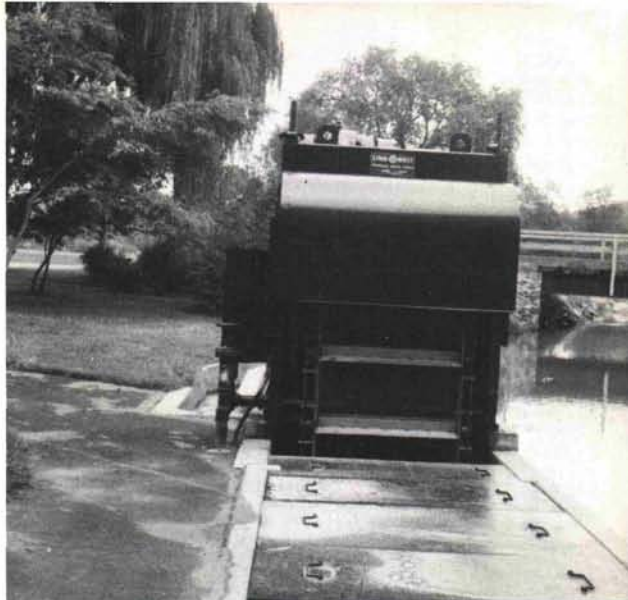


*Back view shows continuous rotary elevator and screen which keeps debris out of intake line.*



## *Manpower Versus Mechanization*

By Lee Record, Director, USGA Green Section, Mid-Continent Region

**R**ex Hansen, Superintendent of the Lost Woods Country Club, was a very serious man. He tried to be a student when it came to practical management of men and machinery. Rex was not new to the game of having men perform well with machinery purring like a kitten; he was just beginning his 40th year as a golf course superintendent, and had experienced almost every conceivable problem one could experience on a golf course during these years. There had been the lean years, and he had struggled and managed; then came the fruitful years. "Yes," he thought, "the good in man certainly outweighs the bad."

Rex subscribed to and read all available literature dealing with manpower and mechanization and its relation to turf management. He had attended short courses and turfgrass conferences through the years and felt he had profited by listening to fellow superintendents, and what they had to say. He had tried to implement something new at his golf course each time he came back from a conference. The theory of each article always read well and his colleagues always had words of wisdom, but he realized that self-motivation was the real key to success. Yes, there was always that problem of selling an idea to the board or committee chairman, but he had managed to handle that problem without too much difficulty. It had

been challenging and yet rewarding each time he faced a problem at his golf course.

Rex whistled on his way to work that morning; he was happy, it wasn't just another Saturday; it was a special day to him. His granddaughter was celebrating her 6th birthday and he was going to surprise her with a trip to the circus. All the plans had been made well in advance, and it would just be a matter of hours before they would begin the 50-mile trip to Galesburgh. The golf course was in good condition for late August; he had had better years, but the members were satisfied.

Rex seemed to feel this year was more demanding than past years—members wanting to play earlier and stretching out the season, outside parties, family twilight league play; when would it ever stop?

"Oh well, the crew is getting along even though Bill and Henry come in late now and then." The thought raced through his mind, "Suppose they're late today. Would that put me behind the eight-ball?"

With this thought, he stepped on the gas, the pickup truck surged ahead. He just had to get to the course in plenty of time to be sure all the equipment was ready to roll; the sun would be up in another half hour.

Many thoughts of previous years sped through his head; the good old days of having

20 to 30 men on a golf course, all dragging themselves to get the job done were over. Tom Mascaro had talked about this at the Purdue Turf Conference in 1967. The hand green push mower was obsolete and the two-handle, two-man spiker couldn't be found. "How we worked in those days," he thought.

During the mid-'30s, a typical work week on greens consisted of the following:

"Pole"	Daily
Mow putting surface	Six times a week
Mow collars and approaches	Four times a week
Mow outer banks	Three times a week
Change holes	Daily
Spike roll	Weekly
Fungicide	Weekly
Topdress	Monthly
Repair ball marks	Weekly
Superintendent inspected	Daily once or twice as needed
Compost or topdressing	Made on course and screened

Yes, Tom Mascaro's statement, "Mechanization has changed our way of living and has freed us from the drudgery and toil of hand labor," was true. Rex knew the one way to compete in the labor market against private enterprise was to "put your employees on wheels." Most men can perform their duties more efficiently by riding than walking. This transition to mobility allows employees to get the job done quickly and inconspicuously, with less inconvenience to members. Rex heard Tom Sams discuss this at the USGA Educational Program on "Economy in Golf Course Maintenance" in 1969. Mechanization and mobility gets the job done faster and saves labor costs.

"Yes," Rex said to himself, "we have come a long way in the past few years; I guess Don Marshall's article in *Turf Grass Times* fits right into the picture." One obvious solution to old labor problems is the "best application of machinery and mechanical operation that you can come up with from both your brain and your wallet.

"There is no better way to pull out of a suddenly declining labor situation than with a few judicious purchases of new labor saving pieces of equipment."

Rex thought about this as he turned the curve with only another three miles to go. For many years he watched putting green mowers transformed from ugly, cantankerous beasts, to streamlined, dependable machinery which yet cut only a 22-inch swatch. Now with the breakthrough of the riding triplex green mower, the job was getting done much faster, enabling him to use his crew more efficiently.

Bill could really handle that machine; the

time required to mow was cut by two-thirds. But, oh what a job he had selling that expensive piece of equipment to his Green Committee. It was hard work at the time, but looking back at it made him smile. He got a raise for the crew last month, as the triplex mower paid for itself three months earlier than he had anticipated.

He thought, "I guess I haven't been to enough turf conferences lately to find out what the real outcome of these machines will add up to. Oh well, I have lots of time for that. I'll go to the USGA Program in January of 1972 and see what Bill Bengeyfield has to say about 'The Good and Not So Good of Triplex Putting Green Mowers.'"

The headlights flashed across the Lost Woods Country Club sign as Rex pulled down the long drive to the maintenance area. "I might as well stop by 14 green," he thought. "The headlights will show me what I want to see; it won't be long and the sun will be up." Rex pulled up to the path that led to the 14th green, got out of the pickup and walked slowly toward the green. Nobody knows how many times he had done this; it was as routine as Pete the hound taking his morning round. "The dew was sure heavy this morning," thought Rex, "I guess it will be best if we knock the dew off before we mow." With that he turned and walked slowly back to the truck.

Lost Woods Country Club was a typical country club, having an active membership which took pride in its golf course and the club's organizational structure. Committee members had been faithful in carrying out their assigned jobs and had always looked up to those responsible in holding key positions that made Lost Woods function. The automatic watering system Rex worked so hard for, the manhours he had spent tabulating the pros and cons in not only saving labor, but also providing a more efficient operation for the upkeep and improvement of the country club, spoke for itself.

It had been hard work attending all those meetings Rex and his chairman had called, but the results were there. It wasn't necessary now to have two night water men on the course and the endless miles of hose that used to stretch around the course could not be found. Yes, Rex had been adamant in wanting that automatic watering system; it even caused alarm with the members as an assessment was warranted for the first time since World War II, but Rex knew his job and was thinking of his members; this is what counted.

The red glow of the morning sun could just be seen in the east as Rex pulled into the maintenance area and turned out his headlights. When he unlocked his office door, Pete, the old hound, let out with a yelp; he was glad Rex was

there and so was Rex, that he still had his faithful friend. They had spent many years together. Rex walked past his desk to the master control for a four-minute syringe. This would give two revolutions of the sprinkler on his greens; just enough to get the job done. How much he appreciated this watering system could never be expressed in words.

It had been more than two years since Rex sent the crew out to remove the dew by hand; the automatic system had done its job. As he walked back to the office door, he could see the sprinklers turning on the eleventh green; a smile crossed his face.

"Sky 6," came the roar over the metal box on Rex's desk, "this is Sky 5, over." The roar scared Rex at first, he couldn't get used to the two-way radio system his assistant had talked him into. "Sky 5, this is Sky 6; go ahead."

"Rex, have you checked the front nine yet? I'm just pulling through the main gate and can swing over that way if you wish." Rex replied, "Go ahead, Tommy; we have a heavy dew this morning and I have the system set for a four-minute syringe, over and out."

Communication; how simple it was. Rex knew that Tommy would check out the front nine without being told, but he loved to use that two-way system. John Straub's "Instant Communication" article in *Golfdom* magazine was every bit of what he said it was; the two-way radio system allowed key personnel to go anywhere on the course and still maintain contact. There was no question in Rex's mind, the two-way radio had increased mobility, saved time and money, and labor had been reduced through improved communication.

The two bay doors began to pull themselves upward as Rex pushed the automatic door button. The sun was now sending the first rays of light across the course.

New and old equipment lined the interior of the maintenance building, each piece in a prescribed area. Dr. Jim Watson was right, "Getting the right machine for the right job saves both time and results in better turf."

Rex thought, "I haven't used a helicopter for pesticides like Charlie Tadge and Len Hazlett have in the Cleveland area, nor have I considered installing a computer for my irrigation system like Jerry Dinelli had done at his course in the Chicago area . . . this is yet in the future, but I have made many strides; the triplex green mower is being used on approach, collar, tee and green areas. Hydraulic fairway units, trucksters, cyclone fertilizer spreaders, power topdressers, spikers, drags, sandtrap rakes and a host of other equipment have been purchased through the years to keep abreast of the latest innovations in turf management."

New pumps, new machines, new ways of

applying pesticides had reduced original two- or three-man tasks to one man jobs. Much had been gained through mechanical and chemical advancement. Times had changed from the old days; record keeping and preventive equipment maintenance was now standard policy. It took only minutes now and Rex could have at his chairman's finger tips the time-cost analysis of any project on the golf course.

"Morning, Rex," said Bill. "Looks like we're in for a good day. It sure feels great this time of the year." "Morning, Bill," replied Rex.

"How is the triplex green mower operating?" ating?"

"No problems," replied Bill.

"Good," said Rex. "See you in a couple of hours."

Tommy pulled up in the pickup truck he was assigned and waved to Rex. "The sprinklers are off on greens," said Tommy. "We had better set a syringe cycle on tees and fairways; the sun may not burn the dew off before that first group begins." "Go ahead," answered Rex.

Henry and George, the other two men of the four-man Saturday crew, had arrived. George was on the way out to touch up the traps with the new power sandtrap rake. Henry would change water in the ball washers and set the tee markers. Tommy would change cups after he set the time clocks for the syringe cycle on fairways and tees.

Two hours passed before the crew began coming back in. Rex had checked his work over for the Sunday morning crew and planned work for the following week. Times hadn't changed too much from the early days. "We're still cutting greens six times a week," he thought, "but I haven't the manpower I once had. I have horsepower now and it's much easier."

"See you Monday," yelled Bill to Rex. "So long, fellows," replied Rex as they walked toward their cars. "Thanks for doing a great job for me this morning." Tommy was going to spend most of the day on the course and Rex told him where he would be. "Have a good time with your granddaughter," said Tommy. "See you tomorrow."

Rex jumped into his pickup truck and headed for home. On the way he thought, "I have always tried to do what I feel is right and in the best interest for the members at my country club. I have tried to think for them and of them. Today, in this economy, I need to stick by them as I have never done before; this is the key to success."

Rex's granddaughter ran to him as he pulled in the drive of his home. "Grandad," she cried, "you're taking me on a surprise trip today." "Yes, I am," he said, "thanks to a lot of people who are concerned with 'Men, Management and Mechanization.' "