

## Good crew, busy members help manage small budgets



*Terry McIver*

TERRY MCIVER  
Managing Editor

**R**emember those ads that promised you Europe on \$5 a day? That's almost an extravagance for some of our best superintendents, who often have very little cash to maintain their golf courses.

When faced with a small budget, you have two choices. You can throw up your hands and quit, or you can decide to make it work the best you can and have fun in the process.

Dave Pulley, superintendent of Pine Valley Country Club is having fun. He's worked at two courses now—Pine Valley and before that, Topsail Greens, both in North Carolina—with minimal budgets.

His budget at Pine Valley—a semi-private course—is a mere \$200,000, half of which goes for salaries. (Our February 1995 survey of golf course maintenance found the national average for public course budgets to be \$325,000, so it would be hard to blame Pulley if he did quit!)

On top of that, he arrived at Pine Valley to find a course suffering from years of neglect.

The fertilizer storage area was a rusty old trailer with no door. (Correction, there *was* a door; it was leaning against the trailer!)

The maintenance building was a 20 x 40-foot shed with no running water or restroom. Equipment was left where it was parked. The fairways were weed-infested.

"It's hard to believe the members put up with it," said Pulley. Now, members are some of Pulley's best "workers."

One member who owns a construction company builds free bridges for the course. Another, with a machine shop, donates equipment repairs. A third provides office equipment and turf equipment rentals at very low cost. A fourth helped to

[GOLF/GROUNDS]

PAGE 4 G ▶

Heat, water stress big news in '95

PAGE 6 G ▶

Tommy Witt crunches numbers

PAGE 10 G ▶

Winter projects cover shop, shows

PAGE 12 G ▶

Electric greensmowers earn looks

rebuild a green for a reduced membership fee.

Out on the course, Pulley removed all hazard and yard markers, to reduce mower operator dismounts. Colored paint now serves as a suitable marking method.

Growth regulators are used on greens, tees, fairways, and along the edges of sand traps and cart paths. Less clippings mean less disposal, which means faster mowing and a neater course.

"Growth regulators are essential for a low-budget course," insists Pulley.

Wildflowers save time in out-of-play areas.

The only employee benefit for Pine Valley workers is free golf. So Pulley went and found good workers who also liked to play golf. Overtime's prohibited, so the guys on the weekend shift have to finish early during the week. Then they play a free round together, which Pulley says is good for team morale.

Pulley wants people who will take pride in the course, whether the budget is low or high.

"I can get more work done with three people who care than I can with six who don't care," he says.

After hearing Dave Pulley's story, I wanted to write an editorial slamming stingy owners. I'm glad I didn't. They know who they are, and this little column isn't going to change them.

I'd much rather praise Pulley's positive approach. He gets A's for attitude, initiative and ingenuity, and that's a great way to approach the new year. **LM**