Bulk Truck Load of Milorganite

$4,995

For Better Results. Naturally.
Milorganite

Fertlize 62 acres of your golf course.
Average load 22 tons.
Call for details.

651-454-3106 / 800-551-4857
Turf Supply Company
Vikings, the population of China doubled as the country prospered, and the snow
line in the Rocky Mountains was 500 feet higher than today. In recent history, two
periods in the 20th century exhibited significant temperature increases. The peri-
ods from 1910-1945 and 1975 to the present have shown significant temperature
increases; the latter correlates with increased man-made greenhouse gas
emissions but the earlier
period does not as human emission of
these gases at this time was slight. As
indicated by ice core data, geologic
records and tree ring data, global climate
is anything but stable.

Another example of research generally
not found in the mainstream media
involves indirect sampling of CO2 levels
in ice samples from 9,000 to 420,000 years
ago. Multiple studies from 1999, 2000,
2001 and 2003 have shown that increases
in past atmospheric CO2 levels did not
precede temperature increases but they
actually followed it. Such observations
totally contradict the premise upon which
today's global warming concerns are
based.

What role does our sun play in cli-
mate change on planet
earth? Some scientists
believe the sun is the
principle driver of cli-
mate change. The sun,
through time, has been a
variable source of ener-
gy. There does exist a
direct correlation
between solar activity
and temperature. A 1997
study showed that the
direct increase in solar
irradiation over the past 30
years is responsible for 40%
of the observed global warming. Once
again, the mainstream media fails to
explore these alternate explanations.

Why then has the topic of global warm-
ing turned into such a politically charged,
divisive topic, consuming today's media
and ultimately causing scientists with dis-
senting views to lose their jobs? Global
warming has become big business.
Current federal spending on global warm-
ing research is 1.7 billion dollars! Research
grants continue to flow to those
researchers producing results that agree
with the popular greenhouse gas theory.
Scientists that produce evidence to the
contrary are finding their funding sources
drying up. There is also increased spend-
ing on alternative energy sources such as
solar, wind, hydrogen, ethanol and clean
clean coal technologies. Follow the money!

Here are a few more interesting points
to ponder:
+ American weather satellites have
confirmed that since 1999 average global
air temperatures are flat or exhibit no
overall change.
+ Last year's hurricane season was pre-
dicted to be the worst in recorded history
by the American global warming science
crowd. It, in fact, was one of the mildest.
+ 2% of the area of Antarctica has
above normal temperatures and is losing
ice. In the remaining 98% of Antarctica
temperatures are falling and ice shelf mass
is building up at the rate of 27 billion tons
per year.

(Continued on Page 29)
The MGCSA booth at the Green Expo this past winter was in good hands with past presidents Jim Nicol, CGCS, Hazeltine National Golf Club, left, and Keith Scott, CGCS, Oak Ridge Country Club.

GO ON GREEN

It's time to get revved up for the new season.
We're ready to roar.

Fueled by some of the finest products on the market, we add experience and proven success to help you finish on top.

We're exclusive distributors for Tee – 2 – Green, Turf Merchants and Profile Products, featuring Futerra F4 Netless Blanket.

Get properly tuned with our help.

TWIN CITY SEED COMPANY

7265 Washington Avenue South
Minneapolis, Minnesota 55439
1-800-545-TURF or 952-944-7105
Fax: 952-944-7329
jglattly@twincityseed.com

Membership Report
MARCH 2007 - NEW MEMBERS

Dan Hanson
Class A - GCSAA
Majestic Oaks Golf Club
Ham Lake, MN
763-755-6530

Bill Lewis
Class A - GCSAA
Black Bear Golf Course
Cloquet, MN
218-879-5626

Adam Meilike
Class A - GCSAA
Southern Hills GC
Farmington, MN
651-463-7256

John A. Monson
Class A - GCSAA
Retired
Long Prairie, MN
320-736-3696

Scott Schunter
Class A - GCSAA
Deacon's Lodge
Breezy Point, MN
218-562-4853

Delano E. Taft
Class A - GCSAA
Grand National
Hinckley, MN
320-629-4836

Rodrick A. Anderson
Class SM
River Falls Golf Club
River Falls, WI
715-425-7253

Curtiss Conkright
Class SM - GCSAA
Victory Links Golf Course
Blaine, MN
763-792-7352

Dave LaFave
Class C
Black Bear Golf Course
Cloquet, MN
218-879-5626

Edward Thomas
Class C - GCSAA (pending)
Deacon's Lodge
Breezy Point, MN
218-562-4853

Casey Andrus
Class D
Interlachen County Club
Edina, MN
952-924-7420

Todd J. Kranz
Class D
Edina Country Club
Edina, MN
952-922-9012

David Sarp
Class D
Edina Country Club
Edina, MN
952-922-9012

Matthew L. Stephens
Class D
Deacon's Lodge
Breezy Point, MN
218-562-4853

Robert Tripp
Class D
Northland Country Club
Duluth, MN
218-525-1941

Dave VanValkenburg
Class D
Brookview Golf Course
Golden Valley, MN
763-512-2329

James Watten
Class A
Northland Country Club
Duluth, MN
218-525-1941

Jesse Murray
Student - GCSAA
Anoka Technical College
Minnesota Valley CC
952-884-1289

Robert Besse
Affiliate
Versatile Vehicles, Inc.
Savage, MN
952-894-1123

Will Dopp
Affiliate
Twin City Seed Co.
Edina, MN
952-944-7105

Ryan Popp
Affiliate
LESCO, Inc.
Richfield, MN
612-866-0419

Tom Swain
Affiliate
MTI Distributing Co.
Brooklyn Center, MN
651-271-0322

Reclassifications

Bradley Marty
Class C to SM
White Bear Yacht Club
White Bear Lake, MN
651-429-1892

John A. Monson
Class A to Class A-Retired
Long Prairie, MN
320-736-3696

- Respectfully submitted by Mike Knodel,
  Membership Chair
My First MGCSA Board Meeting

By MIKE KNODEL
Superintendent, Oakdale Golf Club

When ex-officio Rob Panuska asked if I would be interested in running for the MGCSA Board of Directors, I have to admit that I was hesitant at best. After all, who doesn't have too much on their plate already? After deciding to give it some serious thought, I discovered that I really didn't know what went on behind the scenes of the MGCSA. My curiosity to learn more about our association and to become involved finally got the best of me and I was given the opportunity to serve on the Board at our Annual Meeting in January.

I attended my first MGCSA Board Meeting on January 16 at Somerset Country Club in Mendota Heights. Not knowing what to expect, I took the low key approach, "LISTEN & LEARN." While being in the meeting for only a short time, it became quite evident that the MGCSA Board is a proactive group of very dedicated individuals. It was quite interesting to listen to each committee report and try to get a snapshot of the various issues that come before the Board. By the end of the meeting I knew my initial assessment was correct, I really didn't know what went on behind the scenes of the MGCSA, but I soon would.

I would definitely encourage those who have an interest in our association and the furthering of our profession to consider running for a Board of Directors position. Granted, I have only been part of the Board for a short while, but I believe the time and effort dedicated to our association will be a small price to pay for the rewards of becoming involved!

Mike Knodel, Superintendent at Oakdale Golf Club, was elected to the MGCSA Board at the Annual Meeting in January.

SERVING THE GOLF INDUSTRY

GLENN REHBEIN COMPANIES, with over 45 years of experience, provides building, design and renovation services for Minnesota's elite golf courses. We focus on the details and pride ourselves on growing only top quality sod. Our comprehensive lines of Bluegrass, Blue-Fescue, Bentgrass and specialized Netlon Turf Systems will keep your course looking great all season long.

PROVIDING UNIQUE PRODUCTS & SERVICES

EXCAVATING | UNDERGROUND UTILITIES | ENGINEERING | SURVEYING
ENVIRONMENTAL REMEDIATION | TURF PRODUCTION | GOLF COURSES
ATHLETIC FIELDS | STORM WATER MANAGEMENT

8651 Naples Street N.E., Blaine, MN 55449
office: 763.784.0657 • www.rehbein.com
President James Bade reported that he has written a letter to the new Dean of the College introducing the association. James expressed our association's support for Dr. Horgan and Dr. Watkins. Scottie Hines, CGCS and James attended the Minnesota Golf Council meeting. The point of the meeting was to try to grow the game. The MGA is going to do an Economic Impact Statement. Weather and forecasting were big issues.

Tom Proshek reported the annual Awards Banquet would be held at Prestwick Golf Club.

Scott Turtinen reported there were 59 people who participated in the 18-hole challenge. The Lanyards that were handed out at the MGCSA booth went over well.

Paul Diegnau, CGCS reported there were 8,000+ attendees at the Minnesota Green Expo. The MTGF will make over $100,000. Paul also reported there were a lot of positive comments about the show. The show in 2008 will be one week later.

Kevin Clunis, CGCS reported there are 254 registered voters and 39 independent voters in our association. The MGCSA has three sets of 254 votes but no more than 254 votes can be used per candidate. Kevin also reported that the GCSAA would not increase dues at this time.

Rob Panuska reported that Rick Traver, CGCS would be running for President. Vice President and Treasurer will also be open along with three Directors positions in 2008.

Jack MacKenzie, CGCS reported the MTGF would be meeting soon to discuss the requests for funding they have received. There is around $180,000 in request and the MTGF will hand out about $120,000 for those requests.

Have a great spring!

Peer-to-Peer—
(Continued from Page 11)

see the Bentgrass moving more laterally. We will be increasing our Cutless rate by 1oz/A on our applications to greens, tees and fairways to try and take out some of the weaker bio-types of Poa.

- Eric H. Peterson
Dellwood Hills Golf Club, Dellwood

Keller GC sprays all playing surfaces from May to October to reduce clippings and improve overall health of our Poa annua. Our greens receive .15 oz/M of Primov every 2.5-3 weeks from early May through Sept. Fairways and tees receive .25 oz/M of Primov every 2.5-3 weeks for the same time frame. Played around with Trimmit on two fairways this past summer to begin a fairway conversion to bentgrass. Seeded middle of June after Poa annua seeded out. Results were poor due to extreme heat in July and Trimmit application timing. Trimmit definitely suppresses Poa annua growth and can yellow turf. Yellowing is greatly enhanced by frost. Will continue trials in '07.

- Paul Diegnau, CGCS
Keller GC, St. Paul

FOR SALE
Barley Straw - environmentally safe algae control for ponds. Small squares, can deliver $5.00/bale delivered $4.00/bale pick up Contact: Rick Stocker 952-492-6988

FOR SALE
2-1996 68” National Deluxe Mowers with Electric Start 7.5 hp Kawasaki Engines. Excellent condition and sharpened - $750 ea. or both for $1,300. Contact: Jeff Backstrom Cannon Golf Club (507) 263-0831

FOR SALE
2000 Terratopper 7-750 spinbar top dresser - $3,500.00 or best offer. Must sell. Contact: Bruce Leiveurm Montgomery Golf Club (507) 364-7206

FOR SALE
1996 216-D Toro 72” Reelmaster, 3-Wheel Drive, 2078 Hours, Very Good Condition 16.5 hp Perkins 3 cylinder liquid-cooled diesel. Great for intermediate rough, fairway, or tee mowing. Sharp reels, new bearings, ready to mow! $2,250 Contact: Tom Nacht Bent Creek Golf Club 612-419-4653

FOR SALE
1990 Cushman GA-60 486 hrs New Jackshaft and Sprockets - $6,000.00 obo 1988 Jac G4 9 Blade Reels Sharp and Ready to mow - $500 1988 Tri-King 1471 3WD - $500 1985 Turfcat 2 GW 224, 60” Hydro Deck - $500 Complete Maintenance Records Contact: Ryan Nelson raider276@yahoo.com Interlaken Golf Club (507)239-3178

FOR SALE

FOR SALE

FOR SALE
19 Tournament Flagsticks (507) 235-3178

FOR SALE
Sand D-M Bunker Liner 12 rolls at 3’/4” thickness, roll size 75” x 50” - $185 / roll 2 rolls at 1’/4” thickness, roll size 75” x 220” - $480 / roll Brand new rolls - still in the bags. Contact: Jake Schmitz Midland Hills Country Club 651-631-1545

Emerald Greens (651) 437-2518 or (651) 755-3343

FOR SALE
1987 Scots Ice Machine - $500 12 Par Aide Mounting Pipes - $15/each 6 Divotmate Containers - $100 19 Tournament Flagsticks (815) - $50 each Contact: Matt Rostal Dacotah Ridge Golf Course 607-644-7844

FOR SALE
1979 Scots Ice Machine - $500 6 Par Aide Portable Ballwashers - $500 each 6 Divotmate Containers - $100 19 Tournament Flagsticks (815) - $50 each Contact: Matt Rostal Dacotah Ridge Golf Course 607-644-7844

FOR SALE
6 Par Aide Ballwashers - $10,000 for set Contact: Jeff Johnson or Ken Diethe The Minikahda Club 612-926-4167

FOR SALE
Well cared for 2001 Toro 5200-D Fairway mower. 4post R015 with canopy, new speedometer, heavy-duty rear rollers one year old, all service completed, reels completely serviced and grind with new knives. Complete maintenance records. Ready to move. 2,260 hrs. - $12,000.00 Contact: Fred Taylor Mankato Golf Club (507) 388-2546

FOR SALE
Loftness Snowblower. 72” Skidloader attachment, fits most standardized Skidloaders 2004 with low hours Negotiable / best offer Contact: Ben Just or Jim Pollock Midland Hills Country Club 651-631-1545
Symbol System Chemical Management

By Chris Hoff, Sales Consultant for Precision Turf & Chemical, Inc.
and Rick Fletcher, Technical/Regulatory Manager for Cleary Chemical

Understanding Resistance Management Symbols for Improved Management

Several years ago, a worldwide effort was started to educate user groups on resistance management by providing a simple number symbol system that classified each Fungicide, Insecticide, and Herbicide. This was achieved by grouping the pesticidal Modes of Action (MOA) and their Target Sites. The Mode of Action is the biochemical mechanism by which the product interferes with the pest to disrupt normal growth. These are often associated with the Target Site of Action or the physical location in the pest where the pesticide is active. The end product is a simple to use numeric classification chart for the current active ingredients sold today.

What to Look For

The US EPA has requested chemical manufacturers to voluntarily include a pesticides group number on its product labels. These group symbols are in an easy to read format and standardized across the US. The following is an example of what you will see on products in the future.

Example of a product containing one active ingredient

**Group** | **Active Ingredient** | **Resistance Group** | **Trade Name**
--- | --- | --- | ---
1 | Thiophanate-Methyl | Methyl Benzimidazole | Cleary’s 3336
2 | Iprodione | Dicarboximides | Chipco 26GT
3 | Vinclozolin | DMI | Eagle
3 | Propiconazole | DMI | Banner Maxx
3 | Triadimefon | DMI | Bayleton
4 | Mefenoxam | Phenylamides | Subdue Maxx
7 | Boscalid | Carbamates | Emerald
7 | Fluotolanil | Carboxamides | ProStar
11 | Azoxystrobin | Qol: includes strobilurins | Heritage
11 | Pyraclostrobin | Qol: includes strobilurins | Insignia
11 | Trifloxystrobin | Qol: includes strobilurins | Compass
12 | Fludioxonil | Phenylpyrroles | Medallion
14 | PCNB | Aromatic Hydrocarbons | Turfide
14 | Chlorobenzilate | Aromatic Hydrocarbons | Termec SP
19 | Polyoxin D Zinc | Polyoxin D | Endorse
28 | Propamocarb | Carbamate Fungicides | Banol
33 | Fosthiazate | Phosphonates | Signature
M3 | Mancozeb | Multi-site Activity | Protect
M3 | Thiaram | Multi-site Activity | Sporex
M5 | Chlorothalonil | Multi-site Activity | Daconil
1 + M5 | Thiophanate-Methyl + Chlorothalonil | Multi-site Activity | Spectro 90
1 + 2 | Thiophanate-Methyl + Iprodione | Methyl Benzimidazole | 26/36
3 + 11 | Propiconazole + Azoxystrobin | DMI | Headway
3 + 11 | Propiconazole + Trifloxystrobin | DMI | Tartan
3 + 12 + M5 | Propiconazole + Fludioxonil + Chlorothalonil | DMI + Phenylpyrrole + Multi Site Activity | Instrata

Example of a product containing two active ingredients

**Group** | **Active Ingredient** | **Resistance Group** | **Trade Name**
--- | --- | --- | ---
1 | Carbaryl | Carbamates | Seven SL
1B | Trichlorfon | Organophosphates | Dylox
1B | Chlorpyrifos | Organophosphates | Dursban Pro
2B | Fipronil | Phenylpyrazoles | Ceasefire
3 | Deltamethrin | Pyrethroids | DelaGard
3 | Lambda-cyhalothrin | Pyrethroids | Scimitar GC
3 | Bifenthrin | Pyrethroids | Talstar
3 | Beta-Cyfluthrin | Pyrethroids | Tempo Ultra
4A | Clothianidin | Neonicotinoids | Arena
4A | Imidacloprid | Neonicotinoids | Merit
4A | Thiamethoxam | Neonicotinoids | Meridian
18 | Halofenozide | Diacylhydrazines | Mech 2
3 + 4A | Bifenthrin + Imidacloprid | Pyrethroids + Neonicotinoids | Allestus GC

How to Use This Information

The basic purpose of this grouping system is to reduce the development of pest resistance to the products being used to manage them. The following points are offered:

(Continued on Page 27)
Symbol System—
(Continued from Page 26)

+ Review your current program, add the group codes after each product, and look for patterns in your product use.
+ Avoid using similar group numbers in a tank mix or in sequential applications.
+ Do not use group symbols alone to make resistance management decisions. Read the product label for specific resistance management strategies.

Regardless of your approach, it is the user's responsibility to understand the best management practices that maximize product performance and resistance management. Many manufactures have long been leading advocates in this area and have often stressed the importance of using and changing multiple Modes of Action (MOA) for effective disease control and resistance management.

Additional information is also available to help at the following websites:
+ Fungicide-www.frac.info/publications.html+
+ Insecticide- www.irac-online.org
2006: A Season of Extremes

By Robert Vavrek, USGA Agronomist

It should come as no surprise that many superintendents across the Region found the 2006 season to be unusually challenging. Extended periods of hot weather and the ever-increasing expectations from golfers for ideal playing conditions will test the fortitude of even the most knowledgeable turf managers.

Last year could not have started any worse for courses located across the northernmost reaches of the Region. Heavy rainfall during late November of 2005 rapidly froze into a several inch thick layer of ice that smothered turf across low lying areas of golf courses. Several feet of snow covered the ice within a few days and snow provided enough insulation to maintain solid ice cover until mid-to-late March. Courses in localized areas of northern Minnesota and northern Wisconsin experienced as much as 140 days of continuous ice cover.

Needless to say, you can kiss Poa annua goodbye after four months of ice. Under these extreme conditions, even bentgrass was injured or killed where ice cover persisted the longest. Many courses were faced with the unenviable prospect of initiating an extensive recovery program during initial months of a relatively short growing season.

Just when significant progress was made regarding recovery, a month-long stretch of heat and high humidity occurred from early July until early August. The combination of heavy play and temperatures well into the upper 90s caused a relapse of turf injury where seedling bentgrass and Poa annua had barely a month of growth and development under their belts. Drought stress, heat stress and high temperature diseases, such as brown patch and Pythium blight, dashed any hopes of golfers experiencing consistent playing conditions during August and September.

The rest of the Region was generally spared winter injury, but not the stress associated with extended periods of hot, humid weather. Root systems of playing surfaces dominated by Poa annua died back in response to increasing soil temperatures. Nobody looks forward to the prospect of managing weak, shallow rooted turf for six to eight weeks of heavy play when hot weather arrives earlier than usual.

Early hot weather will jump start insect pest populations. As a result, pests such as sod webworms, cutworms and ants were particularly troublesome last season. On the other hand, earthworms tend to seek cooler temperatures and more consistent moisture deep in the soil during hot weather. Many courses exceeded their annual budget for fungicide treatments before September. Unanticipated treatments needed to be made to control hot weather diseases such as Pythium blight, brown patch and basal rot anthracnose. Dollar spot thinned out a great deal of turf across untreated green banks, tee banks and roughs during hot weather. In fact, the persistent dollar spot activity was a surprise to all of us who expect the disease to subside once temperatures reach the 90s. Perhaps the disease complexes are adapting to global warming faster than us.

Fairy ring activity was a concern all summer. In fact, many courses across the country found fairy rings to be the most prevalent disease problem this season affecting both cool and warm season turf. Treatments that suppressed the rings fairly well in the past did not provide an acceptable level of control last summer. Some classes of fungicides worked better than others. This comes as no surprise considering the variety of fungal species that cause fairy rings.

Warm fall weather extended the golfing season well into December for some areas of the Region. Winter play prompted concerns regarding whether to re-apply snow mold fungicides. A few rounds of play won't have much, if any, impact on the effectiveness of systemic snow mold fungicide treatments. However, if a particular course relies heavily on contact fungicides for snow mold protection, then moderate play accompanied by a mowing operation or two during exceptionally mild December weather can be a concern. This was the scenario for courses in Michigan during December and January where spring flowers broke dormancy adjacent to the sunny sides of buildings.

We can only speculate what the impact of warm December weather will have on the quality of turf come spring. Golf cart traffic across dormant turf will not be pretty. The area around heavily used hole locations will probably be thin and slow to green up. Whether or not the turf fully hardened off before the cold weather finally arrived will likely affect the potential for winter injury. Fortunately, most of the Region experienced significant snow cover just prior to the coldest weather. In fact, we can only be certain of one thing for the 2007 season...that it will bring new challenges.
Grand Champion of Healthy Snacks Takes a Whipping

By PHIL CAMPBELL, M.S., M.A.

Almonds provide a rich source of dietary protein. But occasionally, they get bad press for high fat content.

Because nuts are high in fat, individuals with cholesterol problems are frequently told to avoid nuts. Since nuts are so high in fat, they're to be avoided, right? Wrong, say researchers in a recent study.

A team of nutrition researchers investigated the issue of whether or not nuts make good snacks because of their fat content. The results are surprising.

Rocky Balboa vs. Apollo Creed

Just like in the movie, where Rocky is the underdog and no one believes he has a prayer against Apollo Creed; researchers staged a competition with an underdog against the champion of healthy snacks, the bran muffin.

In one corner, you have the world champion of healthy snacks, and never defeated...WHOLE...wheat... bran muffins - in the other corner, with a record of high fat ... almonds.

Research Discovery

After a month long study, the almonds won. They beat the daylight out of bran muffins.

Researchers reported, "Almonds used as snacks in the diets of hyperlipidemic (high cholesterol) subjects significantly reduce coronary heart disease risk factors, probably in part because of the nonfat (protein and fiber) and monounsaturated fatty acid components of the nut."

Almonds actually outperformed bran muffins in the ability to reduce fat circulating in the blood.

The Take Home

Don't throw out the bran muffins, they're still great snacks. Consider trying almonds. They're rich in protein and helpful in lowering cholesterol.

In the Crosshairs—

(Continued from Page 22)

+ Does anyone remember the mid-1970's media proclamation that the earth was entering a global cool down? (See Newsweek, April 28, 1975)

I believe we all can agree that global climate change is a very complex subject and man's understanding of this subject is limited. It would also be safe to assume that all humans want what is best for the planet we inhabit. The problem as it exists today is that the media, politicians and policymakers have hijacked science in favor of sensationalism, alarmism, and the almighty dollar. I appeal to you, the reader, to don your thinking caps and educate yourselves on the facts as they pertain to global warming. Do not assume that the mainstream media's goal is to present a fair and balanced account on this topic. The truth is out there but you must find it!

(Editor's Note: For additional information check out the following sources: The Skeptical Environmentalist - Measuring the Real State of the World, by Bjorn Lomborg, 2001; "Gore Gored" - A science-based rebuttal to the movie "An Inconvenient Truth" (http://ff.org/centers /csspp/pdfs/20061121_gore.pdf), and Climate Change Truths (http:// www.abd.org.uk/climate_change_truths.htm)
Growing up I used to think of age related ailments happening to those who were "old." Recently my body has made me more and more aware of my years here on earth. Dispersed in a shotgun pattern, my eyebrows have grown long, grey hairs so thick it takes a wire cutter to trim them. My ears are no longer finely tuned instruments adept at picking up the sound of grass growing. And my skeleton will sometimes make sounds, eerie, creaking noises, even in the stillness of a winter afternoon nap.

Other issues relevant to entering middle age include concerns of health care insurance, long term health care insurance and long long term health care insurance. In an effort to shape a new and reduced insurance plan, my club elected to go from a co-pay low deductible plan to a no-co-pay, high deductible plan with the option of a health savings account beginning January of 2007. Post 45 years of age placed me in a more expensive category than when I was a lad of 30.

Am I growing old? Perhaps. Shortly before Christmas during my annual physical, one I had put off for five years, a pain in my side generated good discussion with Dr. Sanders, a physician who now knows me rather intimately ("two fingers at a time I suggested, because I wanted a second opinion right away") and who advised me to lower my cholesterol. Off to the ultra sound lab I was sent with directions to have a stomach scan done. What the heck, my 25 dollar co-pay was pawning the way!

"Looks like you've got sludge in your gall bladder" the thorough technician said. "No crystalline stones, but enough stuff in there to cause some minor distress. I'll pass the report onto your doctor for further review."

With the news in hand I left for a better day at work, no mention of the "C" word, another ponderous thought when you get older.

Not one to hang out and wait for a prognosis I took the matter into my own hands and once home did research on gall bladders, gall stones, sludge, remedies, cures and prevention via the internet. In fact, my afternoon was consumed with web surfing, a very passive exercise having nothing to do with a board or water, yet if practiced long enough will generate a stiff neck and sore shoulder muscles. The amount of information gleaned could have filled volumes, but fortunately the bullet points for good gall bladder health were short and sweet.

**Increase exercise and physical fitness.**

Well, here is a coincidence related to old age. Not wanting my "muffin top" waistline to become a "popover", my wife and I had recently purchased a Vision fitness elliptical exercise machine. Besides helping to shed a bit of weight (12 pounds so far), toning a few muscle groups (can you say "speedo at the beach") and increasing my stamina, the daily Sprint 8 followed by ten minutes of cardio is surely lowering my 240 cholesterol count and helping with my sludge issue.

Decrease sugar intake. Who knew that my sweet tooth for chocolate treats, ice cream at night and the club's famous carrot cake impacted my gall bladder? I sure didn't, but now that I do, I am limiting my sugar consumption. This regimen, combined with my new found physical workout, just may facilitate my goal of three pack abs.

**Increase fiber.**

Beyond improved internal cleansing and regularity, a diet high in fiber has made me acutely aware of the product "Beano."

**Decrease fats.**

Doesn't everything taste better with butter? I, one of the original butter hog fan club members, have always thought so. Melted, clarified or soft spread, butter used to grace my vegetables, breads, seafood and even peanut butter sandwiches. Today my family goes without the smooth texture and slightly salty taste of sweet cream butter and instead we use Paul Harvey's substitute, Smart Spread. With the exception of not melting very well on cauliflower and broccoli, the artificial butter isn't all that bad.

**Increase flax meal.**

Some studies have found a lower risk for gallstones in people who consumed foods containing monounsaturated fats (found in olive and canola oils) or omega-3 fatty acids (found in canola, flaxseed, and, particularly, fish oil). For breakfast I have a quick hot cereal comprised of two tablespoons of oatmeal and two tablespoons of milled flax seed accompanied with a small handful of raisins. Fast, simple and it really gets me going if you know what I mean!

**Increase in Vitamin C.**

Ascorbic acid (Vitamin C) appears to help break cholesterol down in bile. Vitamin C deficiencies have been associated with a higher risk for gallstones. Hmm, how long I wonder until I have one of those 16-inch plastic pill boxes to hold my vitamin C's, glucosamine and condroitin tablets, multi tabs, allergy med, beano and antacid complete with alarm wristwatch and times to take the drugs?

Since hitting my new regimen hard I no longer feel the ache in my side. A natural cure or just psychosomatic? Does it really matter?

Yesterday the doctor's office called. An invitation to visit a specialist has been offered up to review my ultrasound report. Apparently I am a candidate for gall bladder removal due to the sludge build-up. But today I feel GREAT, and am not experiencing any issues. And the drawback of having my gall bladder removed, according to the RN, is a low tolerance to deep fried foods which could lead to bouts of diarrhea. Not a good thing in my book, especially if on occasion I may want to blow my "program" completely and pig out on a fried shrimp dipped in melted butter dinner including fresh popovers, baked potatoes and sour cream or an infrequent visit to KFC for their original recipe.

**But here is the real kicker, besides feeling too good for surgery; I am a cheap son of a bitch.**

The frugal side of me doesn't want to cough up the dough for elective surgery much less pay for the consultation. Since the club's insurance plan has changed, I am on the hook for the first $5,250 bucks of medical expenses. Sure contributions are being made to a health savings account, but there isn't more then a handful of dimes in there today.

**What's an old guy like me to do?** I think for now I will take a wait and see attitude. My body feels good. And I want to keep myself whole as long as possible. Am I at risk for a gall bladder attack? Maybe, but by then I will have some coin in my Health Savings Account and can afford a bit of surgery.

In fact, I think I will save up all sorts of elective surgeries besides gall bladder removal such as knee replacement, hip reconstruction, shoulder renovation and skin renewal and get them done all at once. Discounting some expenses and rejuvenating my body all at the same time seems like the prudent thing to do. - JM