If there's one positive thing I can say about our corner of the green industry, it's that most of the individuals I've met over the last 40+ years, have 'stayed the course' and met the challenges to complete their careers in this often challenging vocation.

A few I met when I was a kid, and even now, after I’ve had the 17th anniversary of my 39th birthday, I still see quite a few of these fellas from time to time.

I met Junior Ruckman when I was 17 or 18 years old; he hasn't changed much. He kept his hair and lost a few pounds. Meanwhile, I've had to endure the exact opposite.

I recall attending golf course superintendent's meetings with my father in the 1960's (I was VERY young), and it was at those meetings or at field days where I met Lee Dieter and L.R. Bob Shields and his sons, Glenn and Mark (and they were VERY young). And I met another father and son, Bradley and Ralph Strouth, from Northwest Park G.C. Both are now retired.

Lee Dieter retired after a long career at Washington Golf & C.C. and Bob Shields passed away years ago, while still at Woodmont. In 1963, I met Bill Emerson at Crofton C.C. He spent quite a few years in this area, and then left for Arizona, spending many years there.

It was also in 1963 that Bob Miller found his way to the Suburban Club of Baltimore, and it took him 35+ years to find his way out. Bob Orazi and Chip McDonald were working for a company called Colonial Gardens (not the way Bob pronounces it) building Hobbits Glen in 1964-65. They're both very much around.

Back then, "Young Turks" was a term of affection used to describe assistant – turned - superintendent types like George Thompson, Sam Kessel, Allan McCurrah, Dickie Anderson, Tom Comalli, David Fairbank, "Poison Pen" Dennis McCammon, and a few other guys who migrated to the Mid-Atlantic from the North.

The camaraderie between older and younger superintendents was something to see. It was more like a group of big brothers and little brothers.

They gathered at a country club for an afternoon of golf followed by a dinner meeting that often ran 'till 9:30 p.m. They talked about ways to mow fairways at 1.25-1.50" (over the objections of their club officials!). Or how to control Fusarium ‘frog eye’ disease in bluegrass fairways. Or the feasibility of Bermudagrass fairways and tees in this area.

That was when Poa annua was under the attack tri-calcium arsenate, and the closing of putting greens during the winter months was a hot issue.

Today, as I see many of those careers change or come to a close, the new ‘Young Turks’ have emerged. And the cycle is complete.

But if there's anything different, I think it may be the camaraderie between the age groups. It seems to me that many of the ‘Young Turks’ in this organization have no older supers to mentor them as in year’s past; but they do have the advantage of a lot of new technology at their fingertips.

With all their electronic equipment they've evolved into the 'Electro-Supers' of today. And more often than not, they play a pretty mean round of golf, too. But years ago, what impressed me most about this industry was the flow of information among its members.

James Bender, author of ‘How To Talk Well’ (McGraw-Hill, 1964) tells the story of a farmer who repeatedly won the blue ribbon for growing corn. It’s a good story, and as true now as it was then:

A local reporter discovered that the farmer shared his seedcorn with nearby farmers and asked "How can you share your best seed with your neighbors when you know they're competing with you each year?"

The farmer replied, "Why sir, you don't know that the wind picks up pollen from the corn and swirls it from field to field? If my neighbor grows poor corn, cross pollination will steadily degrade my corn. If I am to grow good corn, I MUST help my neighbors grow good corn."

That farmer was very much aware of the connectedness of life. He knew that his crop would not improve unless his neighbor's crop improved.

That is how I’ve seen golf course superintendents behave over the years, and it makes me proud.

Let’s hope it will never change.

If you have an idea for Golf Course Corner, Please contact Dave Cammarata at 443-255-6474
U.M. Turf Research Facility Hosts Picnic and Tour for Baltimore Turf Group

On Wednesday, June 13th over 70 members of the Baltimore Turf Group, a newly-formed organization of Baltimore-area golf superintendents and sales representatives met at the Univ. of Maryland’s Paint Branch Facility for a picnic and tour of golf-related research. It was their first meeting at the Facility.

Dr. Kevin Mathias kicked off the afternoon with a tutorial involving the use of a video camera donated to the U.M. Institute of Applied Ag. for their turf management program. For this demo, it was linked with a microscope to view mites and insects.

Later in the afternoon, Dr. Pete Dernoeden and Dr. Tom Turner led a tour of putting green and fairway-height bentgrass and perennial ryegrass cultivar trials, bentgrass dead spot research, and herbicide trials on creeping bentgrass. Afterwards, Steve Potter served up ribs and chicken with his secret barbeque sauce to accompany the crabs provided by Tom Walsh. As if that wasn’t enough, two members mixed Caesar salads on request, and Mike Gilmore brought three different kinds of Haagen-Dazs Ice Cream bars. Of course there were ample refreshments to quench the afternoon heat!

The Baltimore Turf Group maintains a private webpage on AOL to link it’s members. Their address is http://groups.aol.com/baltimoregreens/ but you will first need to join AOL groups before you can view the site (all free!). For more information, contact Mark Merrick at mmerick1@aol.com
Tips for Turf Experts
Summer & Fall

Editor’s note: Tips for Turf Experts is the 2nd column in the series to appear in MTC News. These little bits of fact and wisdom are intended for turf managers in the Maryland area, but may not be true outside our region.

What is the best time of day to water turfgrass?
Answer: During the summer, the best time to water is from 6 to 9 am. The second best time is from 5 to 8 pm. Diseases such as brown patch and dollar spot thrive when leaves are wet at night. Watering during the day (9 am to 5 pm) is usually wasteful of water due to losses caused by wind drift and evaporation.

When is it time to start preventative sprays for brown patch disease?
Answer: There’s no precise answer, but late June is the latest that preventative sprays can usually be made before the first brown-patch outbreak. Once brown patch has begun to blight turf, it is too late to control it with preventative rates and spray schedules.

Can fertilizer help turfgrass tolerate drought during hot summer weather?
Answer: Heavy nitrogen fertility promotes lush growth and can actually reduce drought tolerance. Potassium, is known to enhance drought resistance, but once optimum levels have been reached, there’s no additional benefit from adding more. The role of other nutrients in drought resistance is unclear, but deficiencies are always stressful, and should be corrected promptly.

How much is too much grass to cut?
Answer: Although it seems like a height question, it is really a question of amount. Scalp injury and a loss of vigor is most often observed when more than 1/3 of the total leaf area of a turf is removed at any one cutting.

Is it safe to leave limestone of turf leaves, or must these products be watered in immediately?
Answer: Limestone, whether it is pulverized, granular or pelletized does not need to be removed from turf leaves right away. However, pulverized lime is prone to being blown away by wind, and all these products must eventually enter the soil before they can be effective.

When is the ideal time to apply limestone to turf?
Answer: Spring, summer, fall, winter... it doesn’t matter! Whenever the soil pH is too acidic for optimum turf growth is the right time. Limestone applications normally take several weeks or months to be fully effective, so there is no reason to delay a lime application. Take a soil test!

Do grass clippings contribute to thatch buildup?
Answer: Usually not, because turf leaves decompose rapidly, and turf thatch is mostly old stems and rhizomes, which decay slowly. In fact, there is some reason to believe that grass leaves actually help reduce thatch, because they supply nutrients to earthworms and microbes at the soil surface. The activity of these organisms is essential to the decomposition of thatch.

Can turfgrass clippings reduce the need for nitrogen and other fertilizer applications?
Answer: Clippings contain nutrients! Research has shown that clippings can supply 30-50% of the annual nitrogen need of established turfgrass... a saving of more than 1.0 lb of N/1000 ft² per year. Lawns that have adequate levels of potassium, phosphorus, and other nutrients may never need applications of these nutrients if clippings are routinely returned to the turf.

Which is better for turf, potassium chloride (muriate of potash) or potassium sulfate (sulfate of potash)?
Answer: Both contain potassium, but sulfate of potash has a much lower tendency to ‘burn’ turf leaves, and it also contributes sulfate to the turf, an important nutrient. Muriate of potash must be washed off turf foliage promptly to avoid burn and adds chloride to the soil, which is rarely needed by turfgrass.

Control of crabgrass Postemergence control of crabgrass is often difficAcclaim™ herbicide?
Answer: When most crabgrass plants grow above the turf. Sometime in the first 2 weeks of July is usually the most effective time in central Maryland, because most crabgrass seed has germinated by established plants are still small enough to be controlled by the herbicide.

Volatilization of 2,4-D, MCPP, and related herbicides can injure nearby broadleaf plants on hot days. What 2,4-D formulations reduce this problem?
Answer: Amine formulations tend to be less risky to nearby plants. Ester formulations are the most prone to volatilization and thus pose the most threat on hot days. Home lawn managers should avoid esters altogether.

Where are you most likely to find chinch bugs?
Answer: Chinch bugs prefer sunny, hot, and dry sites. Sandy soils and south-facing slopes are their favorites.