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Middle Atlantic Association of Greenkeepers

TURF NEWS LETTER

February 6, 1951

Turf News Revived:

Your Education Committee in cooperation with the United States Golf Association Green Section has decided to re-issue a Turf News Letter that will include announcements concerning regular monthly meetings. Cooperation and combined effort on the part of the members in the Middle Atlantic Association will be necessary to assure its success. Ideas and constructive suggestions with regard to this venture can make it or break it. We are indebted to Bob Shields for the "meat" in this month's text.

The Beltsville Meeting

Educational Feature: "Lawns That Live"

This 15-minute movie, complete with color and sound, was photographed in part at the 1950 National Turf Field Days. The Division of Information, Office of Radio and Television, U. S. Department of Agriculture, was responsible for the filming in cooperation with the USGA Green Section. The movie highlighted the use of new and improved turf grasses, management techniques, aeration of the home lawn, and turf research at the Bureau of Plant Industry. "Lawns That Live" should fill a vital and much-needed function in educating a potential audience of 30 million people who will view it over TV. The Middle Atlantic Greenkeepers are giving serious consideration concerning the purchase of a copy that could be shown to golfers at their individual golf clubs.

Dr. Grau extended an invitation to the Middle Atlantic Association of Greenkeepers to make this February meeting at Beltsville an annual affair.

Business Meeting

The report of Bob Shields on his trip to the National Convention in Chicago, where he represented the Middle Atlantic Greenkeepers, was considered worthy of publication in its entirety. Bob worked night and day for the Middle Atlantic group. His conscientious attention toward all that took place is a credit to our organization as well as to Bob personally.

The Report on the National Convention

The following is the main thought I bring to you from the National Convention.

You sent me there for a purpose. Evidently you wanted my ideas and my impressions and that's exactly what you are going to get. These are my own. I have talked them over with no one and no one else has read or heard this report up to this moment.

I am grateful that all the old timers, including Bob and Dick Scott, took part in sending me into the lion's den, and gave me the opportunity to ask questions and receive answers that I could understand.

My question was, "What can the National do for me and what can I take back to the 80 men who sent me here to represent them that will sell the National to them?" I told them that we wanted to cooperate with the National but that we wanted to feel we are needed and wanted by the National; that we feel we are pretty good, having gotten along without them for 15 years and could go on alone if we are not wanted; that the Middle Atlantic is almost as old as any of their Locals and was at one time 100% in the National; that we have a past president of the National in our local; that our golf courses are just as good as theirs; that the members of the Middle Atlantic are just as good as or better than the members of their locals; that our desire for information is just as strong as theirs; and that it is perfectly normal and human for the members of the Middle Atlantic, or any local, to ask, "What can the National do for me?"

Some of these statements, even though true, made them angry and I became unhappy because they couldn't make me understand. I got the impression that they resented me as an upstart to those old timers; as an outsider representing a lot more outsiders, for coming into their group and asking silly questions; the answers to which were to them as plain as the nose on one's face. How could a man be president of his association, attend a National Convention, and still ask, "What can the National do for me and the men who sent me here?"

Mr. Strong, Chairman of the Policy Committee, told me that the report we sent in regarding the letter he sent us indicated that the Middle Atlantic was only interested in what it could get out of the National. My reply was that the Middle Atlantic spent half the money in its treasury to send me to the National Association's Convention, even though it had only seven out of eighty members who belong to the National; that this was something that had never been done before; and that it was only human for a man to ask what he was going to get out of it. I told him he probably asked the same question himself before he joined the National.

They talked about raising the dues, and did raise them to \$20. I couldn't understand why it was necessary and was ready to say, "The heck with the whole thing," when the meeting was adjourned.

Then Mr. Strong asked me to give my impression of the meeting. I jumped to my feet and told him that I was more confused than ever and would return to my group and tell them that the National was setting the dues so high that only a

few men with lots of money could get in; that the National didn't need nor want the Middle Atlantic; that the Middle Atlantic wasted its money to send me there, and that I still wanted to know what the National could do for me and my local.

Not one man left the room even though the meeting had adjourned. Every one of them stayed, and after tempers had subsided they took two hours of their time to explain to me and the Middle Atlantic how they felt about greenkeeping.

Before I left the room, I apologized to them on behalf of myself and the Middle Atlantic for keeping them so long; for losing my temper; and for being so stupid.

Why is it necessary to raise the dues? The dues have been \$10 for about 15 years and in that time the Association has just been breaking even, with no surplus on which to grow and pay its way. This breaking even in the past has been made possible only by the sale of exhibit space and registration fees at the National Convention. In view of the present high cost of office supplies and the world situation with the almost certain shortage of materials this year, the exhibitors will have nothing to show at the 1952 Convention and therefore will not buy space. Since the sale of space in the past has paid the way of the National, if there is no show, there would be no National at the rate of the old dues. So, in order to assure a National Convention and a National Association, the raise in dues is necessary.

Also along the same subject it was pointed out that dues in the P.G.A. are much higher than \$20 and prospective members are waiting to get in. The National feels that higher dues will weed out the weak members leaving only strong members and attract better ones, thereby helping the profession to grow.

I suggested a membership campaign to double the number of members instead of doubling the dues of the present members. The reply was that it would help; and that new members would join because I or someone else asked them to and would drop out in a year or two. No 7

When the proposal to raise the dues was brought up at the big membership meeting and it came to a standing vote of approximately 200 men present, there was only one man who voted against it.

They explained to me that the policy of the National is that it wants new members to join them and help advance our profession, but that it does not want the man who pays his dues a couple of years and then drops out because the National has not doubled his pay for him. They want men who like greenkeeping and want to see the status of the greenkeeper change now. They want the word greenkeeper to represent a man of intelligence and responsibility and not just anybody who walks onto a golf course and takes over the superintendent's job without any previous turf-growing experience or schooling. They will get those needed men and will make the greenkeeper a somebody. They are determined to do this whether or not they have the support of all greenkeepers. They don't just mean their financial support - money plays only a small part in the scheme of things. The big thing is the exchange of ideas and the power of many men working toward the same goal.

My best impression of the National is that it is a group of men who sincerely love their profession and are determined to do something to help it so that their sons and men who follow them as Golf Course Superintendents need not be ashamed of their work and be looked down upon as just somebody to push a lawn mower. Another impression was that those men are fighters and will win.

Something else I learned on this trip is how much I like greenkeeping even though it is hard and sometimes dirty work. Evidently others like it too because of the fact that few drop out once they become proficient. Look at the men in this room who have been at it for years (and there were men at the Convention who were nearly 80 years of age).

We all tell ourselves that we belong to the Middle Atlantic Association because we want to improve. Sure we do; but I don't think that is the whole story. We must go farther. Another reason we are here is to improve greenkeeping even though some of us don't realize it. It would be hard to do if each of us stayed on his own course all the time and did not come in contact with other greenkeepers - there must be an exchange of ideas. I sincerely believe and hope in some way to get you to believe, too, that the way to advance yourself is to advance greenkeeping. At the present time Greenkeepers are looked down upon by too many people. These people take credit for, and make money on, the physical and mental efforts which we put forth. The Greenkeepers set the standard that lawn owners all over the country strive to attain, yet that same lawn owner looks down upon the Greenkeeper as being below him. Its not his fault though, it is ours.

There is so much work to be done to lift ourselves out of this situation that only a little effort from each of us would make a big difference. There are many things that we can do if we will do them, but no one (not this Association and not the National Association) is going to force you to do it. That wouldn't work at all. It must come from you through a desire to help and the realization of the fact that you get out of it just what you put into it.

The National does not believe in using force, and it will not force you or even urge you to join the National. That was made clear to me. The desire must come from you. When Bill Glover returned from Boston last year, as a member of the Board of Directors of the National, I think a lot of us thought he was going to start a drive for membership. I wondered why he never did and probably would have joined had he asked me to do so. Just so I would get a membership card, the Greenkeepers' Reporter, and be able to say I was a member of the National Greenkeeping Superintendents' Association. I even stated at the Special December Meeting that I had never had a chance to join the National. Bill tried to make me change the wording of the statement but I didn't do it. I think what I meant was that I had never been asked to join, and now I'm glad I never was. If I didn't learn anything else on this trip, I did learn why Bill Glover never mentioned a membership to me, or to you, and never will. That fact alone makes the trip worthwhile to me for it explains the National better than anything else. The National is made up of, and held together by, men who have but one desire - to help the Greenkeeper. That desire is the only reason why there is a National.

Look at it this way: Did anyone ask you to choose the religion in which you now believe? Would you still be in that church if you had joined to please

someone else, or just for the prestige connected with membership? You might be, but I doubt it, unless you became interested in some activity connected with the church that you contributed to the welfare of the church. Do members of the Masonic Order solicit other members? No. And its hard to get in because a man has to want to be in and must be good to get in. Who usually makes the best soldier - the man who volunteers, or the man who is drafted? Which do you value most - that which is given to you, or that for which you must put forth an effort? Does the P.G.A. ask for members? These comparisons may be foolish but I think that they help explain the National. You must want to be in it to help green-keeping.

Sure it is natural to say:

"What do I get out of it?"

"What will the National give me for the money I pay in as dues?"

I asked those questions and they said:

"Why are you in the Local if that's the way you look at it?"

"What do you have to contribute to the Local or to the National?"

"Are you good enough to be associated with the best Greenkeepers in the country?"

"Are you good enough to be a member of the Local?"

"Are you worthy of the name Greenkeeper?"

The National is a group of men from all over the country. Each is as secure in his job as you are in yours. They could all stay at home and never bother about you or me, or the Association, but they realize the benefits of the exchange of ideas on a national scale and the benefits of associating with men in the same line of work. It's the power of many men from many places thinking together. Two heads are better than one, but four are better than two.

The men on that Committee assured me that they had the highest respect for the members of the Middle Atlantic and mentioned Bob and Dick Scott, Reg Giddings, Dick Watson, O. B. Fitts, Ruben Hines, and Rudy Mill. Their highest praise was for John Anderson, who was at one time President of the National. We are fortunate to have such men in our organization.

In summing up, let me stress the following: The National wants and needs you, but it won't beg. It's up to you to seek membership.

It offers the opportunity for you to talk to the best men in the golf course business and makes it possible to get things done nationally.

Just an increase in the number of members is not the answer - they must be good members.

The National won't say who is good and who isn't. It's up to you to decide for yourself. Are you worthy of being connected with the best in the world?

The National is fighting a battle directly connected with our own. They are working for us, and all Greenkeepers will benefit even though all do not participate.

What you can do to help:

- Have a sincere desire to lift your profession up to where it belongs in the American community.
- Serve on committees when asked. Do it without complaint and without waiting for the Chairman to do it all.
- Attend all meetings. Take part in the discussions. Give your ideas.
- Ask questions.
- Elect a good President

I'm very grateful to you for having sent me to Chicago. It was an education. I feel that by attending that Convention and just rubbing elbows with those men, I have acquired a better background for my job and a certain polish that I would never have gotten otherwise. If you don't feel that the money you spent to send me there was worthwhile to you, then I'll be glad to return the money to the Treasury, with no hard feelings and still consider myself the luckiest guy in this room.

Course Closed Until Further Notice

Jimmy Thomas and Bill Glover volunteered to write an article on this subject at the request of Dr. Fred V. Grau and the USGA Green Section. The article will receive nation-wide publicity in the USGA Journal. It is high time that someone took the lead in publicizing the deleterious effects of playing on soft soggy greens when the course should be closed to play. All superintendents are aware of the damage done by trampling on greens when they are in a puddled condition. The golfers need the education because the damage is not apparent until the following summer when the grass goes out. This article should be a boon to Golf Course Superintendents all over the world.

Caddy Carts Cause Concern

Clif Eisele believes that the caddy cart is here to stay but feels that certain restrictions should be placed on its use. The evidence of tracks and excessive wear on green collars and approaches indicates to Clif that the use of carts during the winter months should be restricted. At Prince Georges Golf Club a new regulation forbids caddy carts to approach closer than 20 feet in front of the green. Dr. Grau suggested the value of newer, more wear-resistant grasses as a possible answer to this problem.

Increase in Dues

Statements for 1951 dues are late in reaching you this year because action concerning a proposed increase was not taken until the February meeting. At that time it was proposed, and passed unanimously, that the annual dues be raised to \$6.00 a year. This \$2.00 increase, necessary to meet rising costs, is the first increase to take place in the last 15 years.

The additional money will be used in the following manner:

1. To increase, from \$35 to \$50 a year, the pay of Mrs. Douglas Van Fossen, who does our secretarial work.
2. To enlarge our scope of activities at the National Turf Field Days. In the past we have overlooked this opportunity to sell the Middle Atlantic group to our fellow Golf Course Superintendents.
3. To absorb the cost of meals and entertainment of our guest speakers.

The fact that more money is needed to conduct the affairs of the Association should be apparent to all members. In all probability the few who do not feel that they are getting their money's worth are those who do not attend the meetings. Certainly the educational features at our monthly meetings contain information worth many times the \$6.00 you pay as dues.

Charlie Treacy's job as Secretary-Treasurer is a difficult one. Please do not make him send out additional statements by not remitting your check or money order during the month of March or April.

New Year's Resolutions

Your Education Committee, by the simple expediency of waiting until late February before making the following New Year's resolutions, are in the favorable position of having an unblemished record. With your support we intend to keep this record intact.

1. Attendance worthy of speaker's time. Bring a friend, gardener, home lawn owner, athletic coach, etc.
2. Adherence to a strict time schedule. This is a must out of courtesy to our guest speakers and hosts.
3. Publicity. To further the cause of greenkeeping profession.

Next Month Elkridge

Machinery Outlook and Maintenance

This timely and important subject will be the educational feature at the March 6 meeting. Representatives from Industry will discuss the topic in detail. The golf match will start promptly at 12:30, with dinner at 6:00 p.m. Dinner will be provided through the courtesy of A. I. Witcher, Baltimore Toro Company, 813 Mapleton Ave., Baltimore, Md. Remember the time, the place, and the date.

Golf at:
ELKRIDGE HUNT CLUB
Baltimore, Md.
March 6, 1951 - 12:30 p.m.

Dinner and Meeting at:
BALTIMORE TORO COMPANY
813 Mapleton Ave.
Baltimore, Md. - 6:00 p.m.

Your Education Committee