



June, 1981



*Golf Course Superintendents Association*  
OF NEW ENGLAND, INC.

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## Setting the Budget Straight

A practical and reasonable overview.

That's what Weston's Don Hearn sought to draw from the country club community when he presented a philosophical commentary on the favorite target of self-appointed cost analysts - the golf course budget.

Hearn is well qualified to tear into the subject. In addition to being a crackerjack at his profession, which happens to be golf course superintendent, he has had a taste of the country club from the inside as interim club manager. Therefore, his expertise is well established...and recognized.

According to Hearn, the financial ills of the country club are too often laid on the doorstep of the superintendent whose responsibility for making up and implementing the budget apparently fingers him as the culprit.

"We should be aware of the fact that golf course maintenance costs typically represent only 15 to 20 percent of the total club operating expense," Hearn advised at the spring conference of the Massachusetts Golf Association. "If you agree that most people join a club because of the golf course, the amount spent to maintain this asset is very reasonable."

Don abhors the tendency of club officials to compare budgets of neighboring clubs with their own. "Especially when they compare them mathematically," he remarked. "There are so many variables involved...number of rounds, type of turf, membership demands, history of pest damage. I could go on and on."

That tendency frequently makes for an absolute misconception of the budget-making process. Each club has problems and/or advantages that are isolated factors to be considered in arranging for an annual financial outlay. They do not apply to the club down the street or the one across town.

Hearn sees a direct correlation between size of budget and demands of club members.

"Some of the demands have gone to the extreme," he explained. "I refer to such playing aids as markers on the flag stick to depict location of the cup, diagrams and the like at the tee, manicured off-tee areas and other money and time drains on the budget. These are in the luxury class."

Very often some of the demands for better playing conditions can be met by the members, themselves.

"In theory, every golfer should rake a trap after he has made his elephant tracks there," Hearn observed. "Fixing ball marks and correctly replacing divots are other areas

where members can maintain conditions to which they are accustomed.

"As far as the super-super conditions go, golfers must be made aware of the costs that go with them. Does the member expect to have the greens mowed seven days a week, bunkers raked constantly, tees mowed at putting green height and fairways mowed four to five times a week to eliminate that dastardly shot known as the 'flier'?"

At this point in the situation, it is necessary for club members to express the extent of their demands - before the budget is finalized. "If the member wishes those pent-house type conditions, he must be willing to pay for them," Hearn added. "If most of them want and are ready to accept the financial responsibility, club officials must raise the funds through a boost in the budget."

What Hearn alludes to here is a common sense approach to setting the condition of the course. In reality, it is the members who draw the guidelines for the budget. The fancier the track they're playing on, the slicker the cost to produce it.

Have budgets skyrocketed beyond belief?

Hearn notes that the cost of maintaining a golf course parallels the cost of living. Over the past 12 years the bench figure for maintaining one hole has jumped 128 percent or from \$4,876 to \$11,112. Over that same period, the Consumer Price Index has followed the same flight or a 128 percent increase.

"That close relationship of percentage hikes is not unreasonable, if the superintendent is required to produce better conditions each year," Hearn concluded. "Of course, what I have established is a more important relationship - cost of maintenance equals demands of membership. That's as pure and simple as budget-making can be."

And it's about as straight as it ever has been set. Donald Hearn, report to the president's economic advisory board.

Gerry Finn

### Meeting Notice

**July 13, 1981 Tedesco C.C.**

**Host Supt.: Paul Miller**

**Golf in the afternoon followed by a dinner meeting. Guest speaker**

**- Phil Wogan**

Tedesco has a nice evening planned for us. So act professionally and fill out, then mail, the reservation form on page 3.

**Directions:** Take Route 1A to Essex Street lights. Turn right and go past General Glover Restaurant. Clubhouse is on the right.

Congratulations and welcome to  
Tom Morris - St. Mark's G.C.

To be voted in at next meeting:  
Patrick Kristy Associate member  
Acoaxet Club

## You and the National

Bob Osterman was right when he put a little twist on an old saw.

"Everybody talks about the National, but not too many people do anything about taking advantage of what it has to offer," he opened his remarks at a recent gathering of Northeastern golf course superintendents.

The National, of course, is the finger-snapping expression for the Golf Course Superintendents Association of America. Osterman serves as secretary-treasurer of the group.

There's a \$90 fee for joining the National, modest by most standards.

"There's a lot to be accomplished with those 90 bucks, too," Osterman explained. "The thing that puzzles all of us in the executive branch is that not enough members make the National work for them."

Of course, the educational opportunities for dues-paying supers are coming out both ends of the barrel, so to speak.

"We have visual aids galore," Osterman advised. "And they're available to everyone. There's just a storehouse of information. Sad, but most of the time it just goes begging."

Osterman cited the recent international turf conference as an example of lethargic response to important offerings by the National.

"We had set up a meeting for representatives of the

various spin-off chapters around the country," Osterman told. "Know how many showed up? Just 30 of 93. That's less than one-third. You can't go around criticizing the group, when you're content to stay out of the main arena."

The National also offers each member two free subscriptions to the association's informative periodical, Golf Course Management.

"You wouldn't believe the number of people who don't even bother to fill out a subscription blank," Osterman continued. "We didn't get too many takers. I can't understand it. That was something for nothing. And it still is!"

Osterman brought up these isolated examples, only as a counter to the frequently-raised question: "What does the National do for me?"

"There's another reason for bringing this up," Osterman added. "We're still looking to swell our ranks. There's still fertile ground to be tapped for increased numbers in the organization. There is strength in numbers and we need all we can muster."

Osterman touched on a popular and controversial subject -- certification of the golf course superintendent.

"Our certification program might need some alterations," Osterman said. "It hasn't turned out the way it was expected when it was formed and employed. However, there are benefits derived from participation. For one thing, we have found that the certified superintendent averages out to \$3,000 more in salary figures compared to the super who has not been certified."

Despite this attractive lure, many superintendents shy away from trying to become certified.

"It's true," Osterman lamented. "Less than 10 percent of our total membership is certified. But we have a study group looking into the overall picture. We might have to make changes.

"Then, too, we might have to give more time and effort to making the presence of certification known to the public. Right now, it hasn't had too much exposure. What it needs is some clout. How to establish it is something else. But certification can be made to work for the super as well as the club who requires his expertise."

Osterman is sympathetic with his profession over the emphasis on course maintenance as the whipping boy in the explanation for rising costs in the operation of the country club.

"We sure seem to take a lot of flak when the finance committees start looking for the source of red ink," Osterman cracked. "It is strange, too. It's as if the cost of fertilizer is the only thing that has gone up in the inflationary years. There are areas, other than the golf course, which must accept responsibility for the increase in outlay for the overall operation of the club. Hopefully, club officials can see beyond the first tee."

Even the availability of Osterman to National members for this particular meeting points up the professional image of the GCSAA.

"We just don't sit back in our headquarters and count the dues money," Osterman concluded. "We're there to help each individual member any way that's feasible. The National's for its members."

Germy Finn

## Editorial

As editor of this publication, I feel compelled to comment on the Dow Chemical ad appearing in recent issues of many trade publications.

I have often thought (but never said) that "Caddy Shack" set our professional standing back 40 years. This ad has only served to reinforce an already tarnished image of superintendents and club members. Being depicted as "Carl" rankles me quite a bit. I think what really bothers me most is that the perpetrator of this ad assumed that every super would see himself in this ad. Sure, we all have a day, once in a while, when we feel bedraggled, belittled, beleaguered, and bewildered; but I hate being depicted as feeling this way every day. It is as if it were part of the job, something we should expect.

Another aspect of this ad that gnaws away at me is the way my members are depicted. I am, of course, assuming they are trying to show "average" country club members; which your and my members are. I am sure I can speak for most of us when I say the type of members depicted in the ad are only the rarest exceptions. Country club members that I have met in 16 years (and 6 clubs) have always conducted themselves as perfect ladies and gentlemen. We have all formed close working and personal relationships with some of our members. We should all rebel at having them shown this way. I wonder how some club members that may see this ad may react to seeing themselves shown as uncultured boobs.

I can't help but wish that Dow Chemical, its' ad agency, and our own G.C.S.A.A. had looked and thought twice before allowing this one to hit the presses.

Charles R. Lane

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## This is the week that was - Greenskeeper's Diary

**Friday** - In at dawn again and fell over the barn dog, before I got a light on. Friday is the day we do EVERYTHING. Assistant late again, sometimes I wonder about him. He wouldn't even hold still when I had to cut the bubble gum out of his hair - got mad because I cut his headband. This is the day I was going to spray because I missed last Friday that should have gone on the Friday before that. Maybe Monday. Maybe by then the cutworms will have turned to moths and have flown away. Looped around the course in the pre-dawn light and saw four joggers, a mushroom picker, two ball hoppers in the pond, three members walking dogs, an old Italian lady cutting dandelions and a partridge in a pear tree. Threw a rock at the last mentioned. I love the course early in the morning - so quiet, so peaceful and tranquil. I think I'll call the state troopers and have all these people arrested. Picked up the remains of a big beer party by the fifteenth then went to work.

**Saturday** - Everybody in the world loves weekends but Greenskeepers. More turf disasters have happened on Saturday and Sunday than all the Mondays, Tuesdays, Wednesdays, Thursdays and Fridays put together. Right off the bat four pins and a dozen markers missing and the usual moronic messages written in the sand traps...why can't they write inspirational thoughts or a weather report? A neat group partied last night. All imported beer, an empty Southern Comfort bottle and two Cutty Sark's -member's kids. Went to look at a very large pupa dangling from the tree by the ninth, and after gazing in wonder for two seconds, realized it was a tampon. Left it there, maybe it will hatch.

**Sunday** - Greens mower operator failed to show 'til I had mowed five greens, I would have fired him but then I would have had to finish. Things looking pretty good today. Can't wait 'til Monday to see what the hell will happen next.

**Credit: Hutchinson Valley**

## How to Write an Article

I have been reading this newsletter for about 13 years. I'm sure I could count on the fingers of one hand all the article written by superintendents.

Each of us has our own reason for not writing an article. "I'm too busy." Bull! I know most of you guys are not under a rock all winter. "I don't have anything to write about." Bull, again! Every super has at least one article in him. "I don't have anything new to tell my peers." You do, whether you know it or not. "I'm not a writer." No, you aren't and neither are any of the rest of us.

Perhaps a few helpful hints from a non-writer are in order here. I have written a couple of articles for this newsletter, both were of a technical nature, but the procedure involved doesn't vary that much from one type of article to another.

Loosely speaking, there are two types of articles; editorial and educational. Editorial articles should tell

**JOB OPENING Mt. Pleasant - Lowell**  
Contact: Mike Cambray 452-8228

what you feel. Educational articles should tell what you know.

Let's assume you have decided to write something. Where do you start? Most successful authors have a trick that works every time. Sit down and start writing. As thoughts pop into your mind, jot them down. You will be amazed at how one thought will lead to another. Don't be concerned about putting them in order, that will come later. I have found a cassette recorder handy for this first step. I can talk much faster than I can write.

Now that you have this jumbled mass of thoughts in front of you, start arranging them in rough order. Use a pencil and number each line of thought. If you don't like its spot, erase the number.

The next step is the old tried and true outline; Roman numerals and all. This gives you structure and will assign priorities to each idea or thought. It will show their relationship to one another.

Once you are satisfied that the outline is complete, the next step is either the easiest or the hardest, depending on your point of view. Get creative. Make up a few flowery phrases and flowing prose to go between the lines of your outline. You may surprise yourself.

If you have gotten this far, then type the darn thing up, double spaced and mail it to me. I reserve the right to correct spelling and delete profanity where necessary. We do not cut paragraphs or any other part of an article. If you wrote the whole thing we should print it.

If you have read an article that you would like to see printed in our newsletter, let me know. With some effort, I can usually get reprint permission from almost anyone.

Any "letter to the editor" is most welcome. This is your newsletter and your sounding board. Any editorial should be signed. In special instances we may be able to run an editorial letter without your signature.

So, when the leaves start to turn, take a break and write an article. Who knows? You may get to be newsletter editor someday.

Charles R. Lane

Our thanks to Brian Cowan (Eastward Ho) and Mark Klimm (Holden Hills) for having us for our last two meetings and tournaments. All reports indicate that everyone enjoyed themselves on both occasions. Thanks again, fellows.

While I am on the subject, the gentlemanly thing to do is to let our host superintendent know how many of us are coming for the meeting and meal. When the actual count for the meal exceeds the reservations by 100%, it makes for bad feelings all around. In most cases it only takes a minute.

**SUPPER RESERVATIONS**

Please fill out and return by July 10

To: Paul Miller  
173 Salem St.  
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Yes, I/we will be staying for supper  
July 13                      Number of people \_\_\_\_\_

Names \_\_\_\_\_

Club or Business \_\_\_\_\_

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# NEWSLETTER

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