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MAGCS P.O. Box 760, Batavia, IL 60510  
Office: 630-406-5356, Fax: 630-406-5456  
E-mail: geo@magcs.org

### BOARD

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E-mail: tjanderso@aol.com

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### PRESIDENT EMERITUS

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E-mail: sls133@lesco.com

### TURFGRASS ADVISOR

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University of Illinois & CDGA  
630-257-2005

### EDITOR

**Cathy Miles Ralston**  
68 S. Waterford Drive  
Round Lake, IL 60073  
Phone & Fax: 847-740-0962  
E-mail: on\_course@hotmail.com

### CONTRIBUTING EDITOR

**John Gurke**  
E-mail: Boomding@aol.com

### GRAPHIC ARTIST

**Mark Karczewski**

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(Photo by Jim Trzinski)

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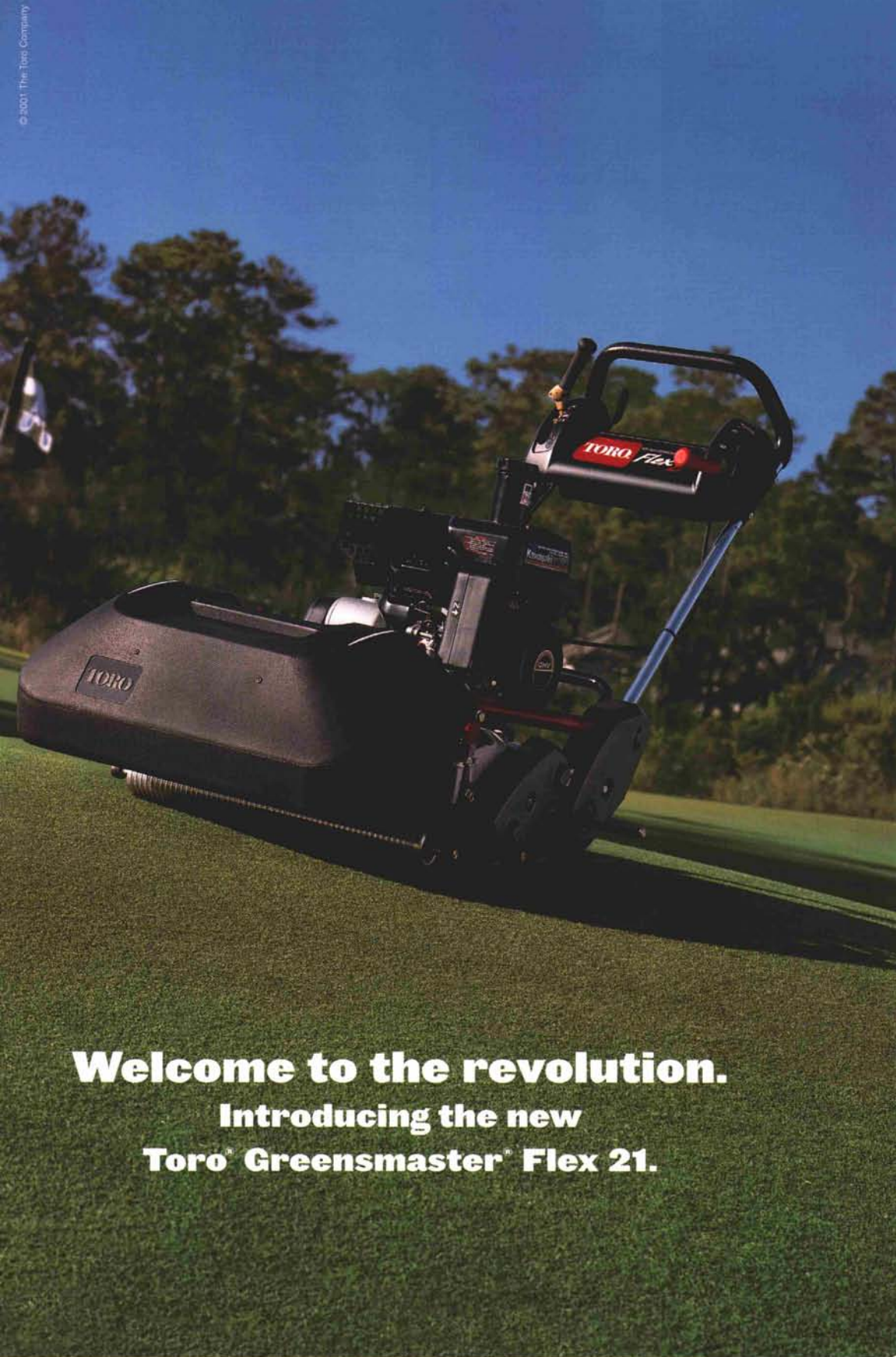
## 43 MIDWEST PERSONALITIES

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.





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# Batter Up!

*Believe it or not, one of the most difficult things about being president of the Midwest is writing a monthly message. I have been struggling to come up with some inspirational subject that would set the golf course maintenance community on fire. Well, guess what? It's not happening! So what will be this month's subject? BASEBALL—or, to be exact, the similarities between running a golf course and coaching a little-league team.*

*... I love my job  
and coaching  
baseball but as  
with anything in  
life, there are  
those times that  
they both drive  
me crazy.*

To start off, I'd like to say that I love my job **and** coaching baseball but as with anything in life, there are those times that they both drive me crazy. For example, during a recent frost delay in May, a golfer asked me how long it would be before play would begin. My response was, "Three hours." (It happened to be around 6:00 a.m.) I might as well have hit him in the face. This guy couldn't believe it was going to take three hours for the frost to melt. I then told him that if I had said "30 minutes" and the frost hadn't melted, he would most likely be more upset with me since I am the one responsible for the frost in the first place; however, if I got the course open before the three hours was up, he would be happy.

This is much like dealing with the parents who are living their baseball career through their kids. I was involved in a situation a couple days ago. The game I was coaching went into extra innings. Our pitcher gave up two runs in the top of the seventh. The kid was tired and had to be pulled. We were forced to use one of our star pitchers for two-thirds of an inning. I wanted to save the kid for the next day's game, but I also wanted to win the game we were playing. Let me tell you, having junior pitch for two-thirds of an inning did not sit well with his father. According to him, it was a sin to waste his son's talents at that juncture—he should have been put in a lot sooner. I explained what I was trying to accomplish but he, like Mr. Frost Delay, was not going to listen. You cannot please everyone all the time!

Another parallel between golfers and kids in little league is that both don't listen or maybe they simply hear only what they want to hear. How many times do you get that deer-in-the-headlights look when, after 2.5" of rain, you tell Mr. Cart Paths Only to stay on the path rather than drive through every puddle of water to get to his ball? It's remarkably similar to when I have to tell Johnny 10 times not to swing the bat in the dugout and he gives me that same look, like I am speaking Chinese to him.

The last similarity I'd like to discuss is garbage. When I was young, I was taught not to litter. Some of you must remember "Don't be a litter bug." What ever happened to that concept? It seems that we are spending an increasing amount of time picking up trash on the course, even though there are garbage cans everywhere. I have no choice but to think that people, in general, don't like to throw garbage in the "proper receptacle." It's much easier to throw it on the ground. Those of you who have never had the pleasure of spending some time in a little-league dugout won't understand the common denomina-

*(continued on page 34)*



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# Friendship by Committee

*Where did you make your friends? I'll bet you know where you made your foes. As I think about my friends in life, most were made through association. My childhood friends lived on or near the same block. We all went to the same school, oftentimes traversing through alleys together to get to our destination faster. We emulated our sporting heroes with the changing seasons, made up rules to our own games, and always argued that we had last wraps when there was a chance to tie, or begged for 10 more minutes when the street lights began to flicker.*

We shared similar challenges and trials throughout our early lives. We defined each other and ourselves through unrehearsed reactions to different tests. As we grew older and our environments changed, so did our friendships. New friends were made in high school, on sporting teams and on dormitory floors in college. We found friends through new interactions and associations.

As we grow older, the cycle continues. I am fortunate that I have many friends in my life. I continue to meet new people, but as I grow older, the opportunities to make somebody's acquaintance decrease. My commitments have changed from my own to my family's. Gatherings with old friends have given way to five-minute cell-phone calls, and I certainly don't need to mention the constraints of my professional life as we head into summer.

*Our Association offers one forum in particular where membership has a chance to work closely with others and a chance to make new friends. Committees are that place.*

However, I will mention the profession I have chosen. Why is the weather always a topic of conversation among complete strangers? Because it is a phenomenon everyone experiences; it is a commonality. Think about our chosen profession. Most of us share personal qualities; we like what we do, we enjoy the outdoors, we are self-starters, organized and driven. We experience similar problems and find many different solutions. There is an inherent camaraderie prevalent throughout our Association. The question is: how do you share that camaraderie? The answer is: through friendship. The place to make new acquaintances and friends is through our Association. The MAGCS offers each member many opportunities to meet new people.

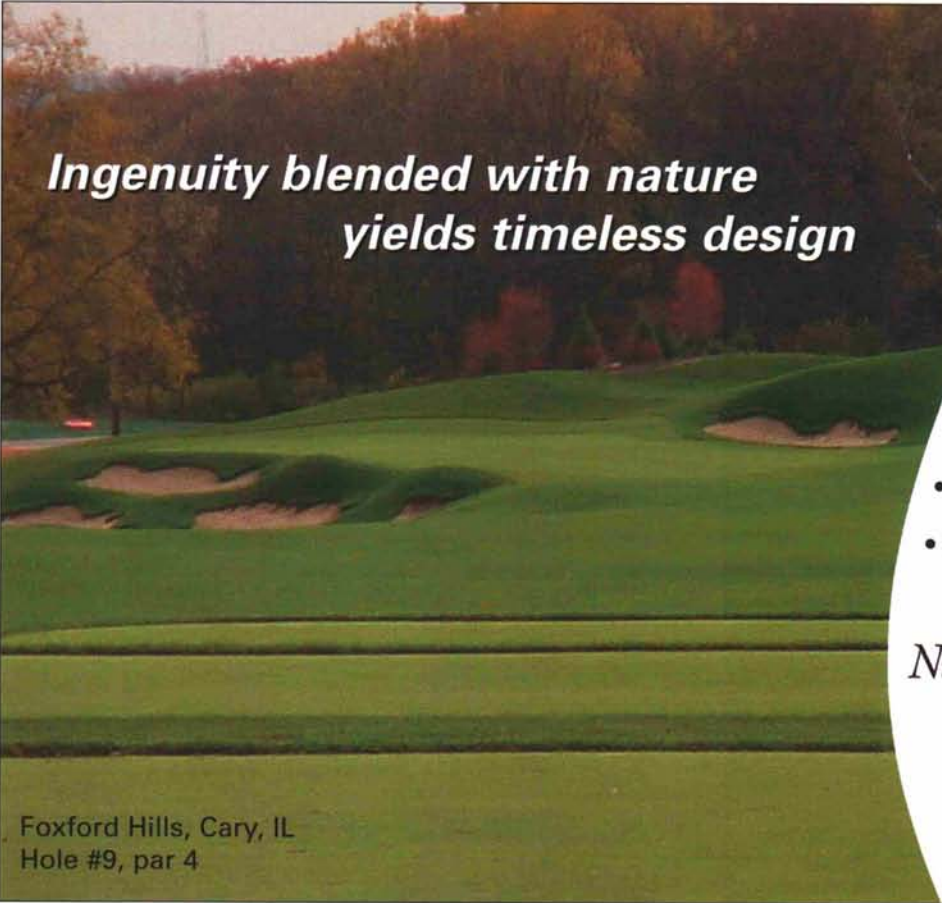
Our Association offers one forum in particular where membership has a chance to work closely with others and a chance to make new friends. Committees are that place. We currently have 12 committees:

- Scholarship
- Education
- Public Relations
- Employment
- Membership
- Editorial
- Arrangements
- Environmental
- By-Laws/Nominating
- Golf
- Long-Range Planning
- Benevolence

By joining a committee, a member enjoys the opportunity to meet other members a few more times throughout the year beyond our monthly meetings. Most of each committee's work is accomplished during our slow season; moreover, the more committee members we have, the less daunting the responsibilities each individual must commit to accomplish.

*(continued on page 38)*





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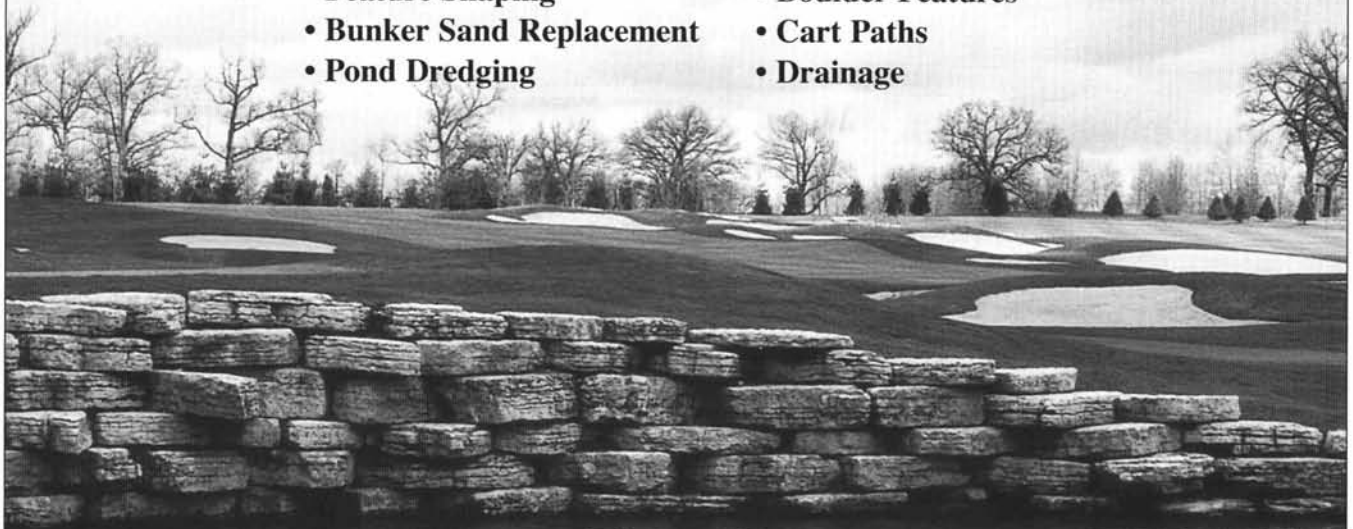


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# Oscar Miles -N-



Oscar Miles.



*Oscar Miles, superintendent of the Merit Club, has more experience than I have room for in my small article. I will try my best to display the side of "O" that I had the pleasure of experiencing during our rainy-day phone interview.*

*The 325-acre Merit Club was well-planned, constructed without cutting any corners. Oscar had significant input into the course's design and infrastructure, bringing 30 years' accumulated knowledge and experience to bear on the project.*

While Joel Purpur was busy building the Ark, Oscar and I conversed as the Merit Club shrugged off 2" of rain and had little concern for the radar, which gave every indication we were in for an entire day's worth of soaking. "We needed it," Oscar stated calmly, while Joel was furiously herding pairs of two inside the partially completed structure. Yes, the Merit Club is a superintendent's dream, capable of handling 8" of rain in a 24-hour period.

Mr. Miles was born on November 28, 1939, in Quincy, Illinois. He was number eight of 10 children; they named him Oscar after his father. Those 10 children kept the Miles parents on their toes; Oscar's father lived to be 87 while his mother racked up 97 self-sufficient years. Three of the ten Miles children became superintendents. Oliver Miles was in charge of seven golf courses as the superintendent of the Cook County Forest Preserve courses. Oliver also taught one of the area's first turf courses at a local college. Many superintendents in the area have had Oliver as an instructor. One of Oscar's younger brothers, Timothy J. Miles, is the president of GolfVisions and the father of our cherished editor, Cathy Miles Ralston. Oscar's son Brent is assistant superintendent at Heather Ridge.

Quincy was not always the Mecca of recreation it is today. When Oscar was younger, he would drive his 1957 Ford with the sky top on the cruise from Dettler's Dairy to Maid Rite to A & W. From there, it was down to Sambo's; when the Sambo's went cold, he would continue the cruise path, which returned to the Maid Rite. The guys would pursue showing off their cars, looking for company, from dark to eleven o'clock or so, hanging out on the front bumper showing off their sound systems. Finding a girl to take to the local passion pit was the goal of this cruise. Some nights were better than others in Quincy, Illinois.

Oscar's days of cruising Quincy and picking up girls ended with the happenstance of meeting Mardelle. Oscar met Mardelle at Cedar Crest C.C. in

*(continued on page 10)*



1962 while he was superintendent at Quincy Country Club. Mardelle had been at Cedar Crest for a function; the details are sketchy, however, Oscar asked Mardelle to dance and the romance was kicked in gear to the "twist." They were wed on January 19, 1963, while Oscar was on active duty with the Army Reserve. Next year will be their 40-year anniversary. Oscar and Mardelle have three children: Brent, the youngest; Judy, who has two children; and Sue, who also has two children. This year, Oscar will join the great-grandparent ranks as his granddaughter, Jessica, is expecting a child in November.

Oscar left Quincy after working at Westview Golf Course. Oscar was urged by pro-superintendent Scottie Glasgow and Dr. Fred Grau to go to Penn State University to acquire a formal education. In 1961, Oscar graduated Penn State and left to intern under Robert M. Williams at Bob O'Link. With a PSU Turf Management certificate in hand, he went back to Quincy and took over Quincy Country Club. He was now superintendent of a club he had only been to once, in 1955, to see Sam Snead and Dutch Harrison give an exhibition. Oscar was so intimidated by the country club of Quincy that he wouldn't even park his car, a 1949 Nash, in the parking lot. He left Quincy C.C. in 1964 and, at the ripe age of 24 years old, he was the



*Pictured at the July 2001 wedding of Oscar's granddaughter Jessica are, back row (L to R), Oscar, son Brent and son-in-law Terry; front row (L to R), wife Mardelle, granddaughters Annie, Nicole and Jessica, Jessica's husband Oliver, daughter Sue, grandson Jamie and daughter Judy.*

youngest "fish" in the Chicago "big pond" of upper-tier superintendents when he took over the helm of Olympia Fields. Warren Bidwell was the outgoing superintendent and Warren left some big shoes to fill for young Oscar.

Oscar left Olympia Fields in 1975 after he made a stunning "leisure suit" impression at Broadmoor Country Club. Times were different then, and Oscar doesn't necessarily think that wearing a green

jacket and checkered pants to an interview would fly today, but it worked then, and off to Indianapolis he went. Broadmoor was where Oscar claims he really learned how to grow grass. He was more mature, relaxed and respected. He was treated well by the members, who included him in every event except the club championship. That would make sense as he was proud of a 3 handicap. One member gave "O" a bit of advice, saying, "You would be a big winner in money games if you were a 7 handicap." Oscar took his advice and stopped killing himself in a quest to be a scratch player; rather, he enjoyed his abilities as a good player. One day, a member made Oscar a proposition, "We don't want to see you lose any money in our games, so . . . I will cover your bets, and you give me 20% of your winnings." That took a lot of pressure off "O" and after that, Oscar usually came out a big winner with a wad of cash to prove it.

It was the summer of 1979 and through the tragedy of C-15 decline, Oscar was back in Chicago as superintendent of Butler National. His first Western Open at Butler loomed only 10 months away. But Oscar had prepared for two previous Westerns, at Olympia Fields in 1968



*Volunteers Ken Schar and Roy Wellman manage 20 bluebird nesting boxes on the golf course.*