

# NEWSLETTER

July 1981



*Golf Course Superintendents Association*

OF NEW ENGLAND, INC.

Sponsors and administrators of the Lawrence S. Dickinson Scholarship Fund — Awarded yearly to deserving Turf Management Students.

## Too Many Cooks... and Chiefs

All of the trite saws apply here. "Too many cooks spoil the broth," "Too many chiefs and not enough Indians," -intrusions of those makings.

Into the life of the golf course superintendent has appeared a new menace to his ever-demanding operation. Call him the intruder, the meddler. Whatever, he's a detriment and he must be, as they say in the TV cop flicks, "dusted."

This dreaded curse surfaces in the role of a country club committee head or member of same whose responsibilities DO NOT include supervision or guidance of the superintendent. Yet, for some strange reason, he has taken upon himself, self-appointed authority to direct the day-to-day handling of the club's golf course maintenance and improvement program.

The in-house administrative mechanics of the country club encompasses a myriad of duties. There is the house committee, the tournament committee, the pool committee, the grounds committee, the handicap committee. You name it, the country club has one.

Unfortunately, certain members of one or the other of these well-intentioned groups look at their appointments as a right to take part in every aspect of governing the club. In essence, they actually believe they are members of the "soup to nuts committee." Therefore, they think their input is mandatory in every issue discussed and every decision made.

As a matter of restating the specs, as they were, the superintendent answers to the chairman of the grounds or golf committee. Supposedly, they enter into a compatible relationship in which each offers suggestions, discuss their ramifications and come to a joint conclusion in implementing the results.

Of course, the ideal grounds chairman is one who accepts suggestions rather than concentrating on giving orders. The history of any country club maintenance program shows that this arrangement has produced the best results.

So, for the most part, it is the chairman who sets the ground rules for his relationship with the superintendent. If he insists on one-way input, obviously, there is nothing the superintendent can do about it other than hope the chairman is well-versed in the intricacies of grooming the golf course.

Some grounds chairmen are and it is to their credit that they are interested enough in the job to avail themselves of information so vital to the overall operation.

The bugaboo, though, comes from another direction. Too many members, associated with other committees, are putting in their two-cents' worth and expecting a dollar in change.

It has been reported that superintendents are being hounded and harassed by foreign committee people to the extent that they find themselves in a state of confusion.

"One guy tells me he wants the greens mowed to a certain height and the next thing I know another is telling me he prefers a different cut," one superintendent said recently. "Of course, it puts me on the spot since

-regardless of my rank or station - I am an employee of the country club. I only wish some order and definition of authority within the framework of the committee setup could be effected."

Therein lies the solution to a problem that could become a very serious obstruction to the superintendent's day-to-day work schedule.

The country club chain of command doesn't need any restructuring. However, the principal parties in its makeup should make an attempt at its redefinition. If a meddler is rocking the boat, he must be made to sit down or be quietly advised that his presence on the board or committee is no longer required.

The task of maintaining and improving the golf course already has suffered its share of complications because of the prevailing economic cutbacks instituted by most country clubs. The superintendents is burdened with the job of producing the same results with less at his hand to produce them.

Now, along comes another headache in the form of people insisting that they should take part in the greening of fairways and smoothing of greens. As far as the superintendent is concerned, such intrusion (most of which borders on the idiotic) only adds to the confusion.

The country club, then, not only has a responsibility to provide the nearest thing to the ultimate in services to its members, it also has the responsibility to its employees to create reasonable conditions under which they can help deliver those services.

One sure way of this is to keep unauthorized members out of the superintendent's hair. While he tries desperately to comb them out, the golf course could go to "you know where."

Gerry Finn

### Next Meeting

August 3, 1981

Agawam Hunt Club

Wayne Zoppo - Host  
superintendent

By now you should already have a flyer with directions and particulars.

Our thanks to Doug Johnson and Paul Miller for hosting the two previous meetings and tournaments. I know that everyone present enjoyed themselves on both occasions. Our sincere thanks to both of you and to the management and staff at both Pinebrook and Tedesco.

## Dow Ad an Insult!

The message came across with a resounding chop to the reputation of the golf course superintendent. It was supposed to be eye-catching and amusing.

It was...and it wasn't.

Recently, several publications relating to the turf field smacked a full page ad in their editions, depicting five irate golfers launching an harangue over the condition of their course. The object of their bombastic blast was a superintendent, pictured as a disheveled Casper Milque-toast - type with his shoes untied and a dirty handkerchief hanging out of his pocket.

The ad was sponsored by the Dow Chemical Company, trumpeting its prized insecticide - "long-lasting Dursban." The pitch was to show the browbeaters coming down hard on the "defenseless" superintendent like a swarm of vultures attacking a warmed-over carcass, exploding their wrath over course damage caused by insects.

Of course, the poor soul had failed to order his Dursban - and he was paying dearly for it. Even the selection of complainers reeked of an animal house scene. Four of them were armed with golf clubs while the fifth (supposedly the club president) was backing them to the hilt with the club logo on his green blazer displaying the long arm of ranting and raving authority.

People, noting the ad, probably got a big laugh. However, its thrust had to be aimed at the superintendent who is responsible for the purchase of chemicals as an aid in his course maintenance program. And, if there were a superintendent with a smile on his face, he has to be either frothing at the mouth or getting himself fitted to a strait jacket.

Obviously, the ad is degrading and deserving of strong response from the Golf Course Superintendents Association of America. Not only does it present the superintendent in a disparaging light, it makes the typical country club member appear as a maniac who bones up for his daily act tearing into an employee with bona fide professional credentials.

One of the journals, publishing this outrageous affront to the superintendents' profession, is Golf Business. It added to the insult by placing the ad opposite an editorial by associate publisher James R. Brooks.

Ironically and stupidly, the subject of Mr. Brooks' piece is the golf course superintendent and his failure to take a personalized part in the upgrading and recognition of his profession. In it, he makes several suggestions to superintendents for polishing their in-club image and promoting a more informed golfing public at his club.

Apparently, Golf Business has no regard for the advertising content of its publication. The sight of the ad, following a reading of an editorial with worthy intention, has to make the interested observer gasp in disbelief. On one hand, it tries to boost the superintendent and on the other it fractures his reputation with a visual bombshell.

Several superintendents already have reacted to this blatant smudge on their reputations. One, in particular, has sent a letter to a publication using the ad with hopes that some kind of retraction or apology be made to rectify the uncalled-for slur. Another is seriously thinking of a Dow boycott. Other responses will swing into action as the insult sinks in deeper.

So far, nothing has surfaced in the form of rebuttal from the GCSAA. Naturally, superintendents will expect the association to use its clout and have the largest impact in

It is with deep regret and sadness that we announce the passing of Meindert Schults. "Red worked for many years for our association and most recently served as a trustee. He was a true friend to most of us and will be missed by all."

### FIRST PUBLICATION

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Congratulations and welcome to Pat Christy, Acoaxet C.C., voted in at the last meeting.

righting this wrong. Since the GCSAA serves as the national spokesman for the profession, it is its responsibility to unload on Dow and any other company engaged in this form of degradation.

However, there's one hitch which should be embarrassing to the national and shocking to its membership. Golf Course Management, the voice of the golf course superintendent, also published the Dow ad.

Talk about rubbing your own face in the mud. Is the GCSAA for us or agin' us?

Gerry Finn.

## Mr. Superintendent -Are You An "Endangered Species"?

By Stan Frederiksen  
Manager - Turf Products  
Mallinckrodt, Inc.  
St. Louis, Mo.

Mr. Golf Course Superintendent - is your future as a career turf manager "clouded?" Perhaps much more than you think. Let's take a look at some very ominous considerations you will have to face in the very near future.

Back in the early '60's, Miss Rachel Carson's book Silent Spring was published. It had an everlasting impact upon the world of growing things, including your "thing," highly maintained fine turf. Undoubtedly its original purpose was a truly noble one - to focus public attention upon the indiscriminate use of chemical pesticides and the adverse effect this could have on man and his world, not to mention the Earth's millions of other living inhabitants.

However, the overreaction by federal, state and local government officials was startling. Federal agencies, armed with powers delegated to them by Congress, began removing from the marketplace, pesticides they found

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had caused some kind of harm, either to people or the "environment." They also began removing pesticides they felt "might," even under the remotest possible circumstances, cause some sort of problem, whether there had ever been such problem reported in connection with those pesticides or not. Further, the "possibility" of potential harm was not limited to that associated with people. The new phrases "balance of nature" and "endangered species" and others began to appear. One group or another began worrying whether in the next 15 or 20 years the "purple-crested-thing-a-mabob" would become extinct because of the impact in the "environment" of chemical pesticides. Strangely enough, some of these groups paid little attention to the very basic question - "Should the world be made safe and adaptable for people? - or for 'endangered species?'"

Let's make some observations as to what has happened since Silent Spring to bring us to where we are at present, with respect to pesticides and their use.

1. Gone from the marketplace are many of the important pesticides that helped farmers grow plentiful good crops that you could buy inexpensively. The same pesticides helped you grow beautiful fine turf. Few of these ever caused problems, but (found some government agencies), they "just might" cause problems, and so they were banned.

2. Gone is the incentive on the part of the chemical companies to develop new pesticides to help your career. Why should they? There's now only one chance in several thousand that any new compound could ever become commercially available as a pesticide.

3. Gone is the source of many of your turf pesticides - that source being pesticides originally researched and developed for food crops. Because turf is such a small segment of the agriculture market, very few, if any, companies would ever embark on a program of research to develop a pesticide just for turf when the chance for its commercial success is so slim. With pesticides for food crops in jeopardy, you can imagine how remote is the possibility of new pesticides for turf.

4. Just after Silent Spring appeared, the food pesticides people found their warehouses filled with pesticide compounds that the government had banned for food crop use. When a magazine writer said that, "A \$14 million market has opened up for fungicides on golf course turf," you can bet the food pesticides manufacturers started moving their erstwhile unsaleable (for food crop use) fungicides over into the turf market, rightly reasoning that "very few people eat grass." It was at this time (mid 1960's) that you saw entry into the turf fungicides markets, by firms which had never participated in such markets before.

5. Right after "Silent Spring," Monsanto published a resounding rebuttal to the book. To discover what the world would be like without pesticides, read the October, 1962 issue of Monsanto Magazine article entitled, "The Desolate Year." It depicts a world without pesticides, overrun with insects and other pests, and presents a frightening picture of how tenuous is the thread that holds civilization together. Without pesticides, the human race could literally be eliminated. The grim fact is that all the pesticides we've ever had could only hold antagonistic pests in check. In no way could all of them be eliminated. Witness even today in your continuing battle against turf pests, how many insects and fungi have already adapted to pesticides and/or have become entirely resistant to many of them. To reinforce yourself on this particular point, be sure to see the motion picture "The Helstrom Chronicle," which shows that practically all insects can

adapt to just about any pesticide - and that it may not be too far in the future when insects, not humans, will rule the world! That is, unless mankind can continue its pressure on the pest world through much more pesticide research and a constant flow to the marketplace of more new pesticides.

6. Is pesticide research dead? Maybe not quite, but it's rapidly approaching that state. Dr. John Shred, the famous Connecticut entomologist, told me at a turf conference a couple of years ago, that at that time of the year just 12 months before, he had, in the first quarter of the year, screened hundreds of chemical compounds for insect control activity. During the current quarter, he told me he'd received candidate insecticide compounds from only two companies.

7. Over-reaction has also shown up at the state and local levels. More and more states, because of pressure from environmentalist groups, are placing their own bans on many pesticides, whether there's any real basis for such action or not, and they are imposing almost intolerable regulations and conditions. An example is California where anyone who even recommends the use of a pesticide must have a permit or license. In the original legislation, a license was needed not only for the state itself, but also for every county of the state in which that pesticide was to be sold and/or recommendations for its use made! It's just about enough to turn off anyone and let the pests take over by default.

8. Another part of the untenable present pesticide situation is the practically impossible maze of registration procedures. Whereas formerly a good pesticide could attain registration in a few weeks, it may now require years - and lots of money. New obstacles have been thrown up, including such things as "feeding studies," "residue studies," "environmental impact studies" and the like. Some companies have received pesticide applications back from the EPA no less than five or six times for "more data" the "dotting of i's," "the crossing of T's," etc. Do you wonder about the increasing prices of pesticides? You shouldn't when you begin to realize the tremendous costs involved just in registration, including the horrendous work involved, the numerous trips to Washington, etc.

9. The crunching halt to pesticide research was mentioned earlier. The true extent of this literally jumps at you when you hear that many companies are completely abolishing their pesticide research facilities and terminating their people. Many experiment stations, formerly strong in agricultural and turf pesticide research, have either cut back or eliminated this from their programs.

10. Again, a persistent reason given for removing long-standing well-and-safely used pesticides from the market is that they "might" (not "will") result in malignancies or "get into the food chain" (another favorite phrase of the environmentalists), or otherwise adversely affect the "ecological balance." It's likely true that indiscriminate airplane spraying of toxic substances over wide areas could pose health problems. But this is far different (for instance) from a qualified turf manager spraying a few ounces of a mercurial fungicide on a tiny (relatively, in area) putting green, where there's proof that it can only move downward (never laterally), and will tie up into insoluble and therefore innocuous soil compounds that can never contaminate or pollute.

So-o-o-o - Where does all this leave us?

*Some conclusions and what we can do about them - the remainder of this article - will appear in next month's newsletter.*

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