

80 AND GOING STRONG

The Illini Country Club may be 80 years old, but this 'Mike Royko' keeps the spirit of the course going strong.



The grounds of the Illini Country Club in Springfield, Ill., possess that extra "something" that tells you someone is working awfully hard.

Even though the Illini Country Club is observing its 80th birthday this year, much of its attraction comes from newer changes blending with its dignified charm.

This current renewal, in no small measure, results from the interests, the guidance, and the imagination of talented superintendent Mike Vogt. He has been the Illini superintendent for five years—long enough to have left an imprint on the landscape's appearance.

Say cheese

Someone has written, "Fortunate is the man who can make his hobby his work."

Vogt has been able to do that. Yet, there is more to it than making a hobby his work.

He is a skilled writer and photographer who has applied these skills to golf course management. The result has been national recognition in the Golf Course Superintendents' Association of America.

Last February "The Ballmark," official publication of the Central Illinois Golf Course Superintendents' Association, won first place in the GCSAA's national competition. Vogt edits it. "The Ballmark" has more the look of a magazine than a conventional newsletter. It measures 8½ inches by 5½ inches in size and features a full color cover.

An average issue runs 34 to 36 pages, including advertising pages. Typographically, it is the equal of any first-line publication.

Illini Country Club superintendent Mike Vogt uses charcoal briquettes as tree fertilizer.

Vogt will tell you he came into a job where pride of workmanship has been a long-standing tradition. In the Illini Club's 80 years, he is only the sixth superintendent.

Worker loyalty is also a plus. Vogt has good

things to say about the 16 workers who maintain the course.

In launching his program of renewal, Vogt supervised the planting of 626 trees in tasteful vistas over the 110-acre golf course. He has relied heavily on willow, ash, honey locust, white pine and oak. Mike has his favorite method of fertilizing, too.

Charcoal fertilizer?

"I like Woodace Briquettes. We will just drop three Briquettes into a hole by a newly-planted tree, and cover them up," Mike says. "We have made some comparisons between fertilized trees and non-fertilized. You can see the results by the end of the first season. Fertilized trees will be bigger, have greener leaves, and will just be further ahead."

The future looks good for Illini Country Club, too, Vogt says. "When this place got started in 1906, it really was a "country" club. It was converted farmland well out from the city of Springfield. Now it is surrounded by homes and shopping centers.

"Still our membership stands at 465 golfers, and there is a year and a half waiting list," Vogt notes. This is in a city of just over 100,000 residents and which has eight golf courses. "The first step to qualify for the U. S. Open starts here. Illini has hosted the qualifying round for the last 25 years," Vogt points out.

For those players, a nicer 110 acres will be hard to find.

WT&T



Superintendent Mike Vogt shows off his award for best newsletter.

Editorials represent an avant-garde development in the newsletter field—a Vogt innovation.

"I'm sort of the Mike Royko of the superintendents' association," Mike says. "I'll take on controversial topics just to get some conversation started."

Vogt says editing the newsletter has made him a better superintendent. "In order to get good material for the newsletter, I have to read a lot. That is a learning experience, and a lot of what I learn I can put to immediate use at the Illini Country Club."