



Monroe Miller is a retired golf course superintendent. He spent 36 years as superintendent at Blackhawk Country Club in Madison, Wis. Miller can be reached at groots@charter.net.

WE NEED A MUSEUM

During my youngest daughter's kindergarten career (she's 29 now), each student was asked to stand and tell about her family. Christie's report was short and simple: "My mom likes to shop and my dad likes dead people."

It was from the mouth of a babe – she meant that many of the trips we took and conversations we had were about the past. Family reunions, cemetery visits, museum trips, old books, antique collecting and nearly anything else connected with days gone by are the things that interest me.

National historical sites are spread all across America, and many small towns have their own local museums, frequently hosted by a core of volunteers whose local pride inspires them.

Sports museums are of tremendous interest to Americans, and I have been to most of them – Cooperstown, Springfield, Canton, South Bend (college football) and Newport (tennis). USGA Golf House and the World Golf Hall of Fame have huge appeal to those of us involved in this great game. Also, in the world of golf history, I love the small upstairs museum at the Foxburg Golf Club, the Jack Nicklaus Museum and the Wake Forest Collection of Arnold Palmer memorabilia.

But there's a huge hole in the presentation of golf's history, a gap made even more evident after my visit to the Turfgrass Information Center in Michigan this summer.

The TIC has done a wonderful job preserving the literature and science of golf turf and turfgrasses. It's a collection that boggles the mind when you see it in person. We all have access to it, and more is available online every day.

I'm grateful for the vision of the USGA, turf faculty and other leaders

who initiated the TIC project and kept it going in its early days.

What we don't have, in a single site, is a golf course museum. We have individual collections, mostly small, and some company collections. A few institutions have some pieces, and I have seen small displays at the old Golf House Museum (equipment mostly loaned or donated by Mel Lucas). The GCSAA has some small equipment at its headquarters in Lawrence, Kan. Dr. Ken Payne and Michigan State have had antique pieces on display at the GCSAA conference in the past, and they were very interesting to see.

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But I believe there would be great value and interest in consolidating all of these collections at a central site, under the management of a trained and experienced curator. Done carefully, this could be a destination visit for many involved in golf – players and professional staff – as well as the public in general.

And a case could be made for acting soon. A lot of the equipment from the middle part of the last century is being scrapped for lack of space and resources, both on the part of golf courses and distributors. Some is parked outside to rust in the weeds and weather.

The passing of time also sees the passing of superintendents and greenkeepers who can tell the stories of the early years in golf course management in our country. Golf is well over

the century mark in America (121 years) and accurately telling the story becomes more difficult, although not impossible, as time moves away from 1888.

It would be a very formidable undertaking, given the physical size of golf course equipment. It would take a big building to house pickup trucks, tractors, gang mowers, F-6s and Parkmasters, and even sickle mowers.

My meager imagination races when I think about displays tracing the history of golf course aerification, irrigation and spraying. We could have mockups of golf course shops from 1900, 1950 and 2000. Wouldn't it be cool to trace the history of cup cutting, and to have a collection of flags and sticks from around the country? Bunker raking, from hand rakes to the Stan Clarke Power Rake, on through the hydraulic machines of today and back to hand raking would be instructive.

Each year we could have a summer field day with demonstrations of older equipment. The events would involve competitions in mowing, sod cutting, cup cutting and championship racing with Cushmans and Red Ryders and other old trucksters.

Who is going to do this? I don't know. Where? I don't know this, either. Maybe the GCSAA or the USGA or the World Golf Hall of Fame. Maybe it will take a consortium of organizations. We could all contribute, though, of our time, our resources and even some of our personal golf course treasures. I know one gal who would be extremely happy to see our basement and our garage emptied and donated to a world-class golf course museum – the American Museum of Golf Course Management.

I wonder if I'll live long enough to see it. **GCI**