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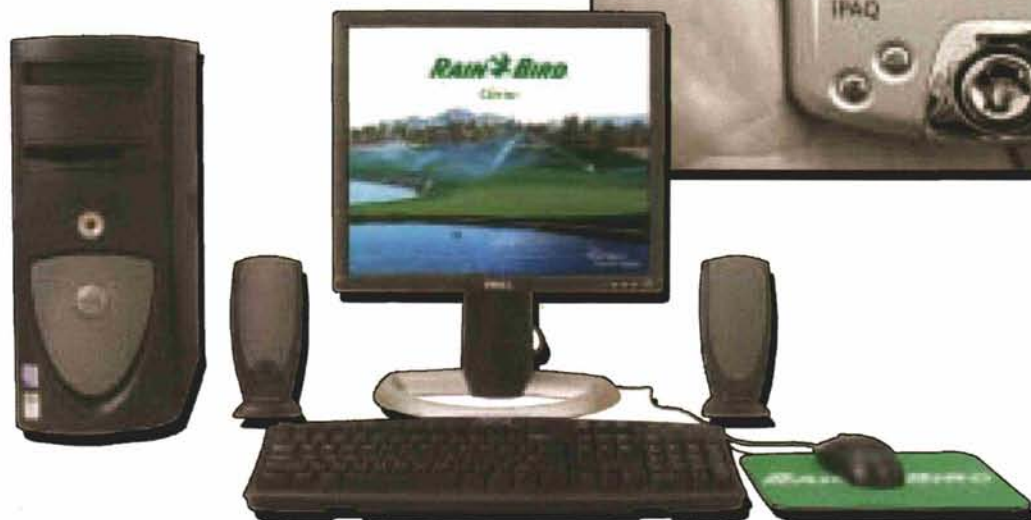
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# OCTOBER 2004

Volume 58 No.5

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No. 14, the signature hole at Donald Ross-designed Calumet Country Club—site of the October golf meeting. (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

# Class “E” Is for “Excellence”

*What an interesting year!*

*The On Course deadline fairy taps me on the shoulder one month prior to the actual publication date of each issue, and all year long I've been making references to the weather, guessing that April will be wet, August will be hot—you know, like it always is.*

*I am a firm believer in supporting our class E members. I do not buy stuff from commercial types who do not think it is a sound business practice to participate in our chapter's activities.*

### **WRONG! WRONG! WRONG!**

The weather is our wild card (or Joker). You just can't count on it to cooperate. When I rise in the morning I have a general idea of what we need to accomplish on the course, but I don't actually decide how to attack the day until I'm standing at the job board looking out at the southwestern sky like I can somehow read the clouds. Doppler radar and weather stations are great, but often it's still a crap shoot. I've lost count of the times that Mother Nature made me look like a blockhead, where the fact that nobody got hurt was the only thing that went right all day.

You'd think that after all these years I'd get at least a little bit better at divining the weather, and I guess I have—a very little bit, but if you told me that we were going to enjoy the mildest summer in recent memory after the crazy spring we went through I would have smiled at you and still ordered enough fungicide for a 36-holer in St. Louis.

Which I did.

Anybody need fungicide? I have cases of it under my desk and I'm sitting on a few of them to write this president's message.

Which leads me to this issue's topic. I've spent several months writing about various aspects of golf course maintenance, the players, the staff, key management team members, course officials and family, but I've neglected a huge component of any golf course operation—purveyors and merchants and vendors—oh my!

Our class E (commercial) members are the pipeline. They sell us everything from rolling iron to ferrous sulfate, plant protectants to UV protection, from bridges to bridging gravel, from . . . okay, okay, I'll stop, but you get the idea. When we need stuff they get it to us.

I am a firm believer in supporting our class E members. I do not buy stuff from commercial types who do not think it is a sound business practice to participate in our chapter's activities. I hope most of you “end-users” feel the same. There may be a do-dad that has to come from West Moravia in my shop somewhere, but by and large my business goes to people listed in the MAGCS membership directory.

This is a group of businesspeople who care enough about our little niche market to keep our Association solvent and strong. We owe them our thanks because they . . .

- Sponsor monthly meetings to keep costs reasonable;
- Make our hospitality room at the national the best in the entire GCSAA with their donations to our Platinum Tee Club;

*(continued on page 4)*



- Provide educational opportunities for our members;
- Support the existence of this publication with advertising dollars;
- Underwrite scholarships for our members; and
- Defray much of the expense for our fall dinner dance and Kane County Cougars family outing.

All of this generosity is over and above the outstanding service and support they provide in conducting their business enterprises. I urge each and every one of the regular A, B, C and D members to stop and consider how hard the job would be without these wonderful people giving us their hand when we need to be picked up. Say thanks next time you see one of the reps—and then beat him or her up over the crazy prices they charge us for their stuff!

Here's a few tips for those of you out there trying to make a living dealing with the rare breed *golfus superintendicus curmudgeonus*.

**DO NOT:**

- "Drop by" anytime you're in the area. It's rude; call for an appointment.

If you can't get one—news flash—we're busy or we don't want to buy what you're selling now, and please don't call on the day you want that appointment, do a little advance work.

- Make claims that can't be substantiated with some sort of research. It's not enough anymore to say Joe Blow down the block can't live without your goo. If your spiel rocks, I'll call Joe Blow myself, and if he doesn't gush over your goo—you're history—forever.

- Get too comfortable in the chair in my office. Be sensitive to my time depending on the season. I'll chat it up with you from December through March, but even then a half-hour is about all I can stand. (Don't be hurt, I can barely stand a half-hour with my rich aunt and I have a lot more to gain from her.)

- Think it's all about price. Outstanding service time and again still carries the most weight in my book.

**DO:**

- Ask me before you use my name as some sort of a "satisfied client" because if I get that call from Joe Blow for a testimonial without warn-

ing, I'll say I never heard of you.

- Give me a heads-up if that gizmo I just ordered is going to cost me an additional c-note for shipping. I have watchdogs who don't like those kinds of surprises on the invoice.

- Remember that leaving a voicemail message is not the same as making an appointment.

One of the reps that I've come to trust over the years told me that his job and his success are based on relationships—how true. I know this business can be hard to break into; we all learn what works for us and can be slow to try something new. For those of you beating your heads against the brick wall that is the superintendent's skull—tough. I make no apologies, but if you work and make a relationship with someone, you may hear the wonderful sound of the dominoes falling.

Getting actively involved with the Association is a great way to start those relationships growing.

Oh yeah, bring a little gossip with the catalogue—I don't get out much.



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# The Write Stuff

*The other day I was hanging out with my 7-year-old daughter, Kori, while she was writing a short letter to a friend. Halfway through a word, her pencil came to a screeching halt as she turned to me and said, "How do you make a 'b' again?" She would sometimes use a small 'b' and a small 'd' interchangeably. I quickly realized that she had not used her writing skills all summer long. This was just another classic example of the old saying, "If you don't use it, you lose it!" When was the last time you used **your** writing skills?*

In many cases, the biggest problem is just getting started. Once you get going, the whole process of getting your thoughts on paper can be very gratifying. I have found that the more you do it, the easier it gets.

So even if thoughts and ideas do flow easily for you, here is a short list of basic guidelines for writing.

The basic writing process includes three stages. During the first stage, **choosing your topic**, you determine your audience and select an appropriate topic on which to write. During the next stage, **developing and organizing your information**, you accumulate the ideas and information you wish to present, arrange them in a suitable order and develop a thesis statement. Finally, during the **writing and revising stage**, you prepare a first draft of your article and then polish it through rewriting and editing.

Although this scheme seems cut-and-dried, writing is a flexible process. It is entirely possible that you may choose to move through these three stages in a different order. The important thing is that you get your ideas on paper. Try and be as clear and concise as possible, and don't be afraid! Be yourself and put your personality into your work. The entire process of researching a topic or sharing an idea can be a tremendous experience.

According to Mary Walker, self-described "communication goddess" and keynote speaker at this year's GCSAA Editorial Session, the most common excuses for NOT contributing to a chapter publication are:

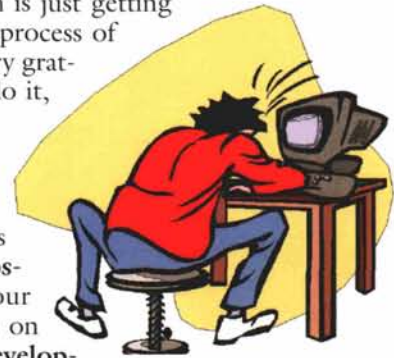
- Not enough time.
- Can't write.
- No ideas.
- Nobody asked me.

Well, let's address how easily we can overcome these four minor inconveniences. The "not enough time issue" I can understand in June, July and August. This is why a little planning and organization can easily rectify the whole "no time" thing. In most cases, we are able to set up deadlines two to ten months in advance. As long as you are not a procrastinator, this should not be a problem.

Next is the "I can't write" thing. No problem. We have a brilliant team of writers that can't wait to get the story. Brad Anderson is the leader of a

*(continued on page 32)*

*Not enough time . . .  
can't write . . .  
no ideas . . .  
nobody asked me.  
Let's debunk the  
most common  
excuses for not  
contributing to a  
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# Keith Peterson -N-



The Peterson family: Beth and Keith with Brian, 7, and Emily, 4.



## Calumet Country Club

*Keith Peterson, golf course superintendent of Calumet Country Club, is hosting the October meeting for the Midwest Association of Golf Course Superintendents. Keith has been the superintendent at Calumet since 1999, when he made the move after four years as course superintendent for Medinah No. 3.*

Dixie Highway and 175th Street is not exactly a new location for this course; however, it was originally built at 95th and Cottage Grove in 1901. The Illinois Central railroad owned the land where the club currently sits and with a land trade in 1921, Calumet moved south to Homewood. Donald Ross worked his magic to create the course, which is enjoyed by the club's 170 golfing members.

In 1957, when Interstate 80 was built on the north edge of the property, Packard shortened three holes. Apparently having three greens in the middle of express lanes was too much of a hazard for all involved. Fifteen of the 18 greens, then, are original, but the routing has changed over the years. Today the course measures 6,559 yards from the back tees and 6,326 yards from the middle tees. The signature hole is number 14, a 210-yard par 3, heavily guarded with bunkers. The green is pitched forward, like most of the greens, and you don't want to be above the hole. The trick is mastering the small (5,000 square feet on average), rolling greens and avoiding the rows of trees that line the fairways. Number 13 is Keith's favorite hole due to the challenge of hitting a narrow uphill tee shot. The green is small with subtle break, giving the host superintendent a definite advantage.

Keith loves golf and the outdoors. Born and raised in Coal Valley, IL (near the Quad Cities), he worked with his brother for a few summers at his hometown Oakwood Country Club. He then enrolled at Danville Community College where he graduated in 1992 with a turf degree. He did his summer internship at Rock Island Arsenal prior to graduation. His first real job was as assistant golf course superintendent at Hilldale Golf Club in Hoffman Estates. He started at Medinah Country Club in 1993 as the assistant on Course No. 1 and

*(continued on page 8)*

Photos by Jim Trzinski.



Calumet's clubhouse frames hole no. 5, a 423-yard par 4.

Oakwood Country Club. He then enrolled at Danville Community College where he graduated in 1992 with a turf degree. He did his summer internship at Rock Island Arsenal prior to graduation. His first real job was as assistant golf course superintendent at Hilldale Golf Club in Hoffman Estates. He started at Medinah Country Club in 1993 as the assistant on Course No. 1 and



moved through the ranks over a seven-year period, serving as course superintendent on Course No. 2 and Course No. 3. In 1999, his last year working at Medinah, he hosted a PGA Championship. Keith had more than paid his dues and was ready to take on the many challenges at Calumet Country Club.

In his first full year there, he realized the single-row irrigation system needed to be updated. Installation of a new double-row irrigation system came in 2000. A new pump house was also included in the project; Keith convinced club leadership to dig a pond for his water source in a low-lying area on the 14th hole. The fill taken from the pond had to be put somewhere, so Keith decided it was a good time to accomplish another goal. The fill became the base for a new 24,000-square-foot bentgrass driving range tee that more than doubled the existing tee space.

When asked what has been the biggest challenge since coming to Calumet, Keith mentions having to deal with budget cuts to his operating and capital budgets while still providing exceptional playing conditions. He has also struggled with selling the membership on the need to remove established trees for the good of the

course. Algae was at times a problem on his no. 8 green, and members were resisting his request to remove 10 trees surrounding the green. Keith informed them that the only way to improve the green was to remove the trees. He finally persuaded them to cut down the trees, and the condition improved.

Keith gets the most out of his employees by treating them with respect. He also is not shy about praising his staff of 12 crew members, a full-time mechanic and his assistant. He describes his assistant, Roy Voss, as conscientious and hard-working. Keith often helps his crew accomplish tasks by working along with them. He is more than willing to help rake bunkers to meet a deadline.

In 2001 Keith expanded his greens to their original size. Using an old photo of the original greens, he was able to determine that he had lost 10 to 15 feet in the back and the corners of the green. He mowed the bentgrass areas on his banks, aerated and filled them with sand. His accomplishment provided numerous cup positions in areas previously unused.

Restoration of the tee boxes had also begun during the 2001-02 season. Along with the conversion of 11 tees from oval to square came the

addition of six new forward tees. The new tees were built using bunker sand that was undergoing replacement at the time. Keith said the soil that had washed into the sand provided suitable moisture retention. The tees are firm and do not dry out quite so fast.

Keith has a brother, Brad, and two sisters, Terri and Vicki. His father, Don, is a retired machinist, while his mother works at Orion High School, Keith's *alma mater*. In 1992, he married his high school sweetheart, Beth, a nurse at St. James Hospital in Chicago Heights. They currently live in Crete with their two children: Emily, 4, and Brian, 7. It's been said that having a pet is like having a child. The three other "kids" in the Peterson family are Hercules, a yellow Lab, Dakota, a Sheltie, and a border collie named Riley. Now that's what I call taking up your free time.

Keith's love for his job is nothing compared to the passion he shows towards his family. He helps coach his daughter's soccer team and also works with her to sharpen her tee-ball skills. His son is also involved with soccer, and Keith is especially excited about Brian's involvement with wrestling. Keith wrestled through high school and stays in shape by working out before work five times per week. He also started wrestling in an Old-Timers' Club. Other fathers from his son's team formed this group, which also includes former college wrestlers. They travel to wrestling tournaments where Brian and Keith are often on the mat at the same time in different matches. His children enjoy watching him wrestle and Keith is encouraged that his children haven't laughed at him yet.



No. 3 green; the hole is a 403-yard par 4.





*A view of the 148-yard, par-3 17th.*



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