MGCSA President Rick Traver is Not a Hat Guy Yet Has a Collection of "Figurative" Hats

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"I'm not a hat guy," Rick Traver, CGCS and General Manager at Monticello Country Club stated quite clearly one late summer day from behind his desk at the MCC Turf Management Center. Indeed no fedoras, pith helmets nor berets, yet Rick does have a collection of figurative hats that he dons as he performs his duties as spouse, golf course manager, volunteer and President of the Minnesota Golf Course Superintendents' Association.

One could say Traver has been into golf since he "started to walk." One of his pastimes while growing up in Glencoe, Minn. was playing the game at Glencoe Country Club. As a youth, Rick alongside his six siblings, volunteered many hours working on the course. Then in the mid 1970s his father became the Superintendent and General Manager at GCC. Now Rick had a 'paid' position while he went to the University of Minnesota in pursuit of a Business Degree.

Not unlike many in our industry once bit by the golf course management bug, Rick decided that there may be a career for him on the links. Enter Steve Young, then Superintendent at Medina Golf Course, now called Baker National, who gave Traver a bigger taste of the business. For two years Rick experienced many of the nuances he would come to love, including working outside, managing people and, when time allowed, improving his golf game.

But it was over an arranged lunch with Dale Caldwell, CGCS, at Minneapolis Golf Club and Bill Larsen, CGCS currently at Town and Country Club, who was Dale's assistant at the time, that Rick received a pivotal piece of advice. If he wanted to compete and be successful in the industry he would need to earn a degree in turf management to complement his honors in Business from the U of M. Off to Penn State he went and in two years Rick obtained his second degree, this one in the green side of the industry.

The rapidly growing world of golf course management in the late 1980s opened its arms to Rick as he quickly completed his internship at Minneapolis Golf Club and moved onto a short term stint under the guidance of Pete Mogren, Superintendent at Oak Glen in Stillwater, Minn. He was not to be there for long, however, as the pursuit for the Superintendent's position at Monticello Country Club became his quest.

For the last 20 years Rick has worn the 'Superintendent's hat' at MCC. However, apparently the brim was too small in the beginning of his long term commitment, and soon he was also wearing the General Manager hat as well. Thus Rick truly followed wearing his father's hats as the Superintendent/General Manager of MCC for 18 of those 20 years! Rick thinks of himself as an empowering leader at MCC as he allows the departments with whom he works to manage their sectors independently and with limited guidance. This style has enabled Traver to pursue his true passion, turf grass management.

Monticello Country Club was not to be his only long term relationship. In the early 1990s Rick was introduced to his wife Barb, a first grade teacher, on a blind date. Thirteen years and one 12-year-old daughter named Maggie later, Rick sums his

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marriage quite simply: "My marriage has been great. Sure there are challenges with the typical superintendent/teacher schedule differences, but family life is great. My family is my hobby."

Rick's dedication to his home life includes the usual renovation projects, inside and out, and daily tasks. He is also very busy following Maggie's extracurricular activities and growing his relationship with his wife Barb. Traver is also active at his home town church, Resurrection Lutheran, where among other volunteer actions he has been responsible as the Grounds Manager for quite some time. He just can't get away from wearing a different hat.

Yet, he has and does expand his personal horizons through a dedicated commitment to the MGCSA and the national GCSAA. A member of the state association since 1982, Rick was approached by Jim Nicol, CGCS and Superintendent at Hazeltine National Golf Club, in 1999 to participate on the MGCSA Board of Directors. Always willing to help, Traver accepted the challenge and has worked his way through the many committee chair and officer positions necessary as prerequisites to the Presidential position that he has held since 2008. "It has been a pleasure to serve with Rick on the MGCSA Board. He is dedicated, confident, and strong in integrity and character. The MGCSA leadership hat has fit him nicely," said Paul Diegnau CGCS at Keller Golf Course and Vice President of the state association.

Although not political in nature, Rick has been a consistent player and leader in the mix of MGCSA relationships for over a decade. On a national level, Rick attained his certification status through the Golf Course Superintendents Association of America in 1999. Traver cites three reasons for pursuing this accreditation; enlightenment, expansion of personal achievements and for fun.

However downplayed, Rick does indeed wear many hats, professionally, personally and voluntarily. Whether on the job, working at church, representing our association at state and national functions, managing Monticello Country Club or, and most importantly according to Rick, sharing time with his family, he is prepared to do it all with gusto. Just give him a moment to change his head gear and he will be ready to go.

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