'S CORNER



by DOUG MAHAL
Chairman
Editorial Committee

At the last annual meeting of the M.G.C.S.A., Article XI Code of Ethics was adopted into the bylaws of our association. It's the opinion of the Board of Directors that this Code of Ethics be strictly observed by all members of M.G.C.S.A. to maintain the high professional standards of the association. A new Code of Ethics Committee (John Nylund, Dale Caldwell, Scott Hoffman and Lyle Olson) has been formed to discuss and suggest appropriate action in cases which violate our code. If any member is aware of such a violation, please don't hesitate to give one of the committeemen a call. Maintaining professional standards of service and conduct is a responsibility the Board of Directors encourages and welcomes. For those who are not aware of the code or have not seen it, a copy is being published in this issue.

A typographical error was made in the dates for our monthly meetings in October at Golden Valley and November at the Hanson House. The correct date for our Golden Valley meeting is October 9 (not the 19th) and the date for our Hanson House meeting is November 12 (not the 2nd). Please make a note of these changes.

Thanks go out to our member contributors for their articles in the March HOLE NOTES. We
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