

Some Things Don't Seem to Change, Do They?

Are Mid-Atlantic Association meetings really so different from those of 50 years ago? Thanks to a diary kept by Ed Worthington, now of Saranac Lake, N.Y., it would seem that some things haven't changed all that much over the years. His diary entry for August 14, 1933, consisted of notes made at a Middle Atlantic Association of Greenskeepers meeting held at Columbia Country Club.

This was the meeting summary, for example: "Discussion on condition of the greens at the various clubs and what they are doing to prevent scalding, controlling brown patch, fertilizing, etc. Played golf in the afternoon, dinner and discussion in the evening."

The list of members present included Reg Giddings of Gibson Island and Annapolis Roads, the president; Dick Scott, the secretary, of Rolling Road, Tom Fisher of Burning Tree, the treasurer; Dr. Doll of the U.S. Department of Agriculture Greens Section; Russell Coltrider of Suburban Club; Dick Watson of Congressional and Chevy Chase; Reuben Hines of Manor; Mr. Chamberlain of Kenwood; O.B. Fitz of Columbia; Bob Scott of Five Farms, Baltimore Country Club and Hillendale; and Nat Mather of the new Maryland Country Club. The Naval Academy and Belle Haven were listed, followed by question marks; did someone not show up? Or was the diarist uncertain of who their greenskeepers were?

Fifty years is not such a long time ago—only back to 1933—and some of the names on that list are still familiar to members who have spent a few years in this business themselves. Our own collection of meeting minutes goes back to 1928, and these names crop up in them, of course; Reuben Hines, for example, moved on to Georgetown Prep, went into golf course construction, and raised turf grasses. He rebuilt No. 12 green and some tees at Washington Golf and Country Club in Arlington in the 1950's. His son is now a superintendent in Florida, carrying on the family name in the profession.

Both Dick and Bob Scott came from a golfing family that included another brother who became a golf pro in Baltimore. Bob's son, Bob Jr., later became superintendent at Hillendale and is now the starter at a Baltimore municipal course. O. B. Fitz originally worked at the Arlington turf farm that was located where they built the Pentagon, at which point the farm moved to Beltsville; he worked many years at Columbia. Dick Watson, a charter member of the association, has been retired from Chevy Chase Club for more than 20 years but still lives in this area; he held jobs at several local clubs concurrently because of his broadly based knowledge and served as a consultant to other clubs.

Considerations on Thatch and Watering

by Don Taylor, Assistant Professor,
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The development of thatch is a normal consequence in intensively cultured turf-grass. Due to the nature of golf green culture, thatch development can be particularly rapid. Superintendents have devised several methods of controlling excessive thatch accumulations such as frequent, light vertical mowing; aerification; top dressing; light vertical mowing; aerification; top dressing; light applications of lime; and reduced nitrogen application. Despite control efforts, seldom, if ever, is there a green with no thatch, nor, in our opinion, would that be a desirable situation. A small amount of thatch protects the soil surface and provides resiliency and increased tolerance for the turf. Realizing that we will normally be working with some thatch on the greens, whether excessive or not, it is important to know some of the effects thatch may have on the water relations of a golf green.

Studies have shown that thatch contains very large pores as compared to soil, even after compaction. Due to these large pores, the water-holding capacity of thatch is low. This can cause problems in cases where the majority of the root system is in the thatch layer and the grass plants are not able to extract significant amounts of water from the soil below the thatch. In such cases, irrigation must be inordinately frequent. Reduction of thatch or improvement of soil to encourage root development below the thatch layer is extremely important in order to sustain growth between irrigations. If, on the other hand, roots are down into the soil in sufficient quantity to extract water there, the lack of water-holding capacity in the thatch should not present a critical problem. The amount of water available to plants would then be determined by the water-holding capacity of the soil and the depth of the roots into the soil.

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President's Message

Please note the change in the date of the November meeting—we'll be getting together a week earlier than we thought. The highlight of our October meeting at Ocean City Golf and Yacht Club was our annual memorial tournament, and I would like to thank G.L. Cornell for donating the Bill Glover Trophy and Bert Yingling for the Reuben Hines Trophy, in addition to extending our appreciation to George Murphy, our host.



With cool nights and some precipitation at last, we should be able to sleep a little bit better. During the past year, your Board of Directors has accomplished a majority of the items it set out to do. We are all aware that it takes a lot of hard work and time to be a good Board member, so let's take this into consideration when we vote in the upcoming election in December. The Association can only be as good as the professionals who represent it. During the past year, many questions have come before the Board, and we have tried to come up with the right answers, ones that the majority feels are right for the Association.

Looking forward to seeing everybody at the next meeting,

Ken Braun, *President*