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Batavia, IL 60510
Office: 630-406-5356, Fax: 630-406-5456

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LESCO Inc.
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Dr. Randy T. Kane
University of Illinois & CDGA
630-954-2753

EDITOR

Cathy Miles Ralston
276 Lincoln Terrace
Buffalo Grove, IL 60089
Phone & Fax: 847-537-7883
E-mail: on_course@hotmail.com

CONTRIBUTING EDITOR

John Gurke
E-mail: Boomding@aol.com

GRAPHIC ARTIST

Mark Karczewski

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FRONT COVER

The 2001 MAGCS Board of Directors and staff is, front row, L to R: vice president Luke Strojny, CGCS, Poplar Creek G.C.; president Brian Bossert, CGCS, Bryn Mawr C.C.; and secretary/treasurer Kevin DeRoo, Bartlett Hills G.C.

Back row, L to R: *On Course* editor Cathy Miles Ralston; president emeritus Don Ferreri, Seven Bridges G.C.; Fred Behnke, Mount Prospect G.C.; Phil Zeinert, CGCS, Kishwaukee C.C.; Mike Mumper, Park Ridge C.C.; Gary Hearn, Salt Creek G.C.; and executive secretary George Minnis.

Not pictured: John Gurke, CGCS, Aurora C.C.; Gregg Rosenthal, CGCS, Kemper Lakes G.C.

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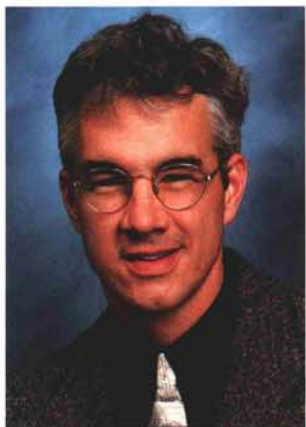
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Kevin DeRoo

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.

The MAGCS member is also an environmental steward. We strive to uphold and enhance our surroundings by promoting flora and fauna in every facet in a manner that is beneficial to the general public now and in the future.



A Smattering That Matters

There are several things to comment on this month, so I'll dive right in and attempt to be brief on each point. As I mentioned last month, I am excited about this new position of leadership and have been very busy in the first few weeks. Any and all positions on the Board are SERVICE commitments, not opportunities to force agendas or feed egos; an obligation to give back to the industry that feeds our families. Our association is very strong, but I expect an improved association a year from now. I welcome our new Board members and speak for the entire Board when I say that our ears are always open to your constructive criticism, ideas and encouragement.

... I was struck by the amount of people I didn't know at the Midwest Turf Clinic. That is probably a consequence of strong growth, but also an opportunity for members, especially the veterans, to welcome new people into the fold.

I would like to thank the membership for the overwhelming support of the dues increase. We were not able to budget on a break-even basis in 2000, but the new dues structure should allow us to do so for the next three years. As your Board, we will be accountable for continuing to put your generous support to good use. Thanks again!

As president, I am obligated to encourage you to participate in YOUR association. We are entering our 75th anniversary year and I can think of no better contribution than each individual member stepping up and doing just a little bit extra. This is an old plea, but never more appropriate. Admittedly, there isn't a need for everyone to host a meeting, serve on a committee or write an article for *On Course*. However, if you are steered in that direction, by all means follow through. Simpler ways to help out exist that can also have a big impact. For example, I was struck by the amount of people I didn't know at the Midwest Turf Clinic. That is probably a consequence of strong growth, but also an opportunity for members, especially the veterans, to welcome new people into the fold. I remember when, as a young and trembling kid, guys like Lenny Berg, Joel Purpur and Peter Leuzinger were friendly to me. Everyone wants to be a part of things, one of the crowd and welcomed as an equal. Saying hello is not particularly painful and can really make a young man's day!

A few other suggestions include: paying your dues on time, attending the educational events (even during the summer when it means a few less minutes on the practice green), signing up for meetings on time and signing up for a golf event as a solo. Go ahead and spend the day playing with someone you don't know for a change. I plan to do so, except for when the college championship rolls around (no, it will not be a net event). Also, untie that assistant and let him or her attend a golf event. They are the future of our association and too often, are behind

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Being a Leader Means Asking Yourself Tough Questions

The snow is falling, and many of us are still catching up on our sleep from last season. We are evaluating the programs that worked for this past season and starting to formulate a strategy for the coming season. I would call these plans the “nuts and bolts” of our given operations. We will take advantage of early-order programs for fertilizers and chemicals. Most of our capital equipment has been purchased.

If we can put ourselves in the shoes of those who are evaluating us as leaders, it would give us a better perspective of the questions that they are thinking of but will never ask.

These issues are all important to our success at our respective clubs, but we might overlook the one issue that is MOST important to our clubs and to our own success. Have we answered for ourselves the questions that are never asked of us as leaders? Each of us is, as one Hall of Fame baseball player put it, “the straw that stirs the drink.” It is important that we evaluate ourselves and ask, are we ready for the challenges of a new year?

I was recently at a meeting where a fellow superintendent by the name of Tom Mason posed a variety of questions to help us evaluate the state of our careers and questions that our employers use, but never ask of us, in evaluating our leadership skills.

- Are you responsive?
- Do you do what you said you would do?
- Do you make other people better?
- Do you evaluate yourself at the expense of others?
- Are your budgets and reports on time and correct?
- Can you speak to a group and get your point across?
- Do you see the “big picture” at your facility?
- Can you teach and inspire attention to detail?
- Can you handle adversity? Do you have a plan for handling adversity?

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Contemplating a New Maintenance Facility?

Before You Build

Early in 2000, when I was assigned my slot to write an Ask the "Expert" article, I imagined my topic would be "how to construct a new maintenance facility." After all, monies had been allocated in our next fiscal budget to do just that. That was back in January of last year. As I sit down to write, it is nearing the end of November and our new maintenance facility is but a piece of open flat ground behind the current shop. Not much to write about there, although for the first time in a long while I can see the back wall of our existing shop. It is amazing what can accumulate if you let it. In any event, with regard to advising on the construction phase of such construction projects, I will have to defer to those who have already gone through such an undertaking. As for myself, it looks like my expertise will be confined to what I have learned so far: the steps to take before you build.

How much heated, useable working space do you currently have? If it is under 1,500 square feet for an 18-hole golf course, I am sure you, your equipment technician and your entire staff are experiencing very tight working conditions.

Identify a Need

The first and foremost step in any project of this magnitude is identifying the need. To do this, you must examine your current shop facility and maintenance operations closely and ask a few simple questions. You might be able to overlook taking 30 minutes wasted out of your day to dig out that dust-covered aerator that has not been used since last spring. But, can you overlook that same half-hour spent trying to get to a mower that was just used yesterday? How much heated, useable working space do you currently have? If it is under 1,500 square feet for an 18-hole golf course, I am sure you, your equipment technician and your entire staff are experiencing very tight working conditions. Does your present shop meet current legal requirements concerning the ADA regulations, chemical rinse pad and chemical storage? What about security and safety—are your employees concerned about an overcrowded shop? Have you ever investigated your village fire codes? Do you need to install a fire suppression system? Do you have to climb over equipment in order to exit/enter your shop? Can you store all of your current maintenance equipment inventory under one roof? What about their specialized implement attachments?

Do you have adequate heating, air-conditioning and ventilation systems? I know one particular instance where a local superintendent has endured inside-office temperatures below freezing through the cold winter months. Whoops, that reminds me, time to plug that space heater in. How about office space, meeting room, lunch room, wash-room, showers, locker-room facilities—are they adequate for you and your staff? Do they exist at all? These are just a few considerations you

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should be pondering in determining your need for an expanded/updated maintenance facility. And, after you've exhausted all other alternatives in finding another acceptable solution to your needs, you must try to sell the project to those controlling the purse strings.

Research/Planning

More than 300 golf courses call Chicago and its immediate suburbs home. More courses are being built every year. There is no need to reinvent the wheel here. Talk to your fellow superintendents and visit their maintenance facilities. Ask as many questions as you can brainstorm regarding what works for them, and maybe more importantly, delve into what does not. Make yourself a wish list and include all the amenities your present shop is lacking. Investigate dimensions to give yourself an idea of how much space you will actually need for your maintenance operations to be successful.

Talk to your fellow superintendents and visit their maintenance facilities. Ask as many questions as you can brainstorm regarding what works for them, and maybe more importantly, delve into what does not.

Before construction ever began on his new maintenance facility, Nick Hongisto at Schaumburg Golf Course made sure the proposed building was going to be large enough by taking the floor plan and making scale model cutouts of all his equipment and furniture. By doing this, he knew exactly what the minimum square footage of the new maintenance building should be. When Brian Bossert of Bryn Mawr Country Club was in the throes of planning his new building, he conducted weekly meetings to get input from his maintenance staff as well. Here at Bartlett Hills, I went so far as to have each of my full-time employees draw up his own plan of what the new shop facility should include, with the only parameters being the outside dimensions of the building. From these five separate drawings, we derived a master floor plan for the building. The important thing here is let your staff's voices be heard; after all, they are the ones who will be using the facility the most. The more people involved, the more possibilities you will discover. Then, after information-gathering has been completed, hire an architect.

Location, Location, Location

As many questions as you have about the building and its size and type, you will also have about the location. Questions about the feasibility of the site chosen should be of primary concern. Does the site offer enough space for a building of the size you want? What are the soil types? Are utilities nearby? What will your neighbors say? Is it a secure location? Is it accessible for delivery trucks? Is parking space available? How about accessibility to/from the golf course for employees? Will trees require removal? Any severe grade changes that would increase excavation costs? Can the area be viewed/heard from the

course, or from the clubhouse? Will it be in a floodplain? These are but a few of the considerations to mull over when choosing your shop facility location; all of these issues will have a direct bearing on the total cost of your project. The important thing here is to choose several possible sites. Weigh the pros and cons of each of your options. And be prepared to use a site that may have not been your first choice.

Budgeting

Building construction costs for a regular pole-type building begin at around \$21/square foot and can escalate up to and even exceed \$90/square foot depending on all of your amenities. An architect will help considerably with nailing down an approximate cost of your future maintenance facility. It is the job of the golf course superintendent to convey to the architect how meeting the needs outlined is vitally important to a successful, efficient golf course maintenance facility. Communicate your wish list and do not settle for less than you need, available space being the most coveted commodity. If you need a minimum 6,000-square-foot building to meet your equipment storage needs, settling for a 4,000-square-foot building is an unacceptable compromise. Plan on a building that can accommodate you and your staff for the next 50 years or so.

In closing, I realize that I probably raised more questions than I had answers for. If that is so, then I have succeeded. Asking questions is the only way we can obtain answers. If you are about to embark on a project of this nature, my message to you is the lesson I have taken to heart: "Knowledge is your friend." The more you learn about the process before you build, the more likely

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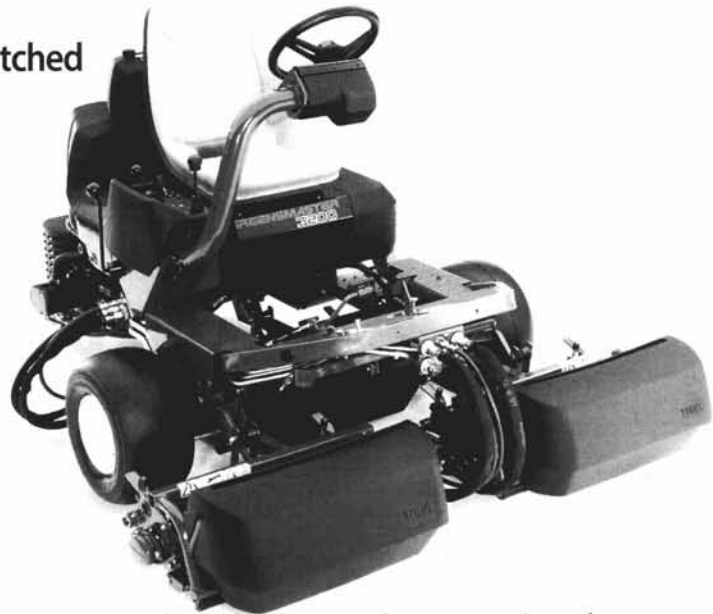
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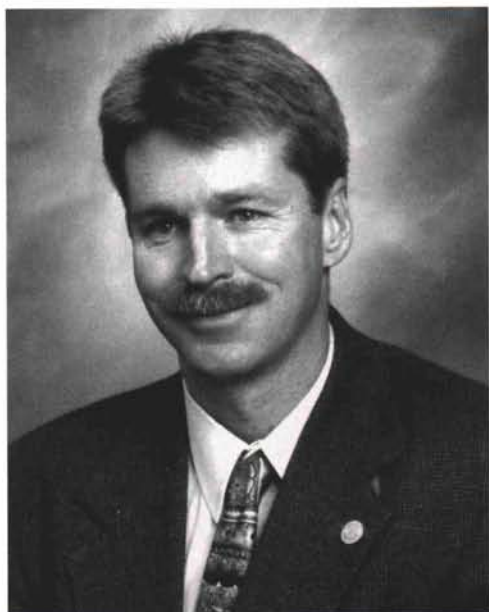
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Luke Strojny



Luke Strojny

-N-

**Poplar
Creek**
Country Club

This month's monthly meeting will be a departure from the norm, as we will convene at Poplar Creek Country Club as opposed to our usual January meeting site of Arrowhead Golf Club. Luke Strojny has been golf course superintendent at Poplar Creek in Hoffman Estates since 1984, and has been a key part of the many changes and improvements that have taken place there.

Currently, Luke is the vice president of MAGCS, and is eager to lead our association in 2002. His work ethic is apparent in the manner in which he has tackled both his job and his association responsibilities.

Luke's journey to reach this point has been not unlike that taken by many of us in this industry—he began his career in golf as a caddy at St. Andrews Golf Club in West Chicago in the mid '70s. After attaining the coveted "cart boy" position there, Luke's career path led him into our end of the business when, in 1976, he began working on the grounds staff for John Lapp. During this time, Luke worked toward his associate's degree in ornamental horticulture from the College of Du Page, culminating in his receiving the rolled-up paper with the pretty ribbon tied around it in June of 1981.

With degree in hand, Luke crossed the border into Cheeseland to accept the position of golf course superintendent at Maple Grove Country Club in West Salem. After two years there, he came back to the lowlands and took on his current position as golf course superintendent at Poplar Creek. Luke continued his on-the-job education, earning Certified Golf Course Superintendent status from GCSAA in 1987 (the year he married his wife, Debbie). In his time at Poplar Creek, Luke has overseen the evolution of the course into a first-rate golf facility through the numerous improvements that have been implemented. Next on the list is a complete redo of the practice facility, which will commence in the fall of this year.

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