

Steve Partyka -N-



The Partykas: Dawn, Brianna and Steve.



White Pines Golf Club

Busy White Pines Golf Club has had a Partyka in charge since the early Seventies. The current superintendent, Steve, began learning the ropes from his father, Edward, in 1975 when he was 15 years old. Count the Partykas among the 20 or so father-son superintendent teams that dot the MAGCS historical landscape (the fertile Dinelli dynasty accounts for about a quarter of that total).

Steve Partyka has managed the maintenance operations of White Pines since Edward Partyka's retirement in 1994, and he has been working there for more than 30 years. Steve describes himself as "old school," and counts names like Wally Fuchs and Lee Overpeck among his mentors, along with his father.

White Pines is a 36-hole public golf course owned and operated by the Bensenville Park District. The facility was established in 1926, and was operated by several private owners until one, a Mr. Branniger who owned five or six golf courses in the Chicagoland area, sold White Pines to Bensenville in 1967. The East and West courses at White Pines are a veritable Mecca for golfers. Located conveniently in the near-western suburbs, the facility sees 75,000 rounds played there annually. On occasion, triple shotguns go off one of the courses, and when I asked Steve how they pulled that off he replied, "I really don't know, we just get out of the way."

The facility has the distinction of several dubious "firsts." It was among the first golf courses to use strictly effluent water for irrigation. The water that finds its way into the irrigation system has a pH range of 9.1 to 9.8, and Steve spends around 50K per year treating it with acid injection and soluble gypsum to get it from yucky to barely tolerable. The fairways are deep-tined twice a year to help manage the salts that accumulate in the soil profile. Steve was pleased to inform me that they are in the process of upgrading his two wells to mitigate the effluent with "real water."

The other "first" is related to a massive tree-planting program that took place a couple of decades ago. More

than 5,000 trees were planted on the course, virtually encapsulating the fairways, tees and greens. A large segment of these trees were lindens, and, being close to O'Hare Airport, White Pines became the first stop for Japanese beetles as they moved westward from the East Coast of the United States. Steve recalls being willing to try anything to control these pests, with little success. At one point, they employed traps and collected enough beetles daily to fill a 55-gallon drum. What do you do with a 55-gallon drum of Japanese beetles? Burn 'em! At first, Steve used gasoline, but the fire, while hot, burned out quickly and Steve would see beetles survive the conflagration and fly out of the drum. A mixture of diesel fuel and gasoline proved to be the recipe for cremating Japanese beetles. Ah, those were the days!

The good news is Steve now has a pack of chainsaws to manage the problem, and if your ball finds the rough you might, just might, not have a tree blocking your next shot.

Like many of us, Steve spends a lot of time at his golf course, so it follows that he met his wife, Dawn, at the club. Brianna, their daughter, arrived 19 months ago, no doubt nine months after a particularly romantic evening watching Japanese beetles burn.

Steve, Dawn and Brianna found their little piece of heaven in Door County, Wisconsin, where the family plans to move when Steve retires in a couple more years. Steve bought five acres near Jacksonport and will build a home there. Wally Fuchs, a Door County legend, turned Steve on to the spot and the rest is or will be history. So far, all they have is a driveway, which required stumping

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out 65 trees and covering with 14 inches of gravel for this 400-foot-long by 12-foot-wide thoroughfare—all for the cost of \$2,600. Welcome to Wisconsin, where, “Ya hey, we gotta lotta gravel.” Eagerly looking forward to retirement, Steve invites everyone up for a visit—but suggests waiting until they have a house.

White Pine’s 36 holes are maintained by a maintenance staff of three full-time and 20 seasonal employees. Steve’s management partner is assistant superintendent Joe Giuliano, who’s been at White Pines for eight years and is also eagerly looking forward to Steve’s retirement.

Put a team together and kick off our 2005 golf season, but if you can’t keep your ball in the fairway you may want to bring your own chainsaw to our April 25th meeting at White Pines in Bensenville.



During a massive tree-planting program a couple of decades ago, White Pines gained more than 5,000 trees. Japanese beetles encroaching on the course’s lindens has resulted in the trees being thinned out—a bit. Left, hole no. 4 on the West Course.



Outstanding course conditions belie the fact that White Pines’ 36 holes absorb 75,000+ rounds per year. Right, holes 9 and 18 on the East Course.

PHOTOS BY JIM TRZINSKI