

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

By JACK MACKENZIE, CGCS
North Oaks Golf Club

"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

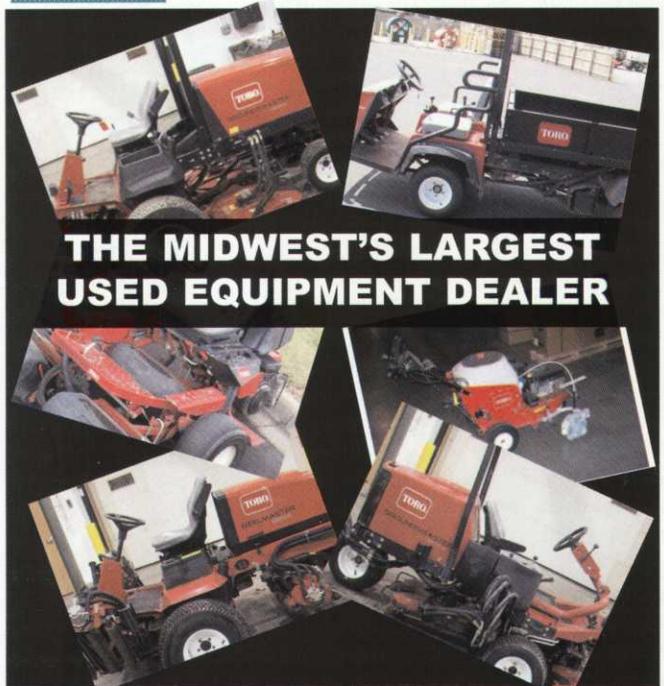
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Rick and Libby



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Rick Traver -

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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.

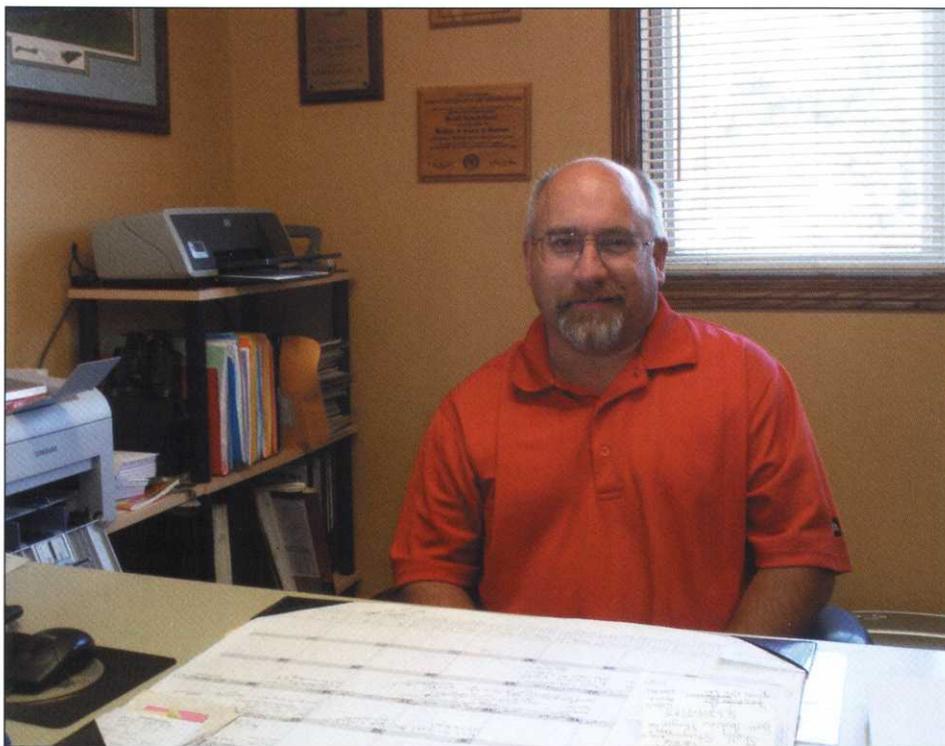
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Dad's Hats

By Maggie and Barb Traver

When Rick comes home, he puts on his "husband hat." Besides manning the remote from his Lazy-boy, this involves many jobs around the house including managing the money, cleaning the gutters, taking out the trash, etc. One hat he never wears at home is that of chef. When it is Rick's night to cook we can count on eating out or pizza delivery. Another hat Rick never wears at home is that of "Lawn Care professional." Very early in our marriage he negotiated a deal with me that if I mowed the lawn all summer he would shovel the snow all winter. That has been a sweet deal for me as I am a teacher and I love to be outdoors as much as I can in the summer. I only question why every time Rick attends the GCSAA convention without me there is a huge snowstorm in the Midwest. Rick does get into turf mode to help out at our church where he faithfully manages the weeds, oversees the irrigation system and even mows on occasion. This summer, Rick put on his "landscaper hat" and built us a beautiful paver patio and path which we really enjoy.

When Rick puts on his "dad hat" he acts tough but he really is a marshmallow. Dad is sometimes Maggie's fashion critic. This is met with a teenage huff as she quickly lets him know what is the latest trend now and not in the 70s and 80s when he was a kid. He puts on his "teacher hat" to help with homework, especially algebra and while his method for solving the problem may not involve the "new math." He usually comes up with the correct answer. He is also an awesome story teller and both Maggie and I enjoy a good bedtime story when he reads to our family at night. While he would like to think he wears the wii crown, he has been knocked down a peg or two by Maggie in wii tennis and by me in wii bowling. He is very supportive of Maggie's activities and tries to attend her events whether that be a piano recital, band concert, choir concert, dance competition, church play, or cross country meet (he hasn't volunteered to run with her however). You would have all enjoyed seeing him put on his dancing hat or should I say shoes, when he participated in the Father-daughter dance last spring. He even gave the audience something to look at with a little butt wiggle as the group waited for the music to start.



Rick in his office at Monticello Country Club.