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HANGING ON 'TIL SPRING

For me, one of the beautiful things about being a golf course superintendent is the extreme and distinct pleasure brought about by the different seasons of the year. Here in the North, we have four well-defined seasons, and each is very different from the others. On a golf course, the work also changes radically from season to season.

I have noticed in my life that about the time I'd get tired of a particular season, the next would slowly arrive. Right now, I am getting a little weary of winter. We have had enough snow and brutal cold to last us this year. Spring will be very welcome.

Make no mistake – I love the winter season. Golf courses are under a cover of snow and colleagues of mine are enjoying some relief from job pressures. That's even truer because we have made it this far with little ice accumulation on turf; we are hopeful of a new season beginning without winter injury.

The snow is not only a beautiful addition to our landscape, but it also is a major recreation feature. Skiing, snowboarding, snowmobiling, snowshoeing and more of the like add fun to the year. Winter gives us hockey, ice fishing and hard-water golf tournaments. We have several good-sized lakes in our town, and the iceboat racing is a big deal, too.

In our state we relished the season the Green Bay Packers gave us, and we were proud of the Badgers despite their loss in the Rose Bowl. We enjoy basketball at all levels, and some even get a real charge from the winter wrestling season. Winter gives us a chance to enjoy the arts more than we might when the weather is warm and the golf course owns us. A few years ago we attended a wonderful performance of the musical "Guys on Ice." It was an American Folklore Theatre play about

ice fishing. The tough ticket this winter was one to see "Guys and Does, a musical about Wisconsin deer hunters and their quest to bag 'da buck.' There is nothing like intellectual stimulation to help pass the time!

I read "The Coldest Winter," David Halberstam's magnum opus about America and the Korean War. GIs were fighting in temperatures as low as -40 degrees, in miserable conditions and weren't treated any better when they returned home than those of us who were soldiers in the Vietnam War. At least that has changed.

The hot stove league gets underway in January, just in time, too. At one

and birds and even rain showers, I sit down and read in Aldo Leopold's "Sand County Almanac." He was as good of a writer as he was a conservationist, and could write about the seasons better than anyone else.

But none other than Arnold Palmer wrote the best and most wonderful words about spring back in 1965:

"Especially in the spring of the year, when the first warm sun presses down on your shoulders, when the grass has just been mowed for the first time and sits there damp and green, with its fresh-cut smell floating up to your nostrils, when the sky is a deep blue roof over your head and an occasional

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point this winter, 48 of our 50 states have snow cover somewhere. You can pretty much figure people all over were starting to think, "When is it going to be spring?" That emotion begins to heighten when the GIS is over, the local turf conferences are past, and the days are noticeably longer.

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For many years, in late winter, when the aching for spring and golf

cloud drifts by so white that it dazzles your eyes, a golf course is an intoxicating place. That was the sort of day, this was the sort of happiness that we kept waiting for all winter when I was growing up in western Pennsylvania. The winters are long and hard around Latrobe, my hometown: the golf course usually was frozen over the middle of December; we had to content ourselves with skiing until that first perfect day came along some time toward the end of March. We dreamed about it all winter and went out of our minds when it finally arrived."

It would be a safe bet that most golf course superintendents in places like the one where Mr. Palmer grew up are also going slightly out of their minds these last few days of winter. Hang on – it's almost here! **GCI**