

THE UNDEFINED ROLE OF ASSISTANT SUPERINTENDENT

THE SCENE

Reporting to the budget committee in the board room on October 16, Bill Jones, superintendent of Wayside CC, continued: "The grounds staff for fiscal '73, beginning December 1, will consist of four full-time employees, two part-time (summer) high-school seniors and two undergraduate, two-year students specializing in turf management, one from Penn State, the other from the Stockbridge School, University of Massachusetts. Both will be with us starting April 1. They will be provided room and board, occupying the room over the pro shop. To round out our knowledgeable and experienced crew, Ron Hilger will complete his second year with us as my assistant before moving on to a job of his own next year."

This last statement prompted a question from the new young and aggressive board member, Harry Sommers, a very successful banker as well as low handicap golfer. "Why are we placing so much emphasis on the selection of turf students for members of our crew? Wasn't young Hilger capable of getting his own golf course upon graduation? Is he necessary? And those two turf students trainees who will live over the pro shop and

The proper training of assistant superintendents, argues the author, is one guarantee for the future that quality will prevail on the golf course. And the responsibility for this important function rests squarely with today's head superintendents and club officials

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eat at the club, isn't that costing the club money?"

It would seem that Sommers had fed all of these rapid-fire questions into a computer and now was ready for the readout. Because he deals with figures everyday and his mind functions like a calculator, one might imagine that this is exactly what transpired, or very close to it.

In reality, this archtypical scene has been re-enacted many times since those two pioneer agronomists, Lawrence Dickinson of The Stockbridge School and H.B. Musser of Penn State University, be-

gan training students who wanted to specialize in the turf management field in preparation to becoming golf course superintendents. The basic concept of these two men has changed little regarding academic curriculum and actual field experience on a golf course prior to, during and following formal classroom activity. These principals find favor with Joe Troll and J.M. Duich today at Stockbridge School and Penn State, respectively.

THREE INTERESTED AND CONCERNED GROUPS

Few of us recognize that the involvement of Dickinson and Musser, as teachers of the first turf students, evolved from the concern of United States Golf Assn. officials about the lack of "trained greenkeepers." The association had published in the Green Section Journal an article seeking answers and inquiring if it was not about time some action was taken about the situation. The other factors, capturing especially the attention of Professor Dickinson, were the many questions issuing each year from the golf course fellows concerning specifically the cultivation of turfgrass used each year at the time of the exhibits of the Horti-

continued

ASSISTANT *continued*

cultural Society. They expressed interest and outright concern about the methods by which they might do a better job at their respective clubs. As a direct result of these inquiries, the School for Turf Management within the Stockbridge School was initiated in 1926.

It is interesting that in the same year, various "greenkeepers" in Ohio and the adjacent states, banded together in a common cause to "collect and disseminate practical knowledge of the problems of greenkeeping with a view of more efficient and economical maintenance of golf courses." Out of this action the present Golf Course Superintendents Assn. of America was formed.

Even more interesting and ironic is that these same parties, the United States Golf Assn., the great agronomic oriented universities and the GCSAA are still trying, in harmony, to accomplish the same principals and needs almost 50 years later. Having criss-crossed the golfing scene since 1928, I can say without reservation that many problems that were real in 1926 have been solved. But like all progressive groups attentive to the needs of their society, the quest for quality is being greatly enhanced by the appearance on the turf maintenance scene of the Ron Hilgers with the practical help of the Bill Joneses and the total understanding of men such as Harry Sommers and the golf clubs that he represents.

THE ANSWER

Bill Jones, a turf management graduate of James State 12 years ago, had anticipated a few questions and was prepared to provide the answers. The last time this challenge came up concerning turf students "living in" at the club was seven years ago, when he wasn't as well fortified as today. Without hesitation Jones reached into his attaché case and pulled out a folder containing copies of information relating to the turf management students who had worked on the golf course in previous years—how long they had worked at Wayside, their performance record, Jones' letter of achievement to their re-

spective schools, where they went to work after graduating and where they are presently located as golf superintendents. Obviously, because they were his "boys" Jones' interest in them continues. The next folder Jones brought out contained the complete information on the two students who would arrive for work on April 1. Their high-school records and their extra-curricular activities clearly indicated their interest in the horticultural field. The last folder he pulled from the case was reached for by Sommers who opened it immediately.

The first item Sommers found in Hilger's file was his resume, an impressive bit of background information, indeed. Seeing the attached picture of Hilger brought an immediate response from Sommers. "Yes, I remember this man. He does your chemical application work. We had quite a chat last summer while the spray tank was being filled just off the fourth fairway. The impression I received was that he certainly knew why he was out there and the exact nature of the disease he was treating on a preventive basis. I remember, he even knew the chemical properties of the fungicide being used. But I didn't know at the time he was your assistant. In other words, Hilger is a working assistant. This throws a little different light on the subject."

THE INVOLVEMENT

The turf management trainee students at Wayside, who are fortunate in having a room and board situation, really don't cost the club "extra money" as Sommers thought. Actually, the student-club relationship is more of a mutual benefit arrangement than appears on the surface. Most of them get "hooked" on a golf oriented relationship as a result of their love for the game and the intrinsic ingredients that entice them to become involved in a golf environment—ecology, open space concept of life, vocation that offers a partnership with nature, which can become very personal to a young man seeking to relate his life to a living medium and something that offers more personal returns than simply monetary compensation.

Who, then, Mr. Sommers, is in a better position to offer a helping hand to such young men than the golfer himself, his club and the great golf associations that are present in every metropolitan community in the country? A mutual responsibility with your superintendent, Bill Jones, who is interested in the future generations to provide greater quality? Yes, indeed. Even an obligation to share this great opportunity.

Drawing further on my own experience and observation of others in the turf field, some of the more successful maintenance programs are directly traceable to the infusion of new ideas into older, practical procedures. Thus, the blending of the academic and practical into workable programs are a simple matter of teamwork. It isn't too far afield to compare the role of the assistant superintendent to that of the vice president of a going concern in charge of production, freeing the superintendent to cover other important areas of the total program.

THE FUTURE: AN OBSERVATION

It is really too bad that this budget committee hearing at Wayside didn't take place in February '73 following the GCSAA's conference and show in Boston. As a club official, Sommers could have been an honored guest with full privileges of viewing the great maintenance exhibits and hearing a variety of subjects by golf course superintendents, academic representatives and technicians from the sophisticated equipment and chemicals firms present.

Specifically, Sommers would have been greatly interested in the views and experiences related by Dr. Joseph Troll, professor of the Stockbridge School and successor to the late Professor Dickinson. One of his most important quotes was from the January, 1923, Bulletin of the Green Section mentioned earlier: "The supply of competent greenkeepers is far below the demand. It is almost impossible for a new club, or an old one which has lost the services of its greenkeeper, to fill the position with an experienced man. At present there are no systematic efforts being made

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CLUB EXEMPT? *from page 50*

tion that most women are unable or unwilling to do a certain job; preferences of co-workers or customers; traditional restrictions for jobs involving heavy physical labor and the fact that physical facilities are not available for both sexes.

Although the above guidelines should forestall any potential problems under Title VII, the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission makes several other recommendations that they feel are implied in Title VII. Their basic premise is this: Because whites predominate in today's work force, they have an inherent advantage in learning about job openings. To equalize this advantage, the commission believes employers should take positive steps to establish contacts in the black community, which can be used to disseminate information about job openings, advertise job openings in minority news media and send information about job openings to schools with large minority group enrollment. In addition, the EEOC notes that some minority group persons have difficulty in adjusting to their jobs and that special efforts should be made to counsel them on their problems.

For the club today, the first consideration under Title VII requirements is to determine whether the club comes within the exemption. If it does not, then the club should review its hiring and employment practices to ensure that there are no procedures that could be pointed to as discriminatory. □



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to train men for this work. The Green Section wishes to start a movement to correct this condition."

Fifty years later those of us with practical and academic backgrounds continue to give these young men the opportunity to prepare for a sound future as golf course superintendents.

Such an attitude on our part is justified because, we, the practical men in turf management, believe as Dr. Troll and Dr. Duich do. Troll's expression on the seasoning of young men following two years in the classroom is very explicit. Again, from his presentation at the conference, "We do not claim to turn out experienced golf course superintendents, but we do graduate people who will be well qualified as superintendents after a period of seasoning in the field."

This is what it is all about, Mr. Sommers.

With costs increasing for just about everything, including the high cost of maintenance labor, materials and equipment, we can only hope that quality will remain our byword—even though we in the turf field have to adjust to the changes being thrust upon us in the name of economy, efficiency and environmental necessity.

Adequate provisions for an interested and reliable maintenance staff must remain a high priority if the quality of golf course maintenance is to survive the "change" decades. Proper encouragement to both turf management trainees and qualified assistant golf course superintendents are a necessary part of this picture, a mutual responsibility to be shared by progressive superintendents and clubs. To those club officials who are looking to apply Ben Franklin's adage, "A penny saved is a penny earned," there is this rejoinder: Penny-pinching has never proved to be the true road to turf quality. Quality is a highly desirable facet in all things in life. The satisfaction and justifiable pride of the golfer and the professional image of the superintendent is totally dependent on quality. Let us continue this quest together. □

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president of the CMAA. He views the current negative publicity about the club industry as unproductive. "Clubs have always faced problems," Hall says, "but there is no overwhelming problem we can't overcome with positive action. We have to look at the situation as a challenge and opportunity, not as the end.

"I think some clubs and managers are spending too much time reading adverse stories, instead of taking action to solve their problems. The successful clubs are those that keep up with the times. There is more to this business than just food and beverage."

Another leader among club managers is John Simmons, Tacoma (Wash.) G&CC and a secretary treasury of the CMAA.

"Clubs have much to offer in an increasingly complex and mobile society," Simmon says. "The potential demand is greater than ever before. "There will be changes—some of them perhaps traumatic. We must seek to affect this change through conscious design rather than have it occur through the force of circumstances. It calls for exhaustive analysis, perceptive foresight and a determination to answer honestly the question, 'What business is our club in?'"

That is the key question that should be asked and answered within every club regularly. Because, after all, a club exists primarily to serve its members. It must also be a citizen of the community. Old ideas die hard, but those clubs with leadership willing to change will survive and prosper. □

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