

## ON THE GREEN

### Art and love of nature come together for super

BY MARK LESLIE

Let us know if Andy Stoffel is not one of a kind.

Here's a guy — the oldest of 13 children — who grew up quickly, yet may grab hold of a dream of his youth. A guy who hammered nails for years while running his own roofing and siding company, yet handles a paintbrush with the aplomb of an award-winning artist. Who bought a farm to build a housing development, then constructed a golf course on it instead. Who first opened his course on the honors system, with golfers putting money in a can before teeing off. Who wakes to water



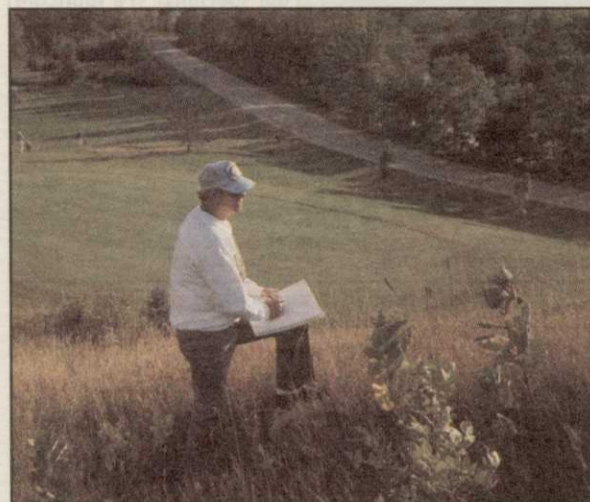
**'Three clergy friends who golf my course, keep telling me it is just like heaven, only not as far away.'**  
— Andy Stoffel

his course at 4 a.m., works all day, then returns after dinner to fertilize and prepare for the next day. Who has pulled two loves together into two distinct careers that are, well, inseparable.

Andy Stoffel, 1) owns and maintains his own golf course, Auburn Bluffs in Campbellsport, Wis., and 2) paints wildlife/golf course pictures that people are encouraging him to mass produce.

"I love my work on the golf course. It's a real challenge keeping beautiful greens... And I love my painting. I'm always getting new

# Stoffel touch on 2 canvases



Andy Stoffel, at left, gets many ideas from his own course, including the painting above, which has been chosen as the May photograph for a special 1990 calendar featuring Wisconsin wildlife artists. Stoffel will be honored as the Artist of the Month for May.

ideas and they stay there in my head until I get them on canvas. If I don't paint it, it won't leave," Stoffel said.

From the time he was a boy drawing pictures while the teacher spoke of history or arithmetic, art has been a crucial part of Stoffel's life.

"I've always felt the need to sketch or paint," he said.

Stoffel first used his self-taught skill in the Army. He used it in his roofing and siding business. And he's perfecting it today.

While stationed at Fort Lewis when he was 18, Stoffel painted murals on the 30- by eight-foot mess hall walls.

"I painted ducks, bears, elk. I got out of a lot of KP and guard duty. Once it took me two weeks to paint the rear of a black bear," he laughed. "They knew I was dragging my feet. But I'd finish one, and they'd tell me to do another one. I painted murals in seven mess halls."

In the siding business while giving an estimate, Stoffel would sketch the house and add colors to show the homeowner what it would look like. "I sold the job every time," he said.

Then came a back injury that led to his new life as an owner-operator of nine-hole Auburn Bluffs, which the artist appropriately calls a "scenic" challenge.

He started entering duck stamp competitions, winning prizes and receiving encouragement from other artists.

"I've always been fascinated with nature," he said, and one day it clicked: "Why not combine the wildlife with the golf course?" he asked himself. There certainly was enough wildlife on the course's 107 acres tucked into Kettle Moraine State Forest.

Now, putting his paintbrush to an 18- by 24-inch canvas instead of a wall, Stoffel said: "I'm using my golf course for all my ideas, but I ad lib. They're my own dream shots. I'm just putting them to the canvas."

"Being a superintendent, I have the opportunity to observe nature at my fingertips."

Responding to suggestions from golfers, friends, family, salesmen and other passersby, Stoffel has had postcards printed of several of his paintings. He had one scene printed on 500 T-shirts (which quickly sold out) and another on 500 sweatshirts. He is eyeing other markets.

"I want to finish a 24-painting series. I've got 20 done now," he said, adding that that would be enough for two calendars.

In fact, a radio station has chosen one of

Stoffel's creations to be the May painting on a 1991 calendar, and will name him May Artist of the Month. Fifty thousand calendars will be printed.

And Miller High Life beer is using Stoffel paintings as prizes in a regional contest.

Excitement fills Stoffel's voice when he speaks of the future, and the hopes he holds dear.

Owners at two other courses want him to paint their courses so they can put up the paintings in their clubhouses and use them on scorecards.

Others have suggested he have place mats made of his paintings.

More T-shirts and sweatshirts loom ahead.

People are starting to collect prints of his series.

"I'm just looking for that one big break, one big backer," he said. "People say my work is getting better with each painting."

"You strive for the day you can get on your feet. In my case, I will pursue my art as I'd like to." Like he does in the off-season between early October and late March.

Still, his golf course has a pull of its own.

Construction began on Auburn Bluffs in 1979. It opened in 1982. Stoffel built the clubhouse and began work there full-time in 1984 when he left the siding business.

"I did put a few houses on the land," he said. But he pictured a nine-hole golf course on the rest of the land and has never regretted his decision.

Three holes run down between bluffs. One of the tees stands elevated 80 feet above the fairway. Little ponds formed by the glacier

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## NEW LITERATURE

### Excel displays Hustler line

Excel Industries, Inc. has released new, eight-page color literature on the Hustler line of Out-Front Mowers and the Hustler Compact Series featuring the 251K and the 251K and 260K Turbo Shredder.

The mower literature features models 275 through 440 as well as their specifications. It also contains the full line of attachments such as the Range Wing, Hi-Lift

BAC-VAC, Hydraulic Edger and complete line of snow removal equipment.

The Compact series literature includes specifications as well as optional equipment and attachments such as the BAC-PAC grass catcher and side-mounted edger.

For free literature or the dealer nearest you, contact Excel Industries, Inc., Box 7000, Hesston, Kan. 67062 or call 800-835-3260.

### ASGCA reprints 'Evolution of Green'

Golf course greens are the topic of a 24-page brochure now available from the American Society of Golf Course Architects.

"The Evolution of the Modern Green" is a reprint of the four-part series written by Michael Hurdzan, past president of the ASGCA. Hurdzan discusses all aspects of engineering, design, construction and maintenance in the full-color

brochure.

Topics include:

- the historical development of golf greens in the United States and how turf managers keep them in top playing shape;
- the research and development of various methods of green construction;
- how and when to rebuild greens and how to avoid the most common

construction errors;

• the turfgrass art and science of establishing and maintaining a delicate living playing surface.

The "Evolution of the Modern Green" is available for \$5 by sending a check or money order to: The American Society of Golf Course Architects, 221 N. LaSalle St., Chicago, Ill. 60601.

### Weather Tec releases irrigation catalogs

Weather Tec, a manufacturer of irrigation equipment and components, has released its latest catalogs.

The company specializes in making products utilizing brass,

stainless steel and metal alloys.

"This company is one of the best-kept secrets in our industry," said Weather-Tec marketing consultant Nick Dvorak. "Their products and service are unsurpassed in proven

drive methods, rugged material usage and scope of line for all market segments, including agriculture, landscape and turfgrass."

The turfgrass catalog contains specifications, performance information and pictures of all products.

For more information contact Weather-Tec Corp., 5645 E. Clinton, Fresno, Calif. 93727 or call 209-291-5555.

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### Stoffel

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put their stamp of beauty on the layout.

"Three clergy friends who golf my course, keep telling me it is just like heaven, only not as far away."

The course has been going "hot and heavy ever since we built the clubhouse," Stoffel said. "Last Friday morning to Sunday night 700 golfers played the course."

Stoffel is up at 3 to 4 every morning, operating the manual irrigation system. He returns to his home next to the course around 4:30 p.m. Then it's back for more chores on the course after dinner.

He said: "You never run out of ideas to improve. As you get a few dollars saved up, you improve. Who wants an instant golf course? — All you do then is mow grass and look at it.

"Golfers enjoy seeing changes and improvements and to watch a course grow."

Stoffel added that it is easy to paint a perfect green, "but keeping up with all the changes in disease and turf management is not. As any greenskeeper, I always want nice greens for the golfer and the course. I am sure anyone in the business knows and understands, you learn to work with Mother Nature and not against her."

"It's a lot of work, but if you have a regular schedule and stick to it, it's OK. I do 90 percent of the greenskeeping," Stoffel said, adding that his wife, Karen, helps mow the course when she's not working her regular job. A student changes the cups and performs other duties. Daughter Samantha, 13, lives with them. But son Chris, 24, lives a distance away.

"I'm so doggone busy working on the golf course during the season. But the four or five months in the off-season I'm a full-time artist," he said.

Stoffel mentioned the people who come into his clubhouse and notice the canvases hanging on the walls. "They say, 'Here's a greenskeeper and he's a wildlife artist. It doesn't make sense.'

"Maybe I'm the only one in the world. But I love it."