

NEWSLETTER



April, 1975



Golf Course Superintendents Association

OF NEW ENGLAND, INC.

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Heat on the Superintendent

The heat's on the golf course superintendent, and it doesn't have anything to do with the weather ahead. This is not about sticky Julys or simmering Augusts. It is about the superintendent's future.

Dr. William Daniel of Purdue University made a hit and run stop on his busy schedule last month at the Massachusetts Turf Conference. On the podium he brought everyone up to date on green construction and also offered a re-introduction of the Purrr-Wick system of building a more uniform feeding basis for greens.

Away from the formal part of his visit, Dr. Daniel touched on a subject which touches every superintendent at one point or another in his career. That is job protection, a common topic these days when furloughs, layoffs and whatever you want to call them characterize the economic recession.

"The superintendent must rely on himself for job protection," Dr. Daniel warned. "Other professions do have safeguards, either into contracts or working agreements. As far as I know, the only job protection the golf course superintendent has is his performance."

The upgrading of the superintendent should be the combination of four phases, according to Dr. Daniel. "The superintendent has just now completed but two of the phases," he explained. "The first was a matter of simplicity. The profession, in order to change an old image, had to adopt a new name and so it went from greenskeeper to superintendent. But that was a lull in between phase one and phase two until the certification program was formulated. However, even that isn't in its most desirable form. Certification just may have to become mandatory instead of voluntary. . . the way it is today.

The other two phases are follow-ups to certification. Phase three should be a licensing system. "Every qualified superintendent should be licensed," Dr. Daniel remarked. "Other professions require documented proof in order to practice them. The superintendent is only protecting himself in this matter. Finally, the phase four should provide some form of penalty for those would-be superintendents who practice the profession without a license. This gives stronger impact to the licensing phase."

Perhaps Dr. Daniel's suggestions appear too complicated at a first reading, but they do offer the superintendent some semblance of protection against the invasion of vocational jumpers who would offer their services at bargain prices in a threat to any job security.

"You can't really tell a country club or a municipal course that they must hire a certain superintendent," Dr. Daniel advised. "But if the situation were such that they were educated to the license and certification system, the chances are the fly-by-night supers would be weeded out."

When talk of job protection hits a conversation, the arrangement of tenure for teachers usually comes into focus, "I suppose the teachers have the greatest form of job protection there is," Dr. Daniel told. "Sometimes teachers can slide along their entire career doing a mediocre job. But once they land tenure, it takes a mighty big explosion to upset them."

The presence of so many variables in the makeup of the superintendent's job atmosphere actually work against the protection of his position. "Education again must play a big part

in the situation," Dr. Daniel added. "We talk of performance as the superintendent's big weapon, but sometimes that performance is affected by circumstances beyond his control. Therefore, the people who employ him must realize that nature could upset the superintendent's finest and best-laid plans. He can be faulted for what Mother Nature does."

Performance, then, as to come from both sides -- the employer and the employee. If the country club understands what goes into the making of top golf playing conditions, it will perform accordingly. Then, it's up to the performance of the superintendent. If he gets the most out of what he has to work with, he can't be faulted. . . or shouldn't be faulted.

So, the heat's on the super. . . and it isn't even summer yet!

Gerry Finn

Next Meeting

Where: Bass River When: April 7, 1975

Times: 10:00 - Demonstration by Mrs. Jane Coogan on the Bantam Steam Cleaner
10:30 - Directors Meeting
11:00 - Regular Meeting
12:00 - Buffet
1:00 - Golf
7:00 - Dinner at the Riverway Lobster House.

Directions: From mid cape highway, take exit 8, go right. Go by the High School and take left on Regional Ave. Club is just down the street.

Experience or Education...

This may come as a shock to some of the seasoned golf course superintendents around the ation's fairways but they could be the last of a fading breed -- those who rely strictly on experience as their mental tools in practicing their profession.

Dr. Joseph Troll of the University of Massachusetts doesn't completely agree with the growing trend to close the door on experience when a job opening is being studied. He always has maintained that the practical aspects of the profession are difficult to overlook. However, he does admit that a good many turf schools are rising so that their supply no doubt will run roughshod over the demand for supers in the near future.

Another expert in the turf field, Dr. William Daniel of Purdue, cites the expansion of the turf managing educational program as the signal that the superintendents of tomorrow, maybe some of today, will be those persons plotting the improvement of the golf course on paper rather than learning slowly in the field.

"There definitely has been a change in the past 10 years," Dr. Daniel revealed. "And I suppose the superintendent's profession has been responsible for it. In making the profession more attractive with higher salaries and increasing benefits, the young people of today are diving into turf management programs just as they did right after World War II when there was a sudden rush to become a school teacher."

Dr. Daniel inserts some stark realism into his observations of the superintendent's scene. "Right after World War II, they stopped making kids," he noted. "And the results are evident now. There is no need for as many teachers as several years ago. The market is flooded. And in most cases, the few jobs that are open go to the applicant with the better education. There is no such thing as experience here. You don't get experience. Furthermore, most schools aren't looking for the experienced teacher."

Sound Off Cont.

willingness to encourage an exchange of ideas and continually evaluate ourselves. As has been pointed out, it appears that we may have fallen into a rut. Recent changes proposed may begin to smooth this rut.

Don Hearn

Dear Sound Off:

I would like to comment on Mr. Kirkman's letter in the last month's issue. I agree fully with his concept of new imagination and more aggressive meetings to help our attendance.

On the other hand, I disagree with his negative feelings toward the attendance of salesman at the meetings. Many of our salesmen are very knowledgeable in our field of endeavor and will add much to our meetings. Isn't the gaining of knowledge one of the main reasons for the Association.

In regards to what class of membership they would come under or the legality of it; I join Ron in saying let people with more wisdom in these matters handle it.

Sincerely,
Bruce Petrelli
Canton, Mass.

March 4, 1975

Gentlemen:

Regarding the article #2 passed at the February meeting, I would not question the legality as to the bylaws, nor would I question the type of membership classification.

However, to criticize a committee after the fact is in poor taste, when in fact the overwhelming majority has ruled that the committee did exactly as instructed by the President.

There is no "easy way" out of an attendance problem, but steps in the right direction have been taken. When eight out of a possible ten articles proposed by the committee are passed by large majority vote, it would appear that this is what the membership wants. To deny membership wants is to deny the existence of an association, which incidentally, is why an association is formed - for the good of the whole.

In summary, the ballots have been cast. The people have spoken, now let the duly elected officers carry out that order.

Sincerely,
John M. O'Connell
Dennis, Mass.

"Regarding Mr. Finn's article in February Newsletter, 'More Walking, Less Riding?', I must take exception with one of his views:

"The 'stag-flation' is which we find ourselves for 1975, may or may not affect the amount that golfers use golf cars. Mr. Finn's view that the usage rate will fall off may be correct. Our view is that weather will be the single most determining factor in 1975. If it is good, golf car revenue will be up; if it is bad, it will be down."

"There are two reasons for this belief; historically, golf car revenue has not fallen off in recession times; and, our volume of business for 1975 indicates golf courses are buying and leasing at a very optimistic level.

"My major contention with the article lies in the statement that the superintendent 'has always been an enemy of the golf car', unless 'they have a stake in the business.'"

"It is my experience that superintendents, while they are essentially negative on the use of golf carts, for the most part realize, whether or not 'they have a stake in the business', that golf cars contribute substantially to the amount of gross earnings and profits generated by the golf course. As such, I have found

they are enthused participants in the golf car decision process and have become interested in insuring that their own yearly budgets contain a significant share of the revenue from golf car operations.

"In short, stating that superintendents are totally negative towards golf cars unless they are getting 'a stake' out of its operation, does superintendents a disservice.

"In my opinion, superintendents are pvoing to be informed businessmen who recognize the profit generated by golf car operations and wish to participate in those profits for the overall good of golf course operations."

EDWARD G. McGUIRE
Polaris, E-Z-Go

The biggest source of revenue at a club is the golf course, itself. It's condition should be the superintendent's main concern. Golf cars are a detriment to that concern. . . in the same class with snow mold, dollar spot and chinch bugs!

"I was indeed flattered to see my name mentioned by one of your subscribers in a recent edition of your fine Newsletter.

"Yes, it is true that I have left St. Andrews. It was a choice hard to come by because of my long and cherished relationship with that grand old club. But I have decided to spread my wings a little and have entered into a new position which I find both fascinating and challenging.

"Presently I am employed as greenkeeper at a new and exciting golf compound called Foxhills. Ottershaw Surrey which is not too far distant from London.

"The golfing layouts no doubt will become among those now reputed as among the best of the empire. They contain the touch of another chap I believe visited the United States recently. He is Fred Hawtree who has a special genius to create courses out of outstanding terrain without relieving it of its natural beauty.

"The two course of Foxhills each measure just under 7,000 yards and are of the same quality and challenge. They are built in four nine-hole loops and the eighteenth holes of both share the same massive green, in front of the new clubhouse with the drinkers and diners looking down on the putting from the upstairs public rooms.

"Fred has been inspired in this venture from his observations of many of the world's finest layouts. There is talk circulating about the long 14th hole on the Longcross course. It has been said that someday it will take its place with those holes fashioned as collector's items.

"The 14th is reminiscent of the finishing hole at Pebble Beach. It has a lone tree in the fairway with inviting water following the route to the putting surface. There is also water to be carried on the finishing shot to a smallish green. It is the longest of all the holes, measured at being 542 yards.

"Another unique feature of Foxhills is its availability. Without fuss, protocol or restriction, the course is open to everyone. No need for a letter of introduction from your club secretary or handicap certificate or advance negotiations. You just turn up, pay your green fee and play and that goes for weekends, too.

"I'm afraid I've said too much already. But since the move from St. Andrews was one of major decision, I thought your readers might like to catch a glimpse of Foxhills. I am truly impressed with its possibilities, as well as its practicalities.

"My best to everyone. You people are doing a splendid job."

JOHN CAMPBELL
Foxhills, Surrey

Thanks for the interesting travelogue, John. . . and good luck to you.

(That puts the cap on the bottle for this time. Keep those cards and letters coming. This is your space. Take advantage of it.)

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Golf Course Superintendents Association

Although it's just beginning to surface, the same syndrome has caught hold of the golf course world. "Now, they haven't stopped turning out turf management majors. So, this market will become flooded and the same type of selectivity will be evident in replacing retiring superintendents."

Dr. Daniel recalls that the golf course superintendent of years ago did not command the respect and attention he does today. Therefore, since he was hardly noticed, little thought went into replacing him. Usually, it was simply a matter of elevating his assistant.

"This problem comes right back to the old story of upgrading the profession," Dr. Daniel advises. "The sad part of it all is that fine, decent people are bound to get hurt. I include in my theory of advancing the superintendent's vocational position a slow but reluctant bumping off of the veteran."

Dr. Troll isn't completely convinced the country club will put an exclusive requirement of education on its turf job openings. "I guess I'm from the old school," he contended. "I still think there's room for both in golf. However, I'm leaning to the fact that one can't work without the other. It has to be a combination of education and experience. So, in a way, I'm saying education is moving in as a distinct qualification for the superintendent's profession. With so many people coming out of schools, the employers have to be influenced when a young man includes a college degree in his presentation."

So, we just could be seeing a sort of passing of the guard. Whether superintendents have been behind the times or not is likely to be answered in the future. Some day those who turn their backs on education just might be forced to turn their backs on the profession.

Gerry Finn

"friends" for the answers.

When Mr. Hern was chosen by the chair to stimulate membership, he was not allowed to choose his own committee, but the same individual that is on two or three committees now was chosen. Why weren't other members of the Association chosen? The problem is beginning to surface.

I think that Mr. Hern accomplished what he set out to do, stimulate the membership. But apparently, actions taken, must be within the confines of the rules which have created the problem from the beginning.

Yes, Mr. Kirkham, we have fallen into a rut, which the sub committee is trying to get us out of. Members are not coming because of the click which has been established. They cannot become involved, but they may pay their dues.

I am sure Mr. Bunn would be more than willing to secure speakers for the education program. But until there is a membership which is involved, his hands are tied.

I do agree with Mr. Kirkham on one point and I quote "we will leave the legality of the salesman rule, for people of more wisdom than I".

In conclusion, I can't imagine Mr. Kirkham not realizing that the salesmen do want to participate. Possibly during the "closed door" meetings, it was the salesmen and the superintendents not allowed to join who were talking. Because of the situation of the N. E. Association, other Associations were or are being formed. If the Association does not take a hard look in retrospect, it must may end up a "chosen few".

Mr. Kirkham, I was grandmaster of a fraternity in college. Wouldn't you agree we have both outgrown that stage?

Gregg Deegan,
Unicorn

Golf Course Superintendents Association
Of New England, Inc.

I would like to offer these personal comments and rebuttal to some of the statements published in the "Sound Off" column in the March issue of the Newsletter.

Since the passing of so-called "rule 2" had no effect upon membership status of salesmen, I agree with the writer that they do not fit into any present class of membership. There was no attempt made to include them as members, only as invited guests.

The writers interpretation of Article II, Section 1 is correct. His interpretation of the Board of Directors action is not. All recommendations submitted by the committee were voted on by the Board of Directors as to whether or not they should be presented to the membership for consideration. Although the Directors have discretionary power regarding guests, it was felt that such a controversial subject should be presented to the membership for approval or rejection. When "rule 2" was brought before the membership it was overwhelmingly endorsed.

Requiring a legal interpretation of the bylaws as a result of the memberships action is unrealistic. Since the bylaws are specific in their purpose, under what auspices would a legal ruling be formulated?

Regarding the writers conclusion that the committee failed to analyze the reasons for the lack of membership participation, and realizing this is subjective criticism, his presumptuousness is understandable. Considerable thought was given this problem. The committee felt that suggestions submitted were ideas that would increase participation. Whether or not this will materialize remains to be seen.

I wholeheartedly endorse the writer's feeling toward a more topical educational program, as education is the cornerstone of a more professional superintendent. I am sure the Educational Committee will consider the suggestions.

The association is going through a period of change. I feel the changes that have and will take place are an indication of our

Sound Off

(Come on in, the controversial waters are just fine. This is another way of saying Sound Off is still in a position of fanning the hot issues of the times. This feature is for everyone who partakes of the Newsletter. It isn't any exclusive vehicle for the superintendent or the green chairman or the editor, for that matter. Everyone with an opinion, gripe or suggestion is welcome to air his or her views. All letters must include the name and address of the sender, although the Newsletter will withhold one or the other or both upon request. All correspondence should be sent to Newsletter Mail Bag, 290 North Road, Sudbury, Mass. 01776. The Newsletter reserves the right to comment on all published letters.)

March 13, 1975

In re to Mr. Kirkham's letter last month, one can see why the N. E. Association is in a dilemma.

To ascertain that if in fact the salesmen do not qualify for any the six classifications, would indicate that the classifications are wrong. The 35 "friends" of the Association, which ultimately "fund" the newsletter, contribute to scholarship funds, etc., are being taken advantage of. To tell the peddlers that your money is acceptable but you are not, would make anyone's blood boil.

Then yes, a discriminate decision from Article XII Section I, tells us that the N.E. Association is a "Closed Shop". If new members are not allowed to participate in the sub committees, the association will become stagnant, unresponsive and unproductive.

Since being indoctrinated into the Association, we have been led to believe that we, the members of the N.E. are a "special breed of cat". Such affiliation with the salesmen into our sacred meetings has led us to believe that the members would lose their image or esteem. The N.E. Association is a "click" which is very difficult to permeate yet this same "click" is looking out to its

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