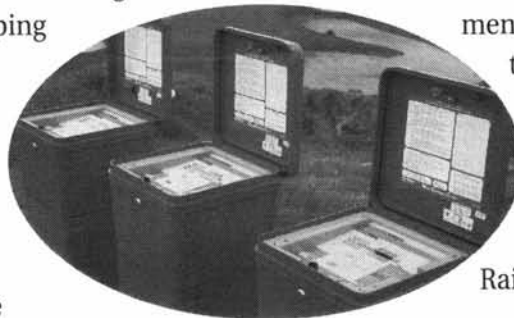




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FRONT COVER

Hole #16 at Elgin C.C. is a 170-yard par 3. (Photo by Jim Trzinski)

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The Midwest Association of Golf Course Superintendents (MAGCS), founded December 24, 1926, is a professional organization whose goals include preservation and dissemination of scientific and practical knowledge pertaining to golf turf maintenance.

We endeavor to increase efficiency and economic performance while improving and enhancing the individual and collective prestige of the members.

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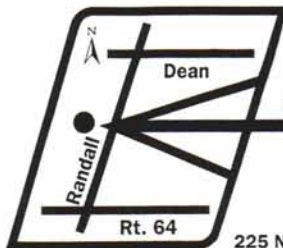


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Springtime: When The Winds of Change Blow, Fly a Kite

I hope this message finds everyone with a fond anticipation of the approaching golf season. Spring is a wonderful time of the year, when changes abound. The changes in spring we always accept without hesitation. The change in turf from dormant to actively growing, the change in weather, trees leafing out, golfers infiltrating our courses. You get the idea. These changes are met with an open mind. We tend to have an open mind to events we have no control over. What about events over which you may have control? You all know me pretty well through my articles during these past seven years. You know what I stand for. I love being a golf course superintendent. I don't know anything else I would rather do. This industry provides all of us a great outlet to earn a living.

I have always communicated well with my staff in the past. But I am going to change my approach. Instead of my existing open-door policy, I am going to actively seek out thoughts and ideas from staff.

I try very hard to keep an open thought process during my day-to-day activities. Sometimes this is much easier said than done. We deal with our guests generally on the best day of their week, the day they play golf. We are in the entertainment business, but I think sometimes we forget this. In reality, the world would survive without golf. So this being said, who is willing to change? I hope I am. I would like to do a spring-cleaning of my perspectives if possible. I would also encourage all of you to try the same evaluation on yourselves. I have been blessed with good personal health, family health and a good living—all this, along with loving family members who support 100% of what I do, is as good as it gets. So how do I give back? I need to be open-minded to the needs of those around me. I need to listen to the concerns of my family first. Having accomplished these goals at home, what about the workplace?

Communication, communication, communication—you can never have too much. It is the most important tool we have as individuals. I am a firm believer that all conflicts can be solved with communication. I am going to listen to staff, golfers, employer and yes, you the member, better than I ever have before. I will not refer to comments as “complaining” or “griping” any more . . . from now on it will be constructive criticism. I find it difficult to take criticism, no matter how hard I try. But I do know it helps an individual grow. Many times we are our worst critics and that is counterproductive. We should always include those around us in the rewards and positive outcomes of our

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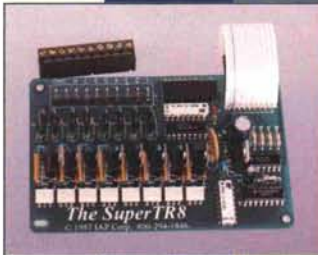
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The time is here. Many of us have either opened our courses or are ready to by now. The winters are getting too short lately. Courses are staying open later and opening earlier, except in the case of Geneva Golf Club, where my good friend doesn't have to open until June this year. (Just kidding, Eddie.) As a municipal superintendent, the early openings and late closings are having a major effect on my budget. I am told that the increased revenues offset the expenses, but we rarely see a dramatic increase in the bottom line for the club. I sometimes wonder if it is all worth it. Should we stick to the season that we budgeted for or try to generate as much revenue as we can and forget about the budget?

I also discovered that we, as members and chapters, do not use the GCSAA enough. Headquarters features a fantastic staff just waiting to assist the membership. I would suggest that when you have a concern with anything from public relations to membership, give them a call.

I would like to thank the membership for electing me to the secretary-treasurer office. After spending my last four years on the Board as chair of the Golf and Arrangement Committee, the change to my new position is welcome. I am very lucky to follow in Brian Bossert's footsteps. Brian did a great job in the position last year and didn't leave me to inherit any huge problems. However, we do have one small problem. In order to maintain our not-for-profit status with the Attorney General of the State of Illinois, we must have a certified audit performed. The Association's budget has grown to more than \$250,000. When a not-for-profit organization has a budget in excess of \$250,000 in operating expenses, the Attorney General wants to be sure that everything is on the up and up. The state requires a certified audit. In January, the Board of Directors voted to hire the firm of Arnold N. Schorn & Co. to perform the audit. The firm will also be taking over the bookkeeping duties, which will make my job a little easier. The secretary-treasurer will still be responsible for check-writing, bank deposits, meeting minutes and other miscellaneous duties. I will keep the membership informed on the status of the audit.

Back in January, Don Ferreri and I attended the Strategic Chapter Planning Conference at the GCSAA headquarters. I must admit, I was NOT very excited about giving up part of my weekend to go to Lawrence, Kansas. I was mistaken. I found the conference to be extremely educational. Not only was it very interesting to see how other chapters operate, but I think Don and I discovered that the MAGCS is a very well-run chapter. Many chapters had difficulties with membership participation; for example, they could not get the minimum number of attendees to a chapter-sponsored GCSAA seminar. The opportunity to network with other superintendents from across the country was also

(continued on page 32)

Todd Hoppahan -N- Elgin Country Club



Todd Hoppahan

Todd feels very strongly about his love of the outdoors, which is the reason he entered the business in the first place. "I like the challenges of working with nature; there is never a dull day, each one is different."

Todd Hoppahan has been in and around golf most of his 36-year life. You might say it's the family business. Most influential in Todd's 22-year career in golf maintenance: Todd's father, Carl, since retired from Evanston Country Club and now an active member with the Illinois Turfgrass Foundation, and Uncle Hans, who we all know well for hosting the Fox Valley Golf League at Blackberry Oaks Golf Club. Todd has been employed by the Elgin C.C. for the past two years. He got his start at Aurora C.C., where he worked eight summers. He attended the University of Illinois, where he earned his bachelor's degree in horticulture with an emphasis in turf. Todd spent the next nine-and-a-half years working at Evanston C.C. as the assistant superintendent. Todd left Evanston C.C. and worked at Eaglebrook for two years before landing the job at Elgin.

Elgin C.C., built in 1901, is one of those great old courses that has a very interesting history. Originally designed by Tom Bendelow, it was "nine stakes in a day." Elgin C.C. paid Mr. Bendelow \$500 for his services and covered the expenses for his train ticket. The course has had many changes over the years and little of the original course remains. In the 1950s, William Schatz routed the existing 18-hole format. Some of Elgin C.C.'s unique features include 130 feet in elevation change throughout the course; the club boasts the highest survey point in Kane County. The golf course itself is a modest 6,300 yards, but the fairways are lined with mature native oak and shagbark hickory and with the undulating terrain, it tends to "play longer." A great story Todd tells relates back to the 1930s; during Prohibition, members had a secret cave that included benches, cabinets and tables where they stored their "spirits" and hung out. All good things must come to an end, and the cave was blasted out; nothing remains but the stories.

Todd has kept very busy the last two years, involved with major drainage work for some of the fairways and bunker renovations for the greens. Other projects have included upgrades to the shop, equipment replacement and new landscaping. One of the most important projects Todd has embarked upon is to "meet the needs of a new generation of golfers." Todd's proactive approach is to educate his membership about why superintendents do what we do in regards to maintaining high-performance turf. His goal is to make Elgin C.C. as fine a golf course as possible. Todd feels it is critical to make an effort to reach out and make knowledge and information available to the membership.


This outreach education philosophy is not exclusive to Todd's work at Elgin C.C. During his stint at Evanston C.C., he was instrumental in the initiative to become

one of the original 10 courses certified as Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary clubs. He continues the same work at Elgin. Todd has also served on the MAGCS Education Committee and currently serves on the MAGCS Environmental Committee. Todd's "torch to carry" is to continue to promote the Audubon program; he was disappointed when Illinois dropped out of the lead for the number of Audubon-certified golf courses.

Todd feels very strongly about his love of the outdoors, which is the reason he entered the business in the first place. His appreciation for being a golf course superintendent continues to grow when he thinks about what other people do for a living. Despite the stresses of maintaining a golf course, Todd remains upbeat, focusing on the challenge. "I like the challenges of working with nature; there is never a dull day, each one is different." Todd continues to attempt to

improve the golf course, saying, "Rewards come from hard work."

In his endeavors, Todd receives support from his wife, Debbie, and their three children: Chad, age 9, Jenna, age 4, and Claire, age 1. The family lives in Aurora. This reporter's sources indicate Chad has been observed filling in divots—look out for the next generation! In his spare time (is there any?), Todd explores genealogy. No, he does not scour thrift stores and resale shops for retro '70s Jordaches (my first thought). Rather, he traces his family tree. He has traced his mother's side to the 1100s in England and his father's side to the 1600s in Germany—pretty cool.

I can't wait to play Elgin C.C. at our first golf meeting of the 2000 season (dare I say of the millennium). Bring your Y2K-compliant golf clubs, and see you there. 

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