

Turfgrass Matters



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Mid-Atlantic Golf Course Superintendents Newsletter

September 8 Lunch Meeting at Geneva Farm Golf Club—Charles Priestly to Host

Geneva Farm Golf Club is an 18-hole, public golf facility located in downtown Street, Md. At one time, the property was a family-owned and operated farm. In spite of the farm's long history—250 years as a dairy operation—the current owner decided to cut his losses in the declining Maryland ag market and convert to a golf facility. The golf course allows the property to stay in his family and still support itself.

The course was designed and built in 1989 by Robert L. Elder & Sons. The facility was completely seeded in March 1990 and opened for play that July. We have bent greens, ryegrass tees, fairways, and roughs. The course measures 6400 yards. We are known to occasionally mow, depending on whether or not our prehistoric turf mowing devices wish to leave the maintenance shop. The fertility program and cultural practices are probably consistent with what everyone else does.

The maintenance budget is around the \$170K range and at times I like to take all the excess monies and order supplies from the "Everything's-A-Dollar" store. The grounds crew of eight does a tremendous job with this large piece of turf, considering budget restrictions. My thanks to them! We seem to make significant upgrades and improvements each season and we believe we can have a top-notch course in a few more years.

The clubhouse at Geneva Farm Golf Course is a 200-year-old barn completely renovated by an Amish crew. Winding stairwells in the silos and stone walls in the banquet facility make this clubhouse one of the most intriguing in the Mid-Atlantic region. (No spikes in the downstairs banquet area, please!)

As for me, I was raised on a farm and worked there until finishing high school. My turfgrass education began in 1982 when I entered the United States Navy Basic Underwater Demolition/SEAL school. During my eight years as a Navy SEAL, I traveled to many countries in order to more closely study the various turfgrass species. Somewhere in the same time period I also managed to attend night school and after six years I received a B.S. in Aeronautical Engineering. In early 1990, I separated from the military and stumbled across this farmer who asked me to take responsibility for his 210 acres of grass.

I decided that my Navy turfgrass experience needed to be expanded in order to take on this job. I began reading books by people named Beard and Turgeon and attending courses held by the UM and Rutgers. I also learned the phone numbers of Tom Malehorn, John Drew, Donn Dietrich and Ron Weaver. Soon, I placed their phone numbers in my speed dial memory.

I am not attempting to poke fun at the professionalism of the golf course superintendent. As you know, with no experience and lacking formal turfgrass education, the past three years have been demanding. My saving grace has been in maintaining a sense of humor and keeping life in perspective. I love my new profession and plan to become certified in the future. I am proud to be a member of an organization that will open itself to a person in my circumstances. I have called upon at least 18 superintendents during this time and have yet to find one who would not lend suggestions, equipment or support to a struggling "super." I appreciate it all.

The Meeting: Lunch will be served at 11:30 followed by the meeting. Bring your appetites because the food is always great. It will be a sit-down meal; cost is \$25. Reservations: 301-490-6202.

Golf: Shotgun at 1:30. Carts are \$9. Call the pro shop at 410-893-1114. **Note:** I would like as many to play as possible. The course is a nice challenge and I welcome any constructive comments about how I can make it better.

From Baltimore and Washington: I-95 North to exit 77 B (Rt. 24). Go through Bel Air and Forest Hill. Rt. 24 will go through Rocks State Park (speed limit 25, watch for tickets). After exiting park, go 1.2 miles, turn right on Davis Road. Clubhouse is 1/2 mile on right.