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Glen Erin Golf Club's no. 18 green and clubhouse, as viewed through the valley.  
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.

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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## ON COURSE WITH THE PRESIDENT

Fred Behnke, CGCS Mount Prospect Golf Club

# The Long Way Home

*The other day I was driving home after another long day at the course. I live on the far northwest side of Chicago and “reverse commute” from my golf course in Mount Prospect. Sometimes I take the Kennedy Expressway into the city, but that day I went local because the Kennedy gets to be a parking lot around 4:00 p.m. I was tired and a bit cranky because we’re building a new clubhouse and construction matters kept me at the course later than I like. Anyway, I was at the stoplight and a kid pulled up next to me and hollered, “Hey, old guy!”*

I ignored him because he obviously wasn’t talking to me.

“Hey, old guy, are you deaf too!”

This time I looked. Glaring over the rim of my bifocals, I casually tucked some grey hair behind my ear, curled my lip and pointed to myself as if to say, “You talking to me, punk?”

“Yeah you, mister, you know your left turn signal’s been on for the last mile. Geeze, wake up!” And he sped off.

I checked my blinker and sure enough there it was, happily flashing away announcing to the world that this driver was clueless. I had no idea when I had turned it on.

Oh-oh.

I suddenly remembered the numerous times I was behind someone driving blithely along with the turn signal on, being aggravated or at least amused at the “poor, old coot.”

What to do?

Do I turn off the left turn signal and continue on my way, admitting to the world that “cootness” had acquired me?

Or . . .

I turned left, and took the long way home.

I like that story. It says a lot about me and that’s my problem, but it’s also an anecdote with a moral.

I was heading home. I go there every day. I know my way home and I don’t need anyone to help me get there, but that day I ended up taking the long way home. Golf course superintendents are notoriously self-reliant and I’ll bet our spouses say we NEVER ask for directions. This Association exists for the simple reason of helping each of us avoid the long way home.

If your long way home is the need to get smart fast—see the MAGCS education offerings.

If your long way home is the need for good information from someone who’s been there and seen that—read *On Course Magazine*.

Have a smart kid, but no dough—see the MAGCS Scholarship Program.

Need to hire someone who knows the difference between a bedknife and a butterknife—use the MAGCS Employment Referral Service.

Want to network and have some fun too—attend (or better yet host) one of the MAGCS golf and business meetings.

Experience teaches us to work smarter, not harder. Your MAGCS mem-

*(continued on page 4)*

*This Association  
exists for the  
simple reason  
of helping each  
of us avoid the  
long way home.*



bership directory can be your best tool in the box.

Thoughts from the Pasture:

One recent afternoon, I was sharing a cold beverage with my friend "Lite": you may remember him from a previous column as my fellow muni-superintendent. He had come by for a visit to check out our new clubhouse construction, and I was crying about some soil issues that had cropped up, resulting in about 3,500 cubic yards of "unsuitable" material being hauled onto the golf course to be "lost."

I'm a visual learner and I learned that that amount of soil looks a lot different on a drawing than piled up in the rough on number 4.

Now Lite has gone through the clubhouse reconstruction process before, so he listened to my tale of woe patiently, patted me on the head and said, "You're in for a lot of surprises this year, just make it fun and keep a log—memories are short in the construction business."

Good idea!

*Write it down somewhere, because things can happen fast.*

The next time you are faced with a moral dilemma or a question of ethics, just do what you think your mother would want you to do. It will be the right thing.

*Happy belated Mother's Day to all you mothers out there.*

Along the same lines, to make a difficult decision, just flip a coin. While it's in the air you will find that you are hoping for it to land a certain way, and your decision is made.

*A positive attitude will not solve all your problems, but it will annoy enough people to make it worth the effort.*

The last time we experienced a spring with this kind of extremes was 1995. Have a nice day!



*Your MAGCS membership directory can be your best tool in the box.*

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# Doing the Right Thing . . . Right

*"Efficiency is doing things right; effectiveness is doing the right things."—Peter F. Drucker, world-renowned educator on principles of sound management*

*Doing the right thing can depend upon receiving an increased amount of relevant and timely information. Doing things right will depend upon continued support through volunteerism and reliance on sound SOPs.*


As chair of the Long-Range Planning Committee, I have given a lot of thought to how the MAGCS can improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the programs offered to its members. Here, an explanation.

The MAGCS has made great strides in doing things right. Much of the gain is attributable to committee adherence to meaningful standard operating procedures (SOPs). These procedures are updated periodically with input from members, which improves member services. The SOPs record what has worked in the past, take the present into account and serve as a basis for future decisions.

Another more important component of our efficiency has been the continued support of our members via volunteerism, serving on committees. Many of our members enjoy donating their time on behalf of the MAGCS. This donated time is not wasted, but very productive due in large part to adherence to SOPs.

Efficiency is doing things right, while effectiveness is doing the right things. Doing the right thing for MAGCS members requires information. One very important source of such information is the 2003 survey. Thank you to those that took time to complete the survey. All committees are utilizing these surveys. A second important information source is our executive director, Luke Cella. Luke has established many new contacts with our allied associations and offers us another channel of information. A third information source is other local chapters. The GCSAA Web site's chapter resources section lists member chapters and their respective contact people.

When I attended the GCSAA chapter leadership workshop in March, I made contact with 23 other superintendents. I listened with great interest to the part of the program that dealt with issues concerning our respective chapters. Chapters in the western and mountain states are consumed by water restrictions and pending legislation. Superintendents in Ontario, Canada are facing bans on pesticide use. These are but a few of the many experiences we can employ to help develop effective programs for our future.

The outlook for MAGCS member service is great. Doing the right thing can depend upon receiving an increased amount of relevant and timely information. Doing things right will depend upon continued support through volunteerism and reliance on sound SOPs. Going forward, MAGCS is more capable, as Jeffrey Cufaude, facilitator at the chapter leadership workshop put it, of "Doing the right thing . . . right." 



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# Kansas Connection

*As the rains fell in Chicago on a stormy Wednesday night, I sat and sat at KCI awaiting the flight home from my recent visit to GCSAA headquarters in Lawrence. The purpose for my visit was to take part in the 2004 Chapter Relations Committee meeting. I was grateful to have the opportunity to represent my new side of the fence as the appointed chapter executive liaison to the committee. I am the only non-golf course superintendent member on the committee.*

*The [new GCSAA] assessment tool is an “instrument designed to guide chapter leaders through the process of examining association operations, services, programs and activities against the competencies for success.”*

Many topics came under discussion as we worked our way through the agenda for the day-and-a-half meeting. One item that we reviewed closely was a newly developed chapter assessment tool. It is a tool in the defined sense. It is a document and can become an important catalyst if used as it is intended. Let me explain. The assessment tool is an “instrument designed to guide chapter leaders through the process of examining association operations, services, programs and activities against the competencies for success.” In non-association management lingo, the chapter assessment tool is a list of questions that our chapter answers. Based upon our answers, goals may then be carefully developed for the chapter.

Chapters gain many direct benefits from completing the tool and implementing the findings into a strategic planning process. Some of these benefits include better approaches to:

- Training new Board members about the organization, structure and operation of the chapter.
- Aiding in the transitions between committee chairs and ensuring continuity exists from Board turnover.
- Uniting goals of all committees throughout the Board.
- Focusing on the needs, benefits and value of membership.
- Improving, creating and driving different processes. (e.g., our Web site, our profile as viewed from the outside, media and public relations).
- Focusing energies on what matters most to our chapter.

The last bullet above is of paramount importance when we develop this tool. The assessment tool is designed for completion from the input of the individual member. The individual is the main focus of our chapter. Certainly, the individual member's needs and the ability of the chapter to meet those needs, is what the assessment tool truly measures. The first step to implementing this tool is to commit to completing the process. The second step involves the membership. The Board must engage with individual members to gather input and provide feedback to accurately complete the questionnaire. The assessment tool's validity depends on the amount of honesty and integrity placed into it by our members. It's against our nature to admit our weakness or faults; however, to make this tool valuable, we need to be honest.

I plan to present this tool to our Board at the June BOD meeting and will develop a strategic planning meeting for this fall. I am excited to implement this tool for our membership. I look forward to the questions that it will raise, and I look forward to implementing plans and actions for the chapter. The process of completing the assessment tool will start with our Board. The assessment tool is divided into many sections, or competencies. They include:

*(continued on page 34)*





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# Dave Braasch -N-



Dave Braasch with fiancée, Jayme VanGalder.



*On Tuesday, June 22 at the June meeting, the membership of MAGCS enjoys the opportunity to play the newly opened Glen Erin Golf Club in Janesville, Wisconsin. The golf course superintendent, Dave Braasch (or Junior, as he is fondly called by friends), will be our host for the day. I recently had the distinct pleasure of touring the golf course with Dave and was really excited with what I saw.*

The definition of a glen is a secluded and narrow valley; a dale; a depression between hills. Erin is the poetic name for Ireland. Given the rolling terrain and open expanses among which this course resides, the name Glen Erin is fitting.

Construction commenced at Glen Erin in October 2001. Golf course architect Greg Martin of Batavia, Illinois, in conjunction with contractor Ryan Central Incorporated, created a masterful example of a golf course blending classic features into existing terrain. Dave was brought on board in February of 2002 and has been going nonstop since that time, first with the construction, then the grow-in, and now fine-tuning a maintenance program. Dave is a 1990 graduate of the turf management program at Joliet Junior College. Following this accomplishment, Dave proceeded to attend Southern Illinois University, where he received a bachelor's degree in plant and soil science in 1992. Dave's management team is rounded out by first assistant, Dave Hale, and second assistant, Ray Mason.

Glen Erin is situated upon 150 acres leased from the adjacent airport. The terrain is rolling with some subtleties mixed in for good measure. The front nine varies from the back in that it is a little more open with groves of trees scattered throughout. The back nine includes a number of holes bordered by mature stands of trees. This golf course has no water features owing to its close proximity to the airport and water's attractiveness to waterfowl (an aviation hazard). The only place you may see water is on the left side of hole 8, where there is a detention area for collecting runoff following a heavy rain.

Construction required movement of very little material and the existing terrain was optimized to create distinct features throughout the course. The native soil is quite sandy and drains at an extremely rapid rate. The greens are 100% sand and percolate at the rate of 46 inches an hour. This is beneficial in some instances and detrimental in others. One natural feature that is very persistent would be the prevailing south wind. The combination of wind and quick-drying soil demands that the maintenance staff be attentive to course conditions in order to prevent excessive drying. However, the prevailing wind and rapidly draining soil also result in very limited disease pressure. No sod was used during construction as the entire course was grown in from seed. The

*(continued on page 10)*

Photos by Jim Trzinski.

No. 17 green.



greens are seeded with L-93. The tees and fairways are low-mow bluegrass that provides a thick cover of turf and allows the ball to sit up nicely in every lie.

Measuring 6,806 yards from the tips, Glen Erin is a good test of the game. Four colored sets of simple stone markers adorn each tee, indicating the starting point for the hole. A variety of tee pods allow for varying course set-ups and distances depending upon wind conditions. Everything appears very straightforward, yet a few features are deceiving. To begin with, five-foot flagsticks make the hole location appear to be further away than it really is. Glen Erin utilizes a colored flag system with green being front, white-middle and orange-back. I stood in approaches on a number of holes and had no idea how far the distance was to the green. A good tip

would be to use the yardage markers located on sprinklers and not to rely on perceived distance. In many instances, bunkers are situated not to capture a ball, but to fool the player into thinking the yardage is different than it actually is. The prevailing southwest wind blows strong in your face, especially on the front nine with its greater openness and increased elevation.

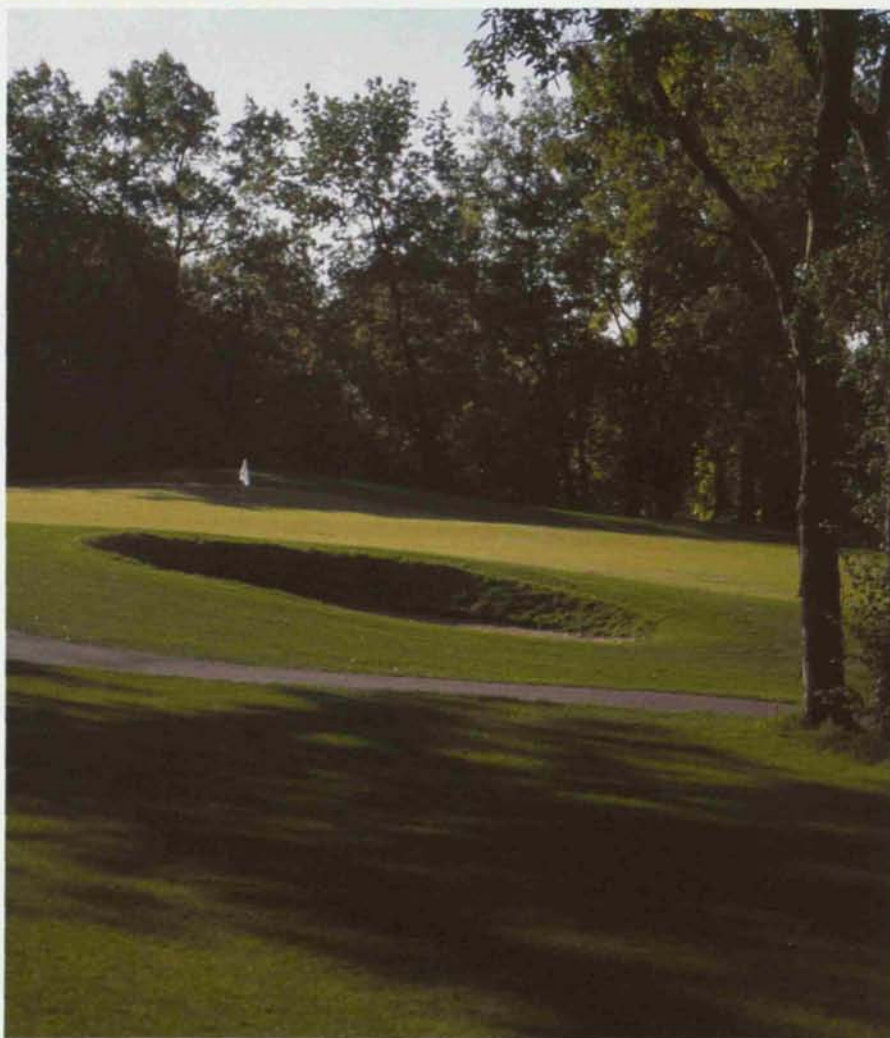
Dave feels fortunate to have been involved with this project from its early stages, calling the experience both very educational and rewarding. He designed and set up the maintenance facility and oversaw installation of the drainage and irrigation systems. The Rock River taunts him daily during the summer as he hears boats traveling upon the water. One of Dave's passions is boating and his dream boat is a 30-foot cabin cruiser. Dave also enjoys golf, playing in a

Wednesday night league, as well as softball.

Dave's favorite hole here is number 15, a par 4 measuring 421 yards named Ryan's Wrath. Off the tee, a good drive is greatly rewarded as the well-placed ball lands slightly to the right side of the fairway; from here, it will roll another 75 yards down a slope. Between the firm ground conditions and the tightly cropped low-mow bluegrass, a ball traveling in the wrong direction can easily run off the fairway and into trouble. The green offers two tiers and provides many challenging hole locations.

Other holes of interest include number 10, which is a long one, measuring 595 yards into the prevailing wind. Number 12, par 4, 424 yards is tight with trees off to the right and left side. Number 16 is the shortest par 3 on the course, measuring 155 yards. The hazard on the right side of the green offers the illusion that the hole is longer than it really is. However, don't be misled into selecting too much club, as the back drops off into a ravine. Hole 18 is a final par 5 measuring a hefty 579 yards from the back markers, putting an emphasis on hitting the ball straight with bunkers both left and right.

During the round, when not watching your ball travel across the golf course, you may wish to glance toward the sky occasionally looking for airplanes setting up for the air show that will be in town that weekend. If your round has not finished in the manner you intended, there is relief in sight. The cursing stone sits on the back side of the clubhouse for those who wish to place their hand upon it and unleash a string of expletives otherwise frowned upon for use on the golf course. After a visit to the cursing stone, the charming clubhouse awaits with an array of ales and stouts imported from across the pond. The Glen Erin experience is one that you will not want to miss.



No. 12 green.