

Course Maintenance Costs Compared Over A 26 Year Period

By HERB GRAFFIS

"The figures tell the story of what has happened in golf course management. Maybe they also point to what is going to happen." This reflection of a supt. of a prominent midwestern metropolitan district club was made as he went over his annual operating costs from 1937-38 through the club's fiscal year, Nov., 1963—Oct., 1964.

In the 20 years reviewed, maintenance costs of the course ranged from \$12,600 to \$69,000. Both figures are exclusive of the supt's salary.

This supt's course almost invariably is in perfect condition. Last summer when many courses in the area were hard hit by disease, his course suffered only minimum damage. It gets continual heavy play from a demanding membership.

Budgets and actual figures, and various notations on the various annual reports show that the supt. generally has had understanding and cooperative green chairmen. It also is evident that the club has had a most resourceful and dedicated supt. as his performance in the lean years of the late '30s and during World War II, plainly reflect an able man doing the work of three, and ingeniously cutting corners to save money while preserving a high standard of course condition.

Supt Never Got "Fat"

During the depression and war years, the supt. took a cut in a salary that had been \$2,400 a year. That sum is less than now is paid for labor in December when a foresighted work program keeps key men busy in an off month.

The labor portion (exclusive of the supt's salary) of 1937-38 maintenance costs was 43 per cent. For 1962-63, labor costs (not including the supt's sal-

ary) ran to approximately 64 per cent.

August was the big month for labor cost in 1938, amounting to \$1,200. August also was the top labor cost month of 1963 at \$5,200. The low month for wages in 1937 was November when \$150 was paid out. The December, 1962, payroll was lowest of the fiscal year, at \$2,500. The jump in winter costs over 25 years is accounted for not only by the increase from approximately 50 cents an hour to \$1.95 per hour in the wage rate, but the necessity of a winter work schedule enabling the club to keep good men steadily employed cleaning, repairing and painting equipment.

Show Where Money Goes

In the earlier reports, "Grounds," "Tennis," and "Landscape," were separately listed. Now all outside work, except on the clubhouse and pool, is included in the maintenance expense roundup. In 1937-38 when the course expense was \$12,600, about \$1,200 was spent on tennis courts and \$1,200 on landscape.

Items reported in the 1937-38 maintenance expense summary:

Labor, fertilizer, seed, disinfectant (now listed as fungicides, herbicides etc.), equipment maintenance, equipment repair, electricity, water, phone (\$75 a year), ice (\$100-May thru Sept.) gas and oil and sand.

Didn't Work Out

Going back beyond the period mentioned here the 1931-32 budget showed a venture in theory that can be laughed at now but was a headache then. The greenkeeper's salary was cut and a "turf expert" at \$50 a month was engaged. The "expert" did not perform expected miracles. The greenkeeper had to work long hours at back-breaking labor. The next year the club decided its own man was the "expert" it needed. So, he got his pay cut restored and the "expert" went elsewhere.

Today the budget and summary of expenses show "Renewal of Equipment" listed for depreciation and replacement as a regular expense to be considered taxwise. Such work as course alterations and other new jobs are listed in footnotes as capital improvements.