

Miracle of the Green Pastures

by HERB GRAFFIS

WHAT YOU HAVE READ and heard about the Green Section of the United States Golf Association in its 60 years of extraordinary and vast service compares with the publicity about the playing of golf like a needle lost in the grass of the 1,290,000 acres of this nation's golf courses.

Yet the Green Section has had a more positive, beneficial effect on American economic and aesthetic life than any other element of American sports.

THE LITTLE-KNOWN public service role of the Green Section is a magnificent story that reaches beyond golf. For instance:

Who pioneered the roadside grass planting that reduced accidents and made the journey prettier? The Green Section.

left with a mixture of disintegrated burlap and ammonium sulfate. To make matters worse, the fertilizer became rock hard as it dried. The only way to make it fit to use was to dissolve the fertilizer in water, then screen out the burlap and other impurities, then apply it to turf in solution.

If the fertilizer was used before the burlap disintegrated, it was caked in the bag so badly that it could not be applied dry without being broken up and run through a fine screen. The Ford Motor Company put on the market in the mid-1930s the first ammonium sulfate that could be broadcast after being poured directly from the bag into the spreader. It was given the trade name NAGA, which stood for the first national organization of golf course superintendents, The National Association of Greenkeepers of America.

I could go on and on, telling of how we mixed calomel and bichloride of mercury with sand or Milorganite, breaking up the lumps of mercury with the aid of the family rolling pin. The mixture was then applied to the greens with a cyclone seeder for the control of fungus disease. Or how we handled DDT and 2,4-D dust until our faces were coated with the powder. Old-time greenkeepers did many things in a reckless, haphazard way, but it was because no better way was known.

One thing that we did know, though, was that more and more turf research work was needed. The Green Section played the principal role and we were most grateful. With time, the universities and agricultural stations became involved. We fought hard for it and supported it in every way possible. Today golf course superintendents, as well as golfers, are reaping the benefits.

Who gave Americans pride in having lawns more beautiful than those of the stately homes of England? The Green Section.

Who encouraged and helped the wonder-working turfgrass research efforts of state agricultural research stations into one of the most useful showings of turf technology? The Green Section.

Who gave agricultural schools impetus in developing procedures for landscaping and other satellites of the golf course maintenance basic work? The Green Section.

Where did the work start that converted factory areas into parks, beautifying the communities and establishing a more pleasant, productive atmosphere for the workers? The Green Section.

Where did the picture of better grass for the playgrounds and parks to the graveyards really begin? The Green Section.

The pioneer greenkeepers and pro-greenkeepers were artists who loved the land. There are volumes of untold stories about their sensitivity, their devotion to the land, their capacity for working wonders with little money and their foresight as environmentalists.

VETERAN GOLFERS have seen many fairways where sticks signalled bird nests for mowers to avoid. Any sign of danger to the natural life was heeded instantly by those practical pioneers in protecting the eye-pleasing and soul-saving and future of the so-called environment.

Most other sports need only a broom or a tape measure to provide its playground, but golf needs and uses God's greenery and unbounded beauty. And so, maybe, God alone knows the Green Section.

Turfgrass Honor Roll

Leaders in the turfgrass industry who have received graduate level financial support from the USGA Green Section Research and Education Fund include:

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