

THE FRONT OFFICE

OPINION PAGE



EDUCATION NEVER ENDS

Fifteen years ago I left my newspaper job in Tulsa, OK, moved to Ohio and began my career in the turf and landscape industry. Before I had a chance to unpack, the publisher, Art Edwards, handed me a plane ticket and sent me to a conference at Purdue University in Indiana. All he said was, "Attend every session you can, talk to showgoers and make sure you visit each exhibitor and learn about his products."

Today, I'll bet I know at least 100 golf course superintendents and sports turf managers who started their education at Purdue's Midwest Turf Conference. For each state or regional conference

I've attended the past decade-and-a-half, I've met hundreds more student-professionals and learned that education never ends. From Massachusetts to Mississippi, from Florida to Nebraska, from New Hampshire to Arizona, from New Jersey to Missouri, from Georgia to California, the education process continues throughout their working lives (and even into retirement) for dedicated turf and landscape managers.

The important thing to remember is that it wasn't always this way. Golf course superintendents in the '30s rarely left their courses. The only time they got together, even on a local level, was when early teachers such as O.J. Noer, Burton Musser, Fred Grau and Tom Mascaro put together traveling seminars with distributors in cities across the country. If the superintendent couldn't travel, then these pioneers decided they would travel to him.

I wish that I could have attended one of the old-time traveling seminars by Noer and his team. Fred Grau says there were frequently just six or eight superintendents sitting around a table at a local restaurant. For two or three hours they would listen to Noer, Musser, and the others pour out their knowledge. Superintendents would ask specific questions and get answers on the spot.

I sense that many athletic field managers today feel like golf course superintendents did in the 1930s. They are more concerned about missing something at work than gaining something away from work. They are unable to travel more than a few miles or take more than a few hours to attend education seminars and product exhibits. They are concerned that their management won't support travel outside of their city or state for the advancement of grounds or athletic field management at their facility.

Continuing education is never a waste of money for the individual or his facility. Newly acquired knowledge enriches everyone as it spreads from the turf manager to his staff. A few choice pieces of information gathered in one or two days away from the office can save days or weeks of time in the future. People you meet at conferences provide an entirely new perspective into common problems. Suddenly puzzles that made no sense to you before can be solved with the help of new information on products and techniques.

I never got to see Noer and Musser in action, but I have benefited greatly from the educational process they initiated. In each issue of **sportsTURF** I try to pass on some of the important techniques and products learned from meetings held each year across the country. But believe me, if you attend these meetings yourself you will never miss another. They are too important to you, to your staff and to your facility to miss.

Something tells me that astute managers of sports facilities know this, and will support your involvement in continuing education—if you just ask.

Bruce Shank

EVENTS

CALENDAR

OCTOBER

4 24th Annual Turfgrass Equipment, Irrigation and Supplies Field Day, sponsored by the GCSA of New Jersey, Rutgers Stadium and Golf Course, River Road, Piscataway, NJ. Contact: Dr. Henry Indyk, (201) 932-9453.

9-12 Florida Turfgrass Annual Conference and Show, Curtis Hixon Convention Center, Tampa, FL. Contact: Florida Turfgrass Assoc. Inc., 302 S. Graham Ave., Orlando, FL, (407) 898-6721.

NOVEMBER

8-11 Oklahoma Turfgrass Conference, Tulsa Convention Center, Tulsa, OK. Contact: Dr. Michael Kenna, Dept. of Horticulture and Landscape Architecture, 360 Agricultural Hall, Stillwater, OK 74078, (405) 624-5414.

13-15 Southern Turfgrass Conference and Show, Montgomery Civic Center, Montgomery, AL. Contact: Dr. Jeff Krans, (601) 325-2311.

14-16 Penn State Golf Turf Conference, Keller Conference Center, Pennsylvania State University, University Park, PA. Contact: Dr. Joseph Duich, Dept. of Agronomy, 405 Ag. Admin. Bldg., University Park, PA 16802, (814) 865-9853.

18-20 Green Team Conference and Trade Show, Buena Vista Palace, Walt Disney World, Orlando, FL. Sponsored by the Professional Grounds Management Society and the Associated Landscape Contractors of America. Contact: Allan Shulder, PGMS, 12 Galloway Ave., Suite 1E, Cockeysville, MD 21030, (301) 667-1833.