

An Open Letter to the Members of the MAGCS From the Wife of the Late Terry G. Dillner, CGCS (August 16, 1955 – July 30, 2005)

Dear MAGCS Members,

My name is Connie Dillner. Some of you knew my husband, Terry, during his eight-year career (1992-2000) as the golf course superintendent of Woodmar Country Club, Hammond, Indiana. Many of you knew Terry during his 18 years (1974-1992) as an assistant superintendent at Evanston Golf Club, Skokie, Illinois, under the direction of the late Walter Fuchs and Carl Hopphan. And a few of you may even remember him back when he started his career in the golf course industry as a grounds crewmember at Pheasant Valley Country Club in Crown Point, Indiana (1972-1974), also under the direction of the late Walter Fuchs. Terry was a longtime member of the MAGCS until his last career move in 2000 as golf course superintendent for the past five years of Arbor Hills Country Club, Jackson, Michigan.

As many of you may know by now, Terry passed away suddenly a few weeks ago, two weeks short of his 50th birthday. Initially, we thought he died from an allergic reaction from a wasp sting. Even though one can be stung numerous times during their lifetime with no consequences, that doesn't guarantee you are immune. You can be sensitized to the venom, unknowingly develop an allergy, and your next sting could be fatal if your symptoms aren't recognized and emergency treatment isn't promptly received.

However, this is not the case. Terry had a massive heart attack. The sting was purely coincidental and had no bearing on the end result, according to the autopsy results. We all missed the signs. When you hear hooves, you think horses—not zebras. Unfortunately, we should have thought zebras. Terry was having small M.I.s (silent heart attacks) apparently for quite some time and didn't even realize it.

We didn't know he had cardiac problems. He had a thorough cardiac evaluation in June 1999 and everything was fine at that time. However, upon Internet research (after the fact), he did have **many** warning signs, just not the types one would typically recognize with classic angina/heart attack symptoms, i.e., pain in the chest, heaviness, etc. He complained of indigestion (a sign) but three chili-cheese dogs with onions at lunch would give anyone indigestion. Also heartburn (another sign), we attributed to all the coffee he drank from 5 a.m. on. Fatigue and tiredness, yet another sign. It's been a long, hot summer with never enough budget, manpower or cooperation from Mother Nature to remedy the stress levels . . . it would tire out anybody. Terry was going full throttle from 5 a.m. to 9 p.m., basically seven days a week. He was a hands-on superintendent, in addition to working on finishing up the home we recently built.

I can't stress this enough to all the members of the MAGCS and to all the professionals who devote their lives and careers in this field: There is more to life than having



Terry, daughter Laura, son Tom, wife Connie and daughter Teresa.

the fastest greens, the nicest fairways, manicured rough, edged bunkers, etc., that both private memberships and daily-fee patrons demand every day.

Your health comes first! The turf will still be there tomorrow. Your family needs you more than that bent, blue, rye or *Poa* ever will. Don't dismiss perceived ailments as minor annoyances. Educate yourself. Know the signs. I wish we did but it's too late for Terry, our children and myself. But maybe, if one other turf professional takes notice, recognizes the signs, and it saves his/her life, then perhaps Terry's passing won't be in vain.

I've been blessed to be with Terry these last 24 years of his 33-year career in this crazy, demanding and rewarding field. I've not just been his wife but also a coworker at his last two clubs: as Terry's administrative assistant (WCC), as a grounds crewmember on his staff (AHCC) and most recently, as membership director and banquet coordinator (AHCC). Yep, I was on a Toro 455D rough mower. I hit a few trees by mowing too close, trying to save the weed whip guys a trip. And I did chop up my fair share of range balls and drainage tile grates. Terry tried to teach me how to mow fairways. I remember him VERY strongly recommending, "Don't crank it off—make wide turns!" But I was happy mowing rough on my 455. I didn't have to worry about picking up those reels in perfect synch before nicking the perimeters on fairways when mowing on an angle. He also tried teaching me how to operate the Park Master, whose sheer size totally intimidated me. It reminded me of an octopus with all those reels and levers going up and down. So I stuck with what I felt comfortable with—my little 455.

But things change quickly in the blink of an eye, so I will help the Arbor Hills' grounds crew finish out the season and put the golf course to bed on this, Terry's last season. I **will** learn how to operate that behemoth of a Park Master, and I **will** mow fairways, and I **will** do a good job because that was his golf course and Terry never left anything unfinished.

(continued on page 38)

An Open . . . (continued from page 37)

In this industry, we (turf professionals and their families) live from golf season to golf season, looking forward to the downtime of winter but also looking forward to spring and the start of a new season. The focus is always about the turf and providing our members and guests the best conditions possible. But perhaps the industry's focus needs to be reevaluated a bit. Because when the final chapter of your life approaches, you're not going to say to yourself, "I wish I had worked more hours out on the course." More than likely, you will say, "I wish I had spent more time with my family. Where did the time go?"

Don't get caught up in the competition of what the other guy is doing at the other club. Don't get caught up in the quest to chase the big bucks at the big clubs. Don't lose sight of why you got into this business in the first place. Because in the end, when all is said and done, and you've mowed your last green, and changed your last cup . . . what you've worked so hard to accomplish and accumulate during your lifetime . . . the house, the cars, all the trappings of success . . . in the end, it's all just stuff, those material possessions.

And the grass will still be there . . . growing . . . as always.

Best regards,
Connie Dillner



Reach = Reward (continued from page 5)

passion, and he ran with it. The trick is to be receptive and responsive to those around you who want to help enhance your facility. Prior to this summer, I didn't even know what a purple martin looked like. Now I can hear their song a hundred yards away, and know they are there. That's the reward. Thanks Ray. Keep 'em flying!

Learn more about purple martins at www.purplemartins.com



G. Rabine & Sons, Inc.

RABINE PAVING

Discover The Difference

888-RABINE 3

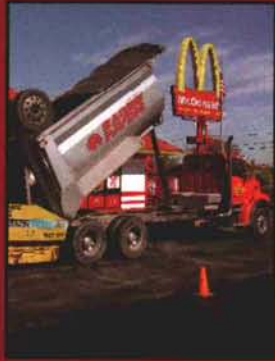
StreetPrint
Pavement Texturing

The look of hand-laid brick for a fraction of the cost

PAVING THE WAY WITH
QUALITY FOR OVER 35 YEARS

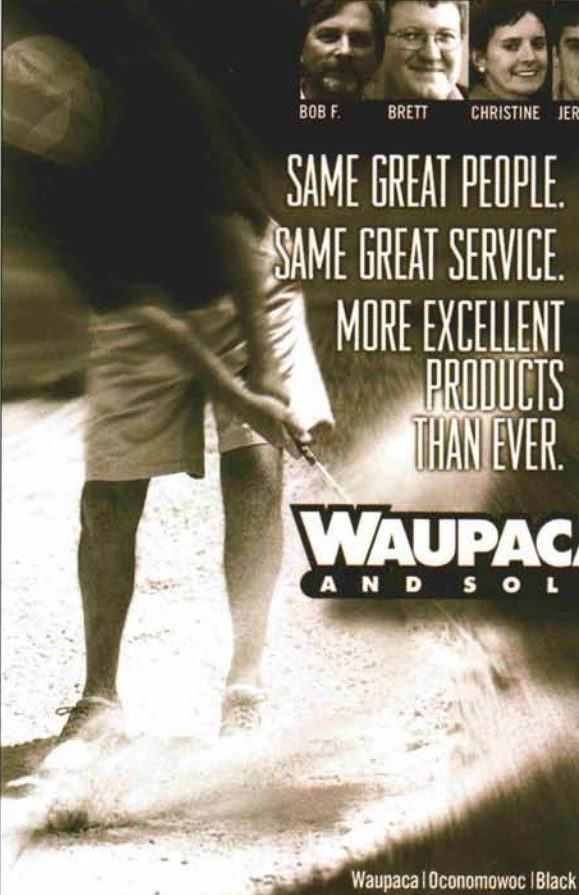
COMMERCIAL RESIDENTIAL MUNICIPAL

- Asphalt Paving and Engineering
- IDOT Pre-qualified
- StreetPrint—Pavement Texturing
- Infrared Pavement Repairs
- Sealcoating and Striping
- Concrete Curb and Gutter
- Snow Removal / Ice Control



www.rabinepaving.com

SERVING CHICAGO, ROCKFORD,
ALL OF NORTHRN IL & SOUTHERN WI



BOB F. BRETT CHRISTINE JEREMY KARI BOB M. SHARON

SAME GREAT PEOPLE.
SAME GREAT SERVICE.
MORE EXCELLENT
PRODUCTS
THAN EVER.

WAUPACA SAND AND SOLUTIONS

FINES FREE
TOPDRESSING®

NORTH FACE
BUNKER SAND®

7:2:1® BLEND

CART PATH GRANITE
BEST BUNKER SAND
CUSTOM MIXES

.....
info@waupacasand.com
(715) 258-8566

Waupaca | Oconomowoc | Black River Falls | Antioch | Rockford | Morris