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The Partykas: Dawn, Brianna and Steve.



White Pines Golf Club

Busy White Pines Golf Club has had a Partyka in charge since the early Seventies. The current superintendent, Steve, began learning the ropes from his father, Edward, in 1975 when he was 15 years old. Count the Partykas among the 20 or so father-son superintendent teams that dot the MAGCS historical landscape (the fertile Dinelli dynasty accounts for about a quarter of that total).

Steve Partyka has managed the maintenance operations of White Pines since Edward Partyka's retirement in 1994, and he has been working there for more than 30 years. Steve describes himself as "old school," and counts names like Wally Fuchs and Lee Overpeck among his mentors, along with his father.

White Pines is a 36-hole public golf course owned and operated by the Bensenville Park District. The facility was established in 1926, and was operated by several private owners until one, a Mr. Branniger who owned five or six golf courses in the Chicagoland area, sold White Pines to Bensenville in 1967. The East and West courses at White Pines are a veritable Mecca for golfers. Located conveniently in the near-western suburbs, the facility sees 75,000 rounds played there annually. On occasion, triple shotguns go off one of the courses, and when I asked Steve how they pulled that off he replied, "I really don't know, we just get out of the way."

The facility has the distinction of several dubious "firsts." It was among the first golf courses to use strictly effluent water for irrigation. The water that finds its way into the irrigation system has a pH range of 9.1 to 9.8, and Steve spends around 50K per year treating it with acid injection and soluble gypsum to get it from yucky to barely tolerable. The fairways are deep-tined twice a year to help manage the salts that accumulate in the soil profile. Steve was pleased to inform me that they are in the process of upgrading his two wells to mitigate the effluent with "real water."

The other "first" is related to a massive tree-planting program that took place a couple of decades ago. More

than 5,000 trees were planted on the course, virtually encapsulating the fairways, tees and greens. A large segment of these trees were lindens, and, being close to O'Hare Airport, White Pines became the first stop for Japanese beetles as they moved westward from the East Coast of the United States. Steve recalls being willing to try anything to control these pests, with little success. At one point, they employed traps and collected enough beetles daily to fill a 55-gallon drum. What do you do with a 55-gallon drum of Japanese beetles? Burn 'em! At first, Steve used gasoline, but the fire, while hot, burned out quickly and Steve would see beetles survive the conflagration and fly out of the drum. A mixture of diesel fuel and gasoline proved to be the recipe for cremating Japanese beetles. Ah, those were the days!

The good news is Steve now has a pack of chainsaws to manage the problem, and if your ball finds the rough you might, just might, not have a tree blocking your next shot.

Like many of us, Steve spends a lot of time at his golf course, so it follows that he met his wife, Dawn, at the club. Brianna, their daughter, arrived 19 months ago, no doubt nine months after a particularly romantic evening watching Japanese beetles burn.

Steve, Dawn and Brianna found their little piece of heaven in Door County, Wisconsin, where the family plans to move when Steve retires in a couple more years. Steve bought five acres near Jacksonport and will build a home there. Wally Fuchs, a Door County legend, turned Steve on to the spot and the rest is or will be history. So far, all they have is a driveway, which required stumping

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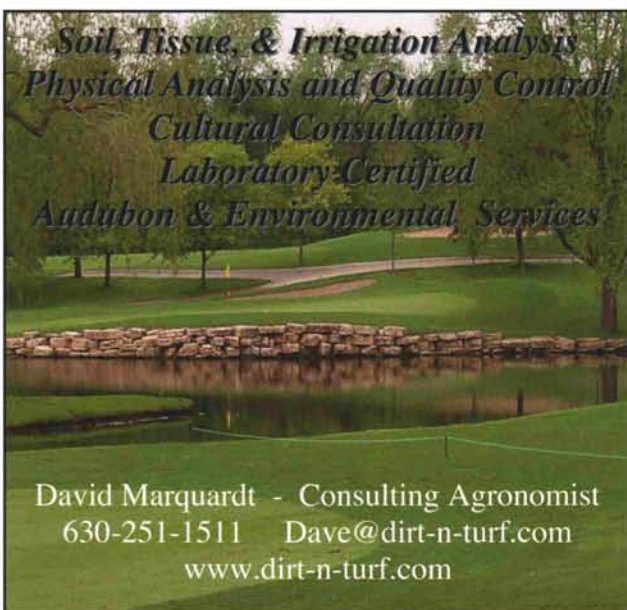
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out 65 trees and covering with 14 inches of gravel for this 400-foot-long by 12-foot-wide thoroughfare—all for the cost of \$2,600. Welcome to Wisconsin, where, “Ya hey, we gotta lotta gravel.” Eagerly looking forward to retirement, Steve invites everyone up for a visit—but suggests waiting until they have a house.

White Pine’s 36 holes are maintained by a maintenance staff of three full-time and 20 seasonal employees. Steve’s management partner is assistant superintendent Joe Giuliano, who’s been at White Pines for eight years and is also eagerly looking forward to Steve’s retirement.

Put a team together and kick off our 2005 golf season, but if you can’t keep your ball in the fairway you may want to bring your own chainsaw to our April 25th meeting at White Pines in Bensenville.



During a massive tree-planting program a couple of decades ago, White Pines gained more than 5,000 trees. Japanese beetles encroaching on the course’s lindens has resulted in the trees being thinned out—a bit. Left, hole no. 4 on the West Course.

Outstanding course conditions belie the fact that White Pines’ 36 holes absorb 75,000+ rounds per year. Right, holes 9 and 18 on the East Course.



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The Shape of Things to Come

The final version of the MAGCS strategic plan will carry a new mission and vision forward into this 21st century. Right now, though, the plan is but a draft. So read all about it and tell your Board of Directors what **you** think.

Imagine the MAGCS strategic plan is the subject of debate by the 2004 presidential candidates. Better yet, imagine "Saturday Night Live" is lampooning the 2004 presidential contenders as they debate the MAGCS strategic plan. Dubya would extol the virtues of sound "strategy" and reiterate a dozen times that creating and implementing such strategy is "hard, hard, hard work." Kerry, meanwhile, would counter that before going forward with any strategic plan, we should take it to the United Nations for its input and approval.

In carefully examining the strategic plan, and bringing our feedback to the Board, we—the members of MAGCS—have a voice in further refining and shaping the plan.

Political humor aside, the development of a strategic plan for the Midwest Association of Golf Course Superintendents is, indeed, a challenging endeavor. Enacting the strategic plan **will** be hard, hard work. And before proceeding, gaining the input and approval of the membership is more than commendable, it is crucial to the plan's success.

Our elected representatives on the current Board of Directors have willingly assumed the challenges outlined above. They firmly believe that having a solid strategic plan—one that includes a more succinct and user-friendly mission statement, a clearly articulated vision for the future and realistic goals towards realizing the vision—is critical to the future well-being and strength of this organization.

The Board took the first steps in early December, convening with facilitator Hannes Combest from GCSAA for a daylong session dedicated to examining the purpose of and plans for our Association. Hannes asked the Board probing questions that required them to think long and hard about where MAGCS has been, where it is today and where it is going. The product of all this soul-searching is a draft strategic plan, compiled by Hannes and her GCSAA team, that incorporates the Board's extensive feedback.

The Board took a first look at this document just prior to its March meeting. Now, it is the Midwest membership's turn to review the draft strategic plan and share our thoughts. As executive director Luke Cella points out, each Board member—by going through the brainstorming session—felt a reinvigorated and authentic sense of ownership in our Association. "When you go through this exercise, everybody in the room takes a personal responsibility," Luke explains. "When people feel a sense of ownership, the follow-through and thought process is much deeper."

In carefully examining the strategic plan, and bringing our feedback to the Board, we—the members of MAGCS—have a voice in further refining and shaping the plan. We, too, gain ownership of the mission, vision and goals for our Association.

The following is a section-by-section discussion of some of the key components of the draft strategic plan. The full text of the draft plan, as well as a message thread for discussion of the plan, is available on our Web site, www.magcs.org. Whenever feasible, the Board plans to encourage an open discussion of the strategic plan at upcoming monthly golf meetings.

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The Mission

The mission statement is arguably the cornerstone of the draft strategic plan. The vision, and goals, for the Association originate there.

The current MAGCS mission statement is the original, dating back to our founding in 1926. Its formal, elaborate language reflects the founders' noble objective of banding together to elevate individuals and the profession as a whole.

"To advance the rights and sciences attendant upon, pertinent or related to the occupation of green-keeping, to unite the greenkeepers and golf course superintendents of the Chicago metropolitan area into a cooperative group for the collection, preservation and dissemination of scientific and practical knowledge and information, thus effecting more efficient and economical maintenance for golf courses and thereby improving and enhancing the individual and collective prestige and efficiency of the members; the creation of an instrumentality of entity of record capable and susceptible of procuring all bene-

fits to the members both individually and collectively."

The Board felt that the content of the existing mission, while meaningful and relevant, was getting lost amidst its length and complexity. They looked not to reinvent the mission, but streamline it in keeping with the changing times. Luke notes, "There's a lot going on there. In this day and age, people look for simplicity, and want to easily get a handle on what we're about. We wanted to come up with a mission that is simple to say and understand, not only for us, but for people outside the Association."

The proposed mission statement in the draft strategic plan reads as follows:

The Midwest Association of Golf Course Superintendents (MAGCS) exists to provide networking, education and career advancement opportunities to those who facilitate the growth and enjoyment of golf.

Networking, education, career advancement—the goal of MAGCS to provide opportunities in these areas is common to both the 1926 and 2005

missions. However, Luke is quick to point out that the very nature of some of these activities has changed enormously. Take networking, for instance. In the past, says Luke, networking meant members exchanging information and ideas in person or more formally, with a letter (sent "snail mail," of course) or a phone call. The phone call was placed to a desk line and no answering machine or voicemail greeted the caller if the intended target was unavailable. Now, with the prevalence of e-mail, instant messaging, digital images and cell phones, sharing insights and trading thoughts is much more instantaneous, informal and constant.

Education, too, means something different now than it did 79 years ago. Luke comments that the changes in MAGCS education offerings in recent years underscore change in the industry, and further changes on the horizon. "The focus is shifting from heavy agronomy and scientific-based education to more of a business and professional orientation," notes Luke. "The primary age

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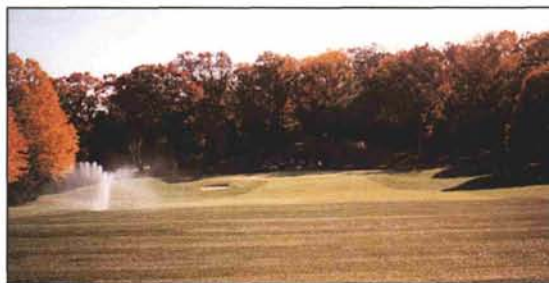


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