

THE GREENSKEEPER

by Edgar A. Guest

He's on the job at break of day and when the stars
come out,
There's always trouble on the course for him to fret
about,
He starts the gang to work at dawn and follows
them around
Then listens to committeemen whose wisdom is
profound,
They talk of "bents" and "Fescues" in a way that
makes him squirm
For they acquire much knowledge in one brief
official term.
His task is one that calls for tact, for lacking that it
means
Next year there will be another man brought on to
keep the greens.
The members seldom know his name, or have a
smile for him,
They only wonder why it is the course is not in
trim,
They only rave and rage and rant while hunting for
a ball
And wonder why the greensman hasn't cut the
rough this fall,
And when they find a cuppy lie or footprints in a
trap
"The course is in rotten shape!" declares each
gloomy chap.
And yet my hat is off to him, when winter
intervenes,
I want to pay my tribute to the man who keeps the
greens.
He's on the job from dawn to dusk, a million pests
to fight,
Tis' his to see that every green is watered well at
night.
The weeds attack his finest work, the drought
destroys his grass,
The rain beats down the tender shoots, but still the
players pass
And still they play the game they love, a happy
golfing clan
Who never stop to count the odds against a single
man.
And so I wave my hand to him, who toils in sturdy
jeans,
The best old friend all golfers have - the man who
keeps the greens

BEST WISHES

The officers and directors wish the
members, advertisers and readers a Joyous Holiday
Season and a Happy New year!

GOLF COURSES LAND USE AND SACRED COWS

The following article was given as a talk to
the top club owners and managers at the annual
meeting of the Nation Club Association held in
London. These are highlights from the talk given
by the Editorial Director of Golf magazine, John
Fry.

The title of his talk was "Golf & Ecology: A
Responsibility and Opportunity for America's
Country Clubs." The remarks were made to owners
and managers but they apply to us as well, if
maybe not more in some ways.

Although the amount of land in the actual
hands of golf clubs is not particularly large
compared to the Redwood forests of California or
the great Southwest desert, many of these courses
are priceless islands of turf, trees and animal life
in the midst of, or standing in the way of, what up
until recently we have liked to call progress. One
golf course in a suburb of Westchester or Chicago
or Los Angeles can be infinitely more valuable than
20,000 acres of Forever Wilderness land, not only
in dollar terms, but more important, in terms of
thousands of people affected by the use of that
land.

There is, of course, great pressure to sell
bearing down on many private clubs and
commercially-operated semi-private and public
courses. Adding to these pressures is the mounting
tax load on many clubs. Suddenly a community
wakes up to the fact that the pleasant expanse of
green in its midst, that was the country club has
been sold off to the developers of an industrial
park or of mass housing. But the public
officialdom, which failed originally to see the long
range value of such green belt areas, is too
bankrupt to buy up a natural resource which it
helped to tax out of existence.

* * *

Each of us as citizen and golfer has a
responsibility for the wise use of the land around
us. We especially have a responsibility - unique
trust - when we own that land. Until you change
your thinking about land so that it no longer
merely is a capital item on your club's book, a
business transaction on the way to some future
land speculation - you don't deserve to receive, let
alone ask for, favorable tax treatment from the rest
of the non-golfing public.

What is needed is to change the attitudes of
our members particularly the governing bodies of
clubs. And when they have adopted new attitudes -
new values about the ecology of golf course land -
they can become crusaders in the communities in

which they live. Finally, when communities themselves alter their sense of value about surrounding golf course land, you're going to be able to talk to them intelligently about taxation.

Golf courses do provide a relief from the unrelieved, continuous sprawl of housing, industry and highway. Therefore golfers and government at all levels, through taxation and zoning, have a responsibility to see that such land is conserved as open space. Even if the land is not necessarily conserved for golf.

In the next few years the land use issue is going to bring about some very fundamental rethinking of some very sacred cows in American political and social thinking - in, for instance, our traditional reliance on dollar values to measure our progress and the quality of our existence in America.

But perhaps the most interesting thing about the current debate over ecology is that the needs of sound ecology are very frequently in direct conflict with traditional American ideas about populism. The Sierra Club is a very undemocratic organization, because it is telling us that it is more important for six dozen backpackers to enjoy walking through the High Sierra at Mineral King than it is to open the land to a million Californians. Golf land, too, falls in a special privileged classification and will always be discriminatory in a sense, because a large amount of valuable land is able to accommodate a relatively small number of people at a given time. But ecology tells us, rightly, that the preservation of open land without intensive use applied to it can be a good thing. In many cases, however, this concept is going to run counter to traditional American populism - for instance our ideas about privilege and property.

Now I am not going to make a case here for the ecological benefits of open golf space out-weighing the civil rights considerations inherent in membership discrimination by country clubs. But in the next few years it is going to be difficult to sweep this issue under the rug, because every time the special property status of golf courses comes up at the Federal and state levels, the issue is going to arise. Let me just say that if golf were not saddled with the discrimination issue, the political swimming would be a whole lot easier for clubs.

Some time this year, Senator Edmund Muskie is going to conduct Congressional hearings on property tax reform. I urge you to start thinking right away about this opportunity to present golf's case at the level of a national forum. It will require study and documentation, but I hope the opportunity will not go begging.

EDITORIAL

Well, the election's are over. There are new faces on the board and new faces in the three top offices. And with the change in personnel and expiration of terms of offices, much to the satisfaction of many, I find my term as a director of the Mid Atlantic over and done with. But not without comment, as you may well have expected!

First, let me say I have really sincerely enjoyed being a Director. The past three years have been especially fulfilling, being able to work for and with the association. It's really enjoyable being able to see how the association works and to see the interest and hard work that all the officers put out as one unit. There are a lot of people who are quick to criticize the decisions and ideas of the board, and it is to their advantage for them to attend a board meeting and see just how these decisions are made and how much thought and discussion goes into each item.

Second, I would like to thank the people who helped out on the newsletter by an occasional article, an item sent in from another publication and very often comments and criticism. The newsletter was done with one idea in mind - to provoke thoughts. There are too many publications in circulation that are middle of the road and very wishy-washy. This has been the one idea in mind in publishing the newsletter - to print something that not everyone will agree with. And the results have been quite rewarding. They have ranged from hateful remarks over the telephone to anonymous letters in the mail to personal letters from Ben Chlevin.

When everyone agrees with what you write, then you aren't doing your job.

The newsletter has been a fun and rewarding job and I hope the tradition and good name will be carried on. But after nearly four years of doing the job, I feel it is time to step aside for two reasons.

First, I feel as though there are other young men in the association who could do the job and there is a lot of hidden talent that we don't know of. Let's give some of these boys a chance.

And second, after four years, I feel as though I have had my fair share of raising hell with people on a lot of different issues. Most of the articles I wrote on were things which I had plenty of say on and definite opinions or questions. But I've had my chance and my term is up. So carry on and let's keep the newsletter going.

AN EXPRESSION OF SYMPATHY

We express our deepest sympathy to George Campbell of Belle Haven Country Club on the passing of his wife on December 3rd.