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the Bull Sheet

Official publication of the MIDWEST ASSOCIATION OF
GOLF COURSE SUPERINTENDENTS.

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On Course With the President

There have been numerous times over the past several months that MAGCS committee meetings have taken place for planning current and future directions of the Midwest. The Long Range Planning Committee, for instance, has met and has many innovative ideas for association improvements. That committee is trying to forecast needs and



establish policies for the future of our association. It is difficult to predict the future and address the desires of the MAGCS membership. To best help these MAGCS committees meet our member expectations and the desired direction of our association, it is imperative that we receive input from the members themselves. This input must come from the entire membership and not just from a vocal minority. This is important if we are to truly please the membership as a whole. Many surveys have been done in the past, but historically we have been lucky to get only about a 20% response on the average. Can't we do better than that? WE MUST!

A new survey is being developed that has several questions relating to the future direction of our association. The survey also contains questions that should provide useful and timely information for budgeting, negotiations, justifications, and Public Relations. The accuracy and success of the survey project depends directly upon your participation. We urge all of our members to take the few minutes necessary with the survey to help define the direction for the MAGCS at this important turning point.

There has been much discussion at the Board level about the current newsletter name **The Bull Sheet**. With complimentary MAGCS newsletters soon to become available to our club officials as a PR tool, the Board of Directors would like to change the name to appropriately represent our association and reflect our professional status. We as a Board realize that our purpose is to respect the wishes of the majority of the membership and do what is best for the MAGCS. For this reason the Board decided to survey every voting member via a telephone poll to obtain a complete and accurate conclusion. A survey was tried several years ago (1991) and the membership opinions about a name change were voiced by return postcard. Once again there was only slightly more than a 20% membership return (23.6%). After a strong campaign by those opposed to change the name, **The Bull Sheet** retention voice topped the survey.

Was that survey a true representation of the voting members? Is the sentiment the same? The only way we could truly know for sure was to strive for complete voting member survey participation. This enormous task is nearing completion with the exception of those voting members who have moved with no forward information or that we simply can't get a hold of. The Board will evaluate the survey results, therefore be on the lookout for further updates regarding this issue.

(continued page 4)

(President's Message continued)

The MAGCS is at a turning point. The direction we take will depend largely on the collective input of the members. When you receive the MAGCS survey, please take a couple of minutes to carefully fill it out. With your cooperation the Board can get a "feel" for how to best serve the MAGCS membership and therefore initiate the planning needed to fulfill the future direction and personality of our growing association.

Joel Purpur, President, MAGCS

Total U.S. Golf Course Supply / 1994

State	Daily Fee	Municipal	Private	Total
Florida	525	106	467	1,098
California	389	185	309	883
Michigan	586	86	145	817
New York	431	128	249	808
Texas	290	169	321	780
Ohio	455	100	192	747
Pennsylvania	399	40	230	669
Illinois	287	176	196	659
North Carolina	290	33	182	505
Wisconsin	321	67	65	453
Minnesota	281	91	59	431
Indiana	257	65	96	418
Iowa	233	56	85	374
Georgia	165	43	160	368
South Carolina	226	9	114	349
Massachusetts	181	42	120	343
Missouri	144	50	114	308
Virginia	120	28	133	281
New Jersey	87	49	132	268
Washington	150	54	58	262
Arizona	154	35	70	259
Tennessee	108	46	100	254
Kentucky	114	44	93	251
Alabama	107	32	111	250
Kansas	82	53	108	243
Colorado	76	78	52	206
Nebraska	98	46	48	192
Oklahoma	71	67	49	187
Oregon	126	17	38	181
Connecticut	59	36	81	176
Maryland	49	33	84	166
Arkansas	57	17	91	165
Mississippi	56	14	91	161
Louisiana	43	24	83	150
Maine	93	10	17	120
South Dakota	55	31	32	118
West Virginia	71	17	30	118
North Dakota	44	47	17	108
New Hampshire	85	3	13	101
Utah	26	54	14	94
Montana	50	20	18	88
Idaho	47	28	12	87
Hawaii	57	8	20	85
New Mexico	33	29	23	85
Nevada	33	21	10	64
Vermont	49	0	10	59
Wyoming	28	16	6	50
Rhode Island	24	3	20	47
Delaware	8	2	21	31
Alaska	11	4	1	16
District of Columbia	1	3	2	6
U.S. Totals	7,732	2,415	4,792	14,939

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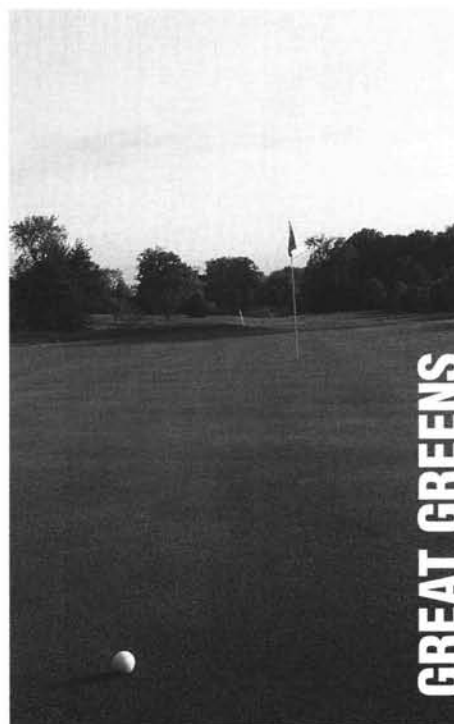
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Huh???

by Bob Maibusch, CGCS, MGC

I think that the most important area that we can improve ourselves professionally, once we've gained adequate training in the technical aspects of our jobs, are in our communication skills. I can think of very few instances over the last fifteen years where golf course superintendents have lost their jobs for reasons strictly related to their golf course presentation. In almost every case their problems seemed to originate with an inability to communicate to their employer the management problems that they were facing, and their worth to the operation. The exceptions to this are the golf course superintendents that have been released because they did not "fit" with the new management style of the facility (Translation: We want to find someone that we can pay half the amount of money to and increase our short-term net income. Are you listening general managers and golf management companies?). Conversely, I know of golf course superintendents who might well have lost their jobs because of poor golf course conditions, but were able to retain their position because of their superior communication skills.

Your communication skills can manifest themselves in many forms. Writing a monthly article for your club's membership newsletter, being a well prepared presenter at committee and board of directors meetings. Being available to answer members questions on a daily basis at the pro shop, in the clubhouse, or on the golf course, particularly during those times when the golf course is experiencing problems, are just a few examples of ways you can communicate. Another thing to remember is to be honest. If you don't know the answer to a question be truthful, but be sure to find the answer and follow up with that person as quickly as possible afterwards. Also, don't be afraid to admit that you have made a mistake, but be prepared to learn from it. Good communication, in my opinion, can do more to justify your worth and reinforce your importance to your employer or membership than any other thing, assuming your technical and management skills are adequate to provide them with a well manicured golf course. Good communication skills help you to justify bigger budgets, larger salaries, and hopefully, some measure of security in knowing that you will not be released without being given a chance to right a wrong. With good communication you can educate your employer regarding the difficulties you face and the value that you give to their organization.

We are by nature of the profession the least known department in our facilities. I have always felt that if my staff is doing its job correctly the membership will never even notice that we are there. That is fine while the members are on the golf course, but once they are back in the clubhouse or pro shop we must be assertive in reinforcing in their minds that we are the most important part of their management team, and that our staffs are the club's greatest asset. This can be difficult at times because you have to emphasize your importance without appearing self-important.



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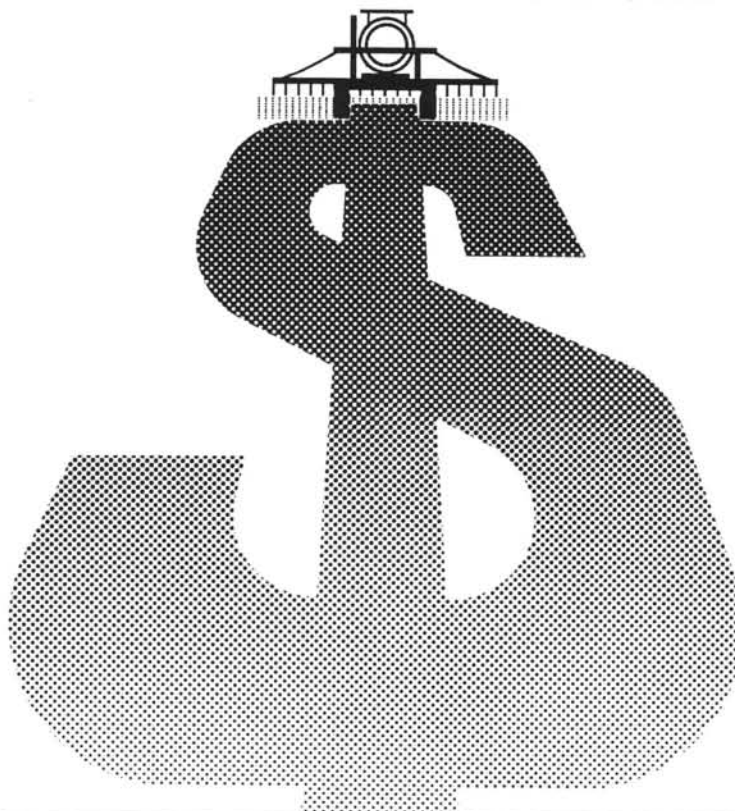


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Tommy Witt Interview

by Luke Cella, Supt.
Pottawatomie G.C.

Int.: "What was the most difficult acclimation that you had to make in the transition from Texas to Wynstone Golf Club in North Barrington?"

T.W.: "My biggest challenge here at Wynstone was getting the staff on the same page with me and finding what the Wynstone membership wants. Second, let me just say this, even though I have grown bentgrass on greens in the South, going from four acres to forty acres of bentgrass requires a lot of time and attention. This all ties into what I was saying about my staff. If you've got the right staff, you've got people who can help you."



Int.: "How did the relocation affect your family / personal life?"

T.W.: "For myself, I have always been involved in my profession. I'm at the golf course meeting new people every day, so it's not that difficult for me (to adjust). I have met and come to know some really fine Golf Course Superintendents.

It's certainly harder on your family. In fact, my wife and my kids would still rather live in Texas. My wife is from Minnesota and had no desire to move back north. As she said, she had become pretty soft living in the South, in Texas for ten years. It's not as easy for her to meet new people. She has to do all the work of finding new doctors, schools, etc. These changes can be very frustrating.

It's easier for the kids to meet new people through school, but because we moved up here in the summer, school hadn't started yet. It took the kids a little longer to meet other kids. The first two or three months were very hard. Some people says kids are very durable, (that children) can adapt pretty easily. I don't buy that. The most important things in the world to my wife and me are our children. To watch them struggle, to meet new friends, even cry at times, because they miss their old friends, that's not a sign of durability. Yes, they will endure and they will overcome, but as a parent who loves his family tremendously, it's difficult to see. A move for a three, five and seven year old can be fairly traumatic."

Int.: "What do you most enjoy about being a Superintendent?"

T.W.: "I started working on a golf course when I was eleven, and I like the challenges of what I do. There are a lot of professions in which you are never able to look back and see what you've accomplished. This may answer the question better than anything. (Tommy hands me a photo album filled with before and after pictures of projects he has accomplished.) No matter how big or how small (the project), I am able to look back and see progress. Members or golfers will readily forget these changes, but I think the neat things about our profession is that it's challenging and demanding, and we can really see the fruits of what we do."

(continued page 10)

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(Tommy Witt continued)

Int.: "What do you least enjoy about being a Superintendent?"

T.W.: "I don't know what I least enjoy, but I'm fairly disappointed with the lack of understanding that the American golfing public has of what it takes to provide premiere golfing conditions. I think for what Golf Course Superintendents go through, and the challenges they face, golfers are basically unappreciative and totally misconceived of what goes on a day to day basis."

Int.: "How are you able to balance your career with your family life?"

T.W.: "I work as hard at that as I do my job. First of all, I fully understand that to provide for my family, I have to have this job. Growing grass and all of its challenges are what contribute to my livelihood. I think Golf Course Superintendents put untold amounts of undue pressure on themselves. We beat ourselves to death. (There is a stereotype that) runs throughout our profession: you're not a good Superintendent unless you work seven days a week, fourteen hours a day. Granted there are times when it takes that, but anybody who thinks they have to work seventy to eighty hours a week all year round, well to me, this just means they're overloaded and may not be the best managers. We can't do it all ourselves. We need to hire qualified assistants and staffs."

In leaving Bent Tree Country Club, (the members) are not going to remember me ten years, five years or even one year down the line and say Tommy used to be here day and night. But your family will always remember (where you were). I'm not going to have my kids twenty or thirty years old and look back and say I never had time for them. I do balance my time, (sometimes) not as much as I like, but as much as I possibly can between work and my family. I would rather be known as a good husband and father than a good Golf Course Superintendent. I strive to be both."

Int.: "What are your hobbies?"

T.W.: "Two hobbies right now, whether one is considered a hobby or just plain fitting it in is spending a lot of time with my kids. My other (Tommy leans back in his chair, outstretching both arms, to two bucks that overlook each of his shoulders) passion is hunting white tailed deer. Illinois has some of the biggest deer on the continent, that's one of the reasons I moved up here."

Int.: "Where do you feel the GCSAA is heading, and what suggestions could you give to our members to help them adjust to any changes?"

T.W.: "The focuses of the GCSAA for the next three to five years are promoting our image, keeping the Golf Course Superintendent at the forefront where environmental issues are concerned, and improving Chapter/GCSAA relations. Those are three fairly large challenges. New departments such as career development, information services, and member services, are all geared towards providing every member with the tools they can utilize to help themselves."

Int.: "As a new Superintendent I look at your career and ask what hasn't Tommy Witt done? I know you must have set goals for yourself throughout your career. What goals have you set for yourself in the future?" (continued page 13) 10

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