

# Career Moves

by Jack McClenahan

It's mid-August and another hot day. I think it was hot weather that put the skids on my golf course career. It started when I installed an air-conditioner in my office in 1969. What a hot year! You would listen to the weather report at night and it would be 95 degrees with a relative humidity that paralleled that number. Hot! Hotter than high school love.

Fungus was germinating on the outside of Zineb bags. It was so bad we had to store the fungicides in the club room freezer to get control of the pythium eating up the fungicide. It was a tough year! Hot!

And you know how hard it is to get a crew to work in weather like that. I was cranky. And, like I said, the crew went from lethargic to dormant. I didn't have the greatest crew in the world to start with. The major decision of their day was whether to have Ripple or sterno with lunch.

The members, as always, were grumbling about my management of the crew. One day they found old Herb sleeping in the woods, and reported it to my greens chairman. My chairman in his stern and officious voice asked me what I intended to do about Herb. I told him, "No problem, I'll stencil *Ground Under Repair* on his tee shirt. That way, if he's taking a nap and they hit a ball near or under him, they'll get a free drop. I'll tell them not to yell 'Fore!' though, because he gets real nasty if you wake him up before quitting time." Thus, Herb became Golf's first living designated *Ground Under Repair*.

When Herb's liver gave out, we made a little memorial in the

woods. We circled it with lime and made an outline of his body like the police do with a homicide victim. Thinking back, it still tugs at my Irish heartstrings.

But, back to the story. On reflection, maybe it wasn't the air-conditioner that put the skids on my career. Maybe it was the floating duck house launching; I can't be sure. But, let me tell you about the famous floating duck house.

Each spring the members' kids would get ducks for Easter. The kids loved the little creatures, but only for a few weeks. Then the calls would come: "Can we bring

## The major decision of their day was whether to have Ripple or Sterno with lunch.

the ducks out to the golf course pond?" "Sure, sure, no problem." Eventually, we built up a real herd of Quackers. The quackers were loved by all, in spite of the fact that they turned the seventh green into a litter box. The duck poop made the green so sticky you didn't have to water it to make it hold a shot. If the stimp meter had existed back then (and thank heavens it didn't) it would have rolled about a foot. It was like covering the green with a mixture of double aught grease and day-old snot. A lot of guys didn't use a putter but tried to pitch and run with a seven iron on a long putt.

Anyway, you get the picture. In spite of all this, most everyone loved the ducks, especially the neighborhood dogs. Jack, Herb and the rest of the crew were secretly cheering for the dogs.

One of the bleeding hearts at the club finally donated enough money to build the club's first floating duck house to stop the dog attacks. What a duck house! I've been on worse cruise ships. Besides that, I thought maybe it would be a way to save the assault on the seventh green, which by now had corn germinating. I found out that ducks don't digest corn any better than we do. At least it germinated in the aerator holes; even in bent grass it had a tidy geometric appearance.

But what a duck house! Now, to keep the duck house from floating to shore, we decided to take half a barrel, fill it with concrete, and use it for an anchor after maneuvering the duck house to the center of the pond. The anchor was great. We attached ten feet of chain, secured it, and loaded it on the floating duck house. The big day came. As the benefactor and greens committee gathered, we launched the Great Duck House. Everybody cheered.

I wish I could end the story right now, but responsible journalism demands I go on. When the Great Floating Duck House was centered in the pond, Herb, who was sitting on the floater, was to take his legs and push the anchor off the boat thus assuring it wouldn't drift to shore where the dogs could munch on the ducks. After pushing the anchor off, Herb was to get in a small boat and come back to shore. Simple enough, right? Wrong! Herb pushed the anchor with the ten foot long chain off the duck house. Great plan. However, the pond was fourteen feet deep! This caused an unforeseen event: the catapulting and launching of old

*continued on back page .*

**Career Moves, from page 2**

Herb. Herb did a great cannonball against his will from the great and now half submerged duck house. In short order, we also found out old Herb didn't know how to swim. The group of dignitaries present gasped briefly, then in unison and without discussion or vote proclaimed me one dumb S.O.B.

But, after years of reflection, I don't believe it was Sleeping Herb or the great duck house, but the newly installed air-conditioner that finished off my career. Let me go on.

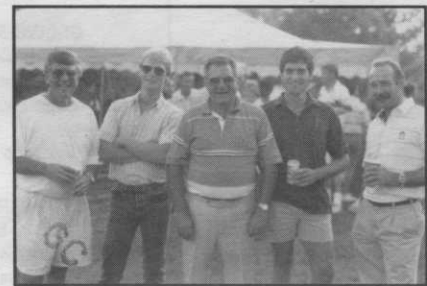
Think of the hottest weather

in which you have ever worked; and when you hear the rest of the story, I'm sure you'll understand. Sitting in my office with the thermostat set at 68 degrees, my greens chairman walks in and asks me, "What's wrong with the thirteenth green?" I say to him, "I don't know; what's it look like? Since I got this new air conditioner I don't like to go out on the course when it's this hot." I say, "Do me a favor, grab the cup cutter and take a plug, send it down to tech and let me know what they think." He goes crazy and starts screaming obscenities. (You try to help some-

one and they turn on you like a dog to a duck). So I say, "Ok, if that's too much trouble, take this Polaroid camera, take some shots and bring the pictures back to my office (my air-conditioned office), and maybe I can figure something out. Just be careful driving out there, the crew is probably taking a nap in the woods."

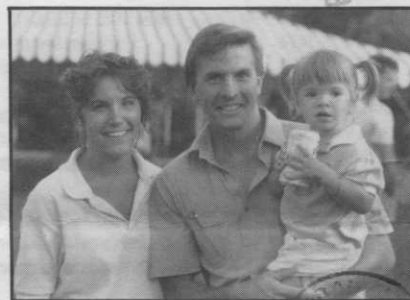
He simply reached over and pulled the plug from my air conditioner.

*Jack McClenahan is a turf equipment sales representative with G.L. Cornell Company.*



### Picnic Pix

*a great time was had by all*



### Mid-Atlantic Association of Golf Course Superintendents

Mitchell Williams, Editor  
Manor Country Club  
14901 Carrolton Road  
Rockville, MD 20853  
(301) 929-1707

