



The avid golfer on the left told the photographer that this "Flower Hole" is the most beautiful golf hole in the country.

THE SENTRY'S WATCHDOG

Anywhere you travel in Wisconsin to talk golf, the subject always turns to the course and the corporate layout at Stevens Point. That's Sentry Insurance headquarters and Sentry World—and Dave Reit is the Sentry's watchdog.

by Jerry Roche, editor

It is inarguably the most beautiful golf hole in the country. It is, at least, according to one well-traveled golfer playing the course last summer.

It is the par three, 145-yard No. 16 hole at Sentry World in Stevens Point, Wisc., guarded by 80,000 flowers. It was designed jointly by Robert Trent Jones and John Jonais, who was chairman of the board of Sentry Insurance until his death three years ago.

But the "Flower Hole" is just one

interesting point of Sentry's amazing complex, nestled smack dab in the middle of dairy country. The company has its headquarters building, downtown home office, a one-acre employees park, a corporate hangar at the local airport and Sentry World. The latter consists of the public golf course, six indoor and six outdoor tennis courts, racquetball courts, a squash court and banquet facilities for up to 1500 people.

It's no wonder, then, that the per-

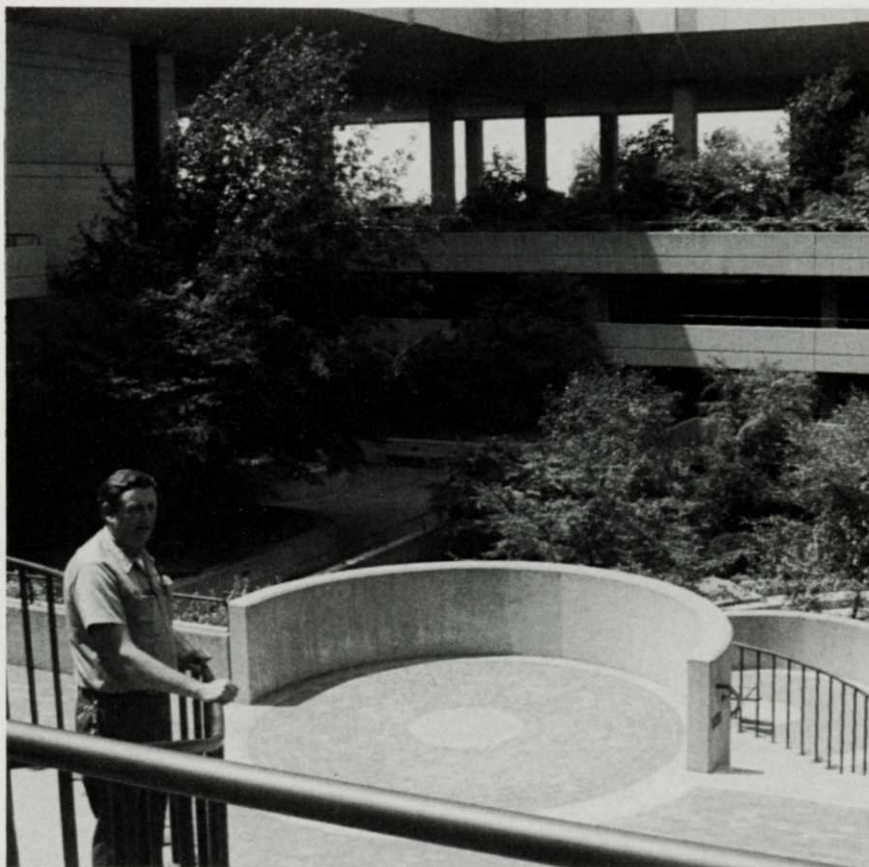
son in charge is no normal "landscape manager." His formal title is "facility superintendent" and his name is Dave Reit.

Reit must care for 420 acres, including the 80-acre national headquarters and the 256-acre golf course (66 playable acres). And he must do it while contending with budget cutbacks.

Jonais, a certified landscape architect, took great pride in the landscape. But since profit margins have de-



Flowers are a strong feature of the Sentry Insurance Company's national headquarters building.



Dave Reit surveys the headquarter's atrium, "designed to blend into as much the countryside as possible."

created, Sentry board members have taken stock of the company's finances and cut back in some areas.

"For the company to be stable and grow is the prime concern," says Reit. "We don't do things the way we used to. It's been a big kick in the teeth to morale since Mr. Jonais died.

"Working 12 to 13 hours a day, six—sometimes seven—days in a row puts a hell of a demand on us. You've got to have good, reliable people. There's an awful lot of talent there, an awful lot of good, new ideas being generated by them. We just can't do things the way we used to."

This is not to say that Reit's hands are completely tied. He still controls \$175,000 for the headquarters' landscape and an additional \$500,000 for the golf course, greenhouse and employee park.

It helps, too, that Sentry has three mechanics who are qualified on the company's lapping machines, milling machines and metal lathe. "We do all our own repair work," Reit notes.

The maintenance facility's size is testament to the amount of work done: 120 by 460 feet with a full paint shop included. (That's about the size of 1½ football fields.)

Training is also rather inexpensive. That, too, is done totally in-house. "There are not a lot of sources available in central Wisconsin," Reit adds. "You pretty much have to be self-sufficient in a town this size. That's the key to all of our maintenance."

Flowering up

Like on the "Flower Hole," annuals are a big part of the entire facility's beauty. The main building's courtyard contains more than 15,000 annuals (down from 35,000 in past years). For weddings, special flowering almond, forsythia, hydrangia, witch hazel and hazelnut plants are put in.

At the entrance to Sentry World are basil, coleus and geraniums. "But we're going more and more to perennial flowers like shasta daisies," says Reit.

Sentry, of course, has its own greenhouses. At present, there are 220,000 annuals in stock, some of which are sold commercially.

Reit has been landscape supervisor for eight years. His predecessor, Bill Roberts, a turf graduate of Penn State University, is now superintendent at Lochmoor Country Club in Grosse Pointe Woods, Mich. "Bill had a heck of an impact on the way the course looks today," credits Reit.

The complex has a fascinating irrigation system. It features 7,000 heads,

50 miles of piping and 70 controllers running off two main controllers. The buildings have Toro controllers and heads; there are some RainBird heads in outlying areas. The golf course has Buckner equipment with a PSI pumping system. The entire system is capable of pushing 5,000 gallons per minute on all sites.

On the golf course fairways, four-inch irrigation pipes are spaced four feet apart. Water is pumped in from a half-mile of man-made creekways carved out of the swamp when the complex was built in 1981.

Originally, 50 percent of the golf course was woods, 30 percent was swamp and 20 percent was wasteland.

The real keys

Reit is especially proud of the golf course. "The real keys to a good course are fertilization, coring and irrigation," he says.

Among the fertilizers he has incorporated into the regime are Scott's 15-0-30 and Par Ex 24-4-12 for fairways; Milorganite 6-2-0 plus an additional 20-0-16 for greens and tees. Roughs

get Lebanon 20-10-20. Occasionally, depending on conditions, urea, sulfur and/or potash are added. Fertilization is "pretty much spread throughout the year," Reit notes. Bayleton, Subdue and Chipco 26019 are used to avoid dollar spot. Daconil 2787, Thiram and an Alliette/Rubigan/Daconil combination are used for other diseases.

The biggest insect problem at Sentry World is the cutworm. So Reit uses two applications of Proxol at the proper time to keep populations down.

Complementing the pesticides is \$2 million worth of equipment: 18 maintenance trucks and 250 other pieces of equipment. Also, nearly 500,000 parts are kept in stock.

Sentry World owns four John Deere tractors, some models 420 and 755; a JI Case front-end loader, a Ford/New Holland backhoe and 25 Cushman utility vehicles.

Jacobsen mowers are used on the fairways and greens, along with Toro Greensmaster 2s. The equipment inventory even includes a Hi-Ranger tree truck and a tree transplanting truck.

The course has 26 acres of Penn-eagle and Penncross fairways. The 40 acres of playable rough are bluegrass. Tees and fairways are mowed at $\frac{3}{16}$ -inch, greens at $\frac{5}{32}$ -inch and playable roughs at 2 inches.

The other component to a good golf course, according to Reit? Aeration, which reduced thatch and compaction. As a matter of fact, thatch on the course was reduced from three inches to $\frac{3}{4}$ -inch in less than one year.

"One man spent the whole summer coring the hell out of the course," Reit notes. "We core around midnight and pick up debris at 4:30 a.m."

Dry times

Despite last summer's drought, the course was kept in fine shape.

"We had to make some adjustments on some of the outlying areas, eliminating water. Some of the areas which you could call 'readily playable' we had to let go," remembers Reit.

"Everybody was pretty well suffering. The employees realized what we were up against. But we pretty much kept top management involved. There's just no way you can substitute for Mother Nature."

But when Mother Nature turns on her spring thaw, you can be sure that the new set of earlybird golfers will again be greeted by, maybe, the most beautiful golf hole in the country. And, maybe, by the most beautiful course around. **LM**

Hahn

The HAHN Pendulum Action SPREADER



The Ultimate In Precise Fertilizer Application

The strength and durability of steel coupled with the precision of pendulum action make the Hahn PA-17 your spreader solution.

With a capacity of 17.1 cu. ft., the conical seamless steel hopper ensures free flow of all materials... fertilizers, seed, lime or sand.

Infinite arc adjustment and multiple flow settings allow you to calibrate the PA-17 accurately and confidently.



Available for 3-point hitch mounting or as an attachment for the Hahn Multi-Pro 418. From Hahn, the leaders in application equipment.

For a free demonstration call your nearest distributor or: 1-800-457-HAHN in Indiana 812-428-2020

Hahn

1625 N. Garvin Evansville, IN 47711