



In Bounds

by Jack MacKenzie, CGCS

The explosion echoed, and left my nine-year-old ears ringing. Running out from under our deck I yelled loudly, “It wasn’t me!” Mom was smarter than that as she took the book of matches from my hand and grabbed my wrist, tugging me toward the front steps. Fireworks were an explicit no-no in our house because, according to Mom, there had been a serious burn accident involving the daughter of a very good friend.

“Don’t tell Dad, I don’t want a spanking. But you should see what Curt has, a whole bag of firecrackers. He keeps them hidden and I know where they are”, I sniffled through weak tears, my voice crackling with guilt.

“I beg your pardon? (a Mom phrase) Who do you think you are,

first playing with matches, then playing with firecrackers and now blaming your brother? Surely he didn’t force you to light the fuse?” That was just the beginning of the “blame” speech and the “keeping your own house in order” lecture. Soon the fireworks were forgotten as she went on about personal responsibility.

This was a lesson that to this day I sometimes forget.

In this time of increased environmental awareness, isn’t it easy to blame the “other” agricultural industry, our big brothers the farmers, when water quality and quantity, nutrient fate and pesticide management is involved? I have thought and said “...look at their tile lines, look at their field flooding techniques, look at their feed lots, look at, look at look at!”



Wow, talk about deflecting blame. Historically our industry has used some pretty wicked chemistries, drained wet lands, over-watered on occasion and have had our own storage, clean and fill challenges. Yet it has always been easier to look at the perceived “bigger” offender.

Just as the golf course industry has made dramatic changes, so have our brethren in the commodities business. Are you aware of their positive transformations?

The Discovery Farms Minnesota Project is charged with collecting water quality information under real-world conditions to provide credible and practical information to support farmers in better farm management decisions. Discovery Farms Minnesota is a farmer-led effort to gather field scale water quality information from different types of farming systems and in landscapes all across Minnesota. The goal is to

provide practical, credible, site-specific information to enable better farm management. The program is designed to collect accurate measurements of sediment, nitrogen and phosphorus movement over the soil surface and through subsurface drainage tiles.

The Green Star Farms Initiative is a new approach intended to challenge farmers and those who advise them on farming practices to think critically about both agricultural production and resource protection. Aggregation of farm information allows agricultural businesses to compare individual analysis to other farms across the state, within a region, or within a sector. This aggregated information helps identify broader research and education needs, which is of value to the many farm organizations working together to address water quality and stewardship issues.

The Minnesota Agricultural

Water Quality Certification Program (MAWQCP) is a voluntary program designed to accelerate adoption of on-farm conservation practices that protect Minnesota's lakes and rivers. Producers who implement and maintain approved farm management practices will be certified and in turn assured that their operation meets the state's water quality goals and standards for a period of ten years.

Three great programs implemented by our partners in the "green" industry. Agriculture is a gigantic ship, and not unlike golf management, making a change in course takes time, lots of energy and inspired individuals to cause the course adjustment to happen. It is time to give our "brothers" a break and acknowledge their efforts.

Upon the playground during fourth grade, Billy Palmer, a lad competing with me for the ownership of "liking" Mary

Durham, intentionally pushed my face into a very hard and unforgiving basketball post. The egg sized bump that grew upon my forehead sent me immediately to the nurse's office for an ice pack and then home for a bit of R&R.

Unfortunately for Billy, my older, and very, very much larger sixth-grade brother Curt, supported me in my absence. Needless to say, my "big brother" made it perfectly clear that nobody messes with the MacKenzie clan.

Isn't it time golf course managers quit throwing darts at our agricultural partners and focused upon our own challenges? Are we not in the same family and have the maturity to support one another during crisis and celebrate each other's success stories? The MGCSA should be embracing the farming industry for all of their positive attributes. After all, our Big Brother has a state agency named after them.