

SUPER-N-site

John Gurke, CGCS and Aurora Country Club

Bill Meyer, Park Ridge Country Club

PHOTOS: LUKE CELLA

2014 is quite an important year for Aurora Country Club, as it is the club's 100th anniversary. The original course was designed by William Boice Langford and Thomas Bendelow on what was the Minard Farm. The course has been through a few renovations since then, the most recent in 2007.

All the tees were reworked and a few new ones added on this century old course. Bunkers were also renovated adding drainage and slightly repositioned throughout. The 150-acre rolling property sports tree lined fairways and small greens, making accurate golf shots important. The greens can be very tricky at times, they have the same contours as the originals even though they were changed to USGA specs in the 1980's.

On to the man of the hour: John Gurke, CGCS. I



John (did the horizontal stripes make me look fat?) and Aaron are looking forward to hosting the Midwest members this June.

would assume most of you reading this are familiar with John's name at least, as he is an associate editor of this great publica-



Aurora Country Club celebrates its centennial this year.

tion and the author of the ever amusing Bull Sheet. John is a native of Wheaton and got the golf bug when he started helping out his brother at Butler National during the Western Open, at the ripe age of 14. He continued to work at Butler National throughout high school, working for Ed Fischer and then Oscar Miles. After high school, John attended the University of Illinois, not initially going for turf but changing majors once he had a semester or two under his belt. During his summers throughout college, John would come back and work at the Oak Brook Public Course for Rick Wilson. After graduation, John hooked up Ed Fischer again and became Ed's assistant at Old Elm Club in Highland Park. After a few years at Old Elm, John became the Superintendent at Bartlett Hills Golf Course taking over for Joel Purpur. Three years later



he moved to Aurora Country Club and that was 24 years ago.

John tells me of the things that makes Aurora such an enjoyable place to work is the people. The management team is very willing to do what needs to be done, whether that's John and his assistant, Aaron Reinhart, carving the ham at the Easter brunch or the GM and golf pros helping clean up major storm damage. John also can't say enough about his own crew. Most of his seasonal staff has been around just as long

In John's personal time he is an avid reader. In the last seven years John has also gotten into snowmobiling. He has a regular spot in the Upper Peninsula where he snowmobiles all winter and he is accompanied by some other MAGCS members on these trips, such as: Dave Groelle, Todd Schmitz, Dan Murray, Dave Fisher, and Dave Biery. His favorite trip this year was a four day backpacking trip covering about 800 miles.



The bunkering at Aurora Country Club fits well with the design and flow of the course popping in and out of the mature tree lined fairways.

as he has, and his two most important guys are Aaron, and Nick Pavlovich, his long-time equipment technician. Last but not least are the four-legged members of his crew, Millie and Rooby, a pair of blue heelers who do a great job of driving off any winged rats (sorry geese) that might think to make the course home, and Tilty, the stray cat that showed up a few years ago and hasn't left.

The biggest project that John says he's going to be dealing with this year is the removal of Ash trees due to EAB. They have also started a project to plant new trees in the major gaps left after the removals.

To finish it up, I asked John a couple of random questions:

Q: What keeps you coming back every day? **A:** The uncertainty and the nervous excitement of what the day will bring.

Q: Favorite Book? **A:** *Don't Stop the Carnival* by Herman Wouk

Q: Favorite Food? **A:** John said he could eat pizza every night. The best, he says, is Al's Pizza in Warrenville, with sausage and pepperoni and an extra spin in the oven. That last part is a special request, but John says it makes the cheese perfect.



Also he says you MUST wait 20 minutes before you eat it so that it gets the right consistency.

Q: Where would you go on vacation, no cost to you? **A:** John would be in the British Virgin Islands on a catamaran with a captain taking care of the sailing part. Sailing from island to island with no real plan, just relaxing and enjoying the sun and some drinks.

Q: Favorite movie trilogy? **A:** This was a hard one, but John decided that his favorite trilogy was The Bourne movies, although we thought there might be four of them now. Some of his other favorites are: It's a Wonderful Life, Shawshank Redemption, and Some Like It Hot.

Q: What are you looking forward to this year/New Year's Resolution? **A:** The biggest thing that John is looking forward to is becoming a Grandfather. One resolution he had for this year is to get a little more involved in social media, primarily Twitter.

The last time John hosted an event was June 1994. From what he tells me, it was a 96 degree day and the power went out in the clubhouse. He says back in those days, after golfing, everyone took showers and had a formal dinner complete with coat and tie, so you can imagine it was a disaster. Just about everyone left. As fate would have it, the power came back on right as everyone had almost left. So, fingers crossed we will have better luck come this year at Aurora. John, Aaron, Nick, Millie, Rooby and Tilty all are looking forward to hosting us on June 16th when MAGCS pays a visit to the 100-year old Aurora Country Club. @

Aurora Country Club in its 100th year. The course will provide a test for our June contests: the Dom Grotti and the Class C Championship. Top: The 9th hole ends with the clubhouse as a backdrop - don't go long on your approach as it is almost impossible to keep your chip back onto this front sloping green. All of the tees were rebuilt and or added in the last renovation and don't be surprised at the size of a couple of the greens, especially the 11th - it's only 1,961 square feet with OB down the left side!