

Eyeballing the future

My interest is in the future because I am going to spend the rest of my life there.

— Charles F. Kettering

In the midst of millennium madness my mind meanders to the fact that the millennium doesn't start until Jan. 1, 2001 — a year from now. But never mind reality in this day of giddiness. For a moment, let's go along with the crowd — some of whom are actually attributing the economic rocket ship



Mark Leslie
editor

America is riding to Bill Clinton, of all people. Let's take a look with those rose-colored glasses at the next 100 years. It can be an exciting "trip," something like my wife's grandmother who, in her 96 years, lived to see the first car, the first airplane and the first computer.

• This century we've come from horse-drawn mowers to a mower in which you log in the coordinates of your fairway and let 'er rip.

The future? Doctors are about to implant manmade eyes into Stevie Wonder. I foresee manmade eyes in that machine that will help it mow the golf course from tee to green.

And that troublesome job of cutting the cups each day? A day will come when you can program the mower to cut the cup for position 1 or 2 or 7 on each of the greens.

• The Internet is barely a baby and its possibilities seem limitless. Everyone, it seems, has a home page — even my nephew. And e-commerce is everywhere. Indeed, who does not sell their goods and services over the World Wide Web?

The future? Virtual reality will come to golf. Turfgrass professors will take cybertrips to golf courses to investigate diseases and prescribe a cure without even leaving their offices.



Many courses have web pages.

Better still, can't you wait for the time when Prof. Growmore can say, "Beam me up, Scotty!"?

• Designing courses on computers with CADD software has speeded up a number of processes and helped many architects with dig-and-fill figures, but aren't we just skimming the surface?

The future? Simply plug your finished CADD disks into earthmoving equipment out on the site, turn on the engine and watch that equipment (remember the manmade eyes?) create the course envisioned on the disk.

• GPS and GIS technology is being used today to precisely map courses and all the particulars in them — and under them — from irrigation and drainage lines to bunkers, greens, tees and trees.

The future? Working with a course's weather station and tuning into weather-forecasting services, GPS- and GIS-driven equipment will micromanage irrigation, chemical applications and various other tasks.

• Spanish is now a prerequisite for two-year students at Michigan State University. I foresee the day when you won't have

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Supers keep late hours for knowledge

So it's 7 o'clock on an early-December Tuesday evening in Columbus, Ohio. The superintendents and assorted turfgrass managers assembled at the Ohio Turfgrass Conference and Show have had a full day of meetings, educational sessions and trade show tromping.

Now the bars and restaurants are open. ESPN SportsCenter is winding down and a full slate of college basketball, NBA and NHL games are about to hit the airwaves. Then there are home courses to check up on and loved ones to call before they head off to bed.



Peter Blais
managing editor

So, considering the alternatives, how many people would you expect to show up for a late-night session called "Greens Management — What's Working and What's Not" featuring Ohio State Professor Dr. Karl Danneberger moderating a panel of seven local superintendents, a pair of United States Golf Association agronomists and a Chicago city agronomist?

No disrespect to the distinguished moderator and panel, but I thought a dozen, maybe two dozen at best would venture back to the conference rooms they had already inhabited since 6:30 that morning.

"Missed it by that much," as perplexed secret agent Maxwell Smart used to say holding thumb and forefinger an inch apart. Try 200 people wedged into a packed room.

The number of turf experts trying to quench their collective thirst for a little more knowledge was the first thing that impressed me.

The second eye opener was one of Danneberger's opening questions to the seven supers who, between them, must have had somewhere in the vicinity of 200 years of combined turfgrass-growing experience.

"What's the one thing you learned this year that's new?" the Ohio State professor said.

Now these guys had been around for awhile, through droughts and floods, good economies and bad, strong green committees and weak ones. I expected at least one or two "Gee, I don't know. It was just another golf season."

But these guys were more like school kids leaning forward in their seats thrusting their hands toward the ceiling because they knew the answer to the teacher's question.

"Some of these fairy rings can actually increase in activity the hotter it gets," answered Dr. Randy Kane, an agronomic troubleshooter for the Chicago District Golf Association who, like several others, commented about this summer's record heat. "Once it gets over 100 degrees even pythium and brown patch shut down. But these fairy rings really take off."

Keith Happ of the USGA's Mid-Atlantic region noted "how little water" he and the supers in his region found they needed to keep grass healthy and presentable.

Ted Hunker of Tartan Fields Golf Club in Powell, Ohio, said, "The new bentgrasses can be pushed over the edge just like the old bentgrasses can be pushed over the edge."

"Good people in the right positions is the key," said Todd Voss of Double Eagle Golf Club in Galena. "Second, lightweight brooming can add just as much to green speed as

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Cell phones? No dice at Brasstown Valley

To the editor:

Just a quick note to let you know, my crew and I really enjoyed your commentary on cell phones (*Golf Course News*, November). We've had our sign up since April of 1999 and have really enjoyed needling the cell phone walk-a-bouts!

These people really don't know how to take our singe. They ask us if we are really serious. All we can do is laugh and say, "Have fun and play golf only."

Personally, I feel the same as you about the issue, and would like to see some type of golf code of ethics.

Hey, if Ben Hogan knew this behavior was going on, in the game he so cherished, he

would roll over in his grave, if he hasn't done so already.

Sincerely,
Steve G. Gonea,
Brasstown Valley
Young Harris, Georgia

P.S. — My crew thought paint balls would be the way to go on the sniper issue: 1) red = slow play; 2) yellow = 2nd warning; 3) black = you're gone, partner!

Editor's note: I have this great idea for signage for no cell phones and, what do you know, the folks at Brasstown Valley are six months ahead of me. What do you know!



The sign at Brasstown Valley.

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Charles E. von Brecht

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Brook Taliaferro

Editor

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Editorial Office

Golf Course News

106 Lafayette St., P.O. Box 997

Yarmouth, ME 04096

207-846-0600; Fax: 207-846-0657

mleslie@golfcoursenews.com

pblais@golfcoursenews.com

aoverbeck@golfcoursenews.com

Advertising Offices

National Sales:

Charles E. von Brecht

106 Lafayette St., P.O. Box 997

Yarmouth, ME 04096

207-846-0600; Fax: 207-846-0657

cvonb@golfcoursenews.com

Western Sales:

Michael Levans

Western Territory Manager

106 Lafayette St., P.O. Box 997

Yarmouth, ME 04096

207-846-0600; Fax: 207-846-0657

mlevans@golfcoursenews.com

Marketplace Sales:

Jean Andrews

P.O. Box 51

Fryeburg, Maine 04037

Phone/FAX 207-925-1099

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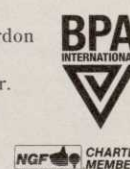
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WES POWERS, 44, DIES

LANARK, Wis. — Men who had worked with Wes Powers at Sentry World in Stevens Point and Foxfire Golf Course in Waupaca will help his widow, Janet, get the Powers' golf course ready to open this spring.

Mr. Powers, 44, passed away peacefully at his home on Nov. 23 after a courageous battle with cancer. His death came one year after building and opening his dream, the 18-hole Lanark Links, in Almond.

"I don't know the first thing about running this golf course," Janet Powers said in December, "but I am determined to do so. It was Wes' dream. It was the one constant in the last months of his life."

He had worked at Sentry World and Foxfire Golf Course. In 1998 he opened Lanark Links, making golf very affordable for youths and adults alike as "our way of giving back to the community," he said then.

Survivors include his wife, two daughters, Jennipher Pagel of Waupaca and Kari Scott of Almond; two sons, Wesley of Waupaca and Caleb of Madison; three granddaughters, JennaMarie Pagel and Paige and Haley Scott; and his mother and stepfather, Lula and LeRoy Decker of Onarga, Ill.

A memorial fund has been established. People may send donations to Janet Powers at 7519 Wolf Lake Rd., Almond, Wis. 54909.

Eyeing the future

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to learn a language to communicate with someone of another tongue. You will simply speak into a contraption that will translate what you say into the language you have asked for.

- Speaking of communication, is reaching your staff a problem?

In the future I see tiny earphones being worn by all the grounds crew for instant communication.

- And how about the bag-drop operation?

I can visualize this: The golfer drives his car into a machine at the bag drop and pops his trunk; a robot reaches into the trunk, removes the golf bag and puts it on a conveyor belt; the belt transports the bags to the waiting golf car, where another robot places the bag on the car. No, I'm not finished yet... The golf car then drives to the spot for the golfer to hop on and begin his round.

- Today some of the foremost superintendents are using Eco Soil's BioJect system to apply biological controls on their courses.

In the future, this system will be commonplace, brewing up "design-blended" biocontrols that will handle a plethora of diseases through the irrigation sys-

tem, thus greatly reducing the manpower and costs of chemical applications.

- Turfgrass breeders are taking bentgrasses farther south than ever imagined and breeding Bermudagrasses with playability resembling bents. The Scotts Co. is even developing a Roundup-resistant bentgrass.

The future? Bents will exist that can thrive at the Equator, so further work on Bermudas will be unnecessary; paspalums will be puttable for courses on salt water... and far in the future grass will actually grow and cut itself... at exactly the height you want it.

I know we can't see the first car, first airplane and first computer in our lifetimes, but there are so many more advances to look forward to. Subsurface injection will hit the pests where they live. Antidessicants will be perfected to ward off weather's effects on turf...

It's grand to prognosticate. But remember what Euripides wrote: "What we look for does not come to pass. God finds a way for what none foresaw."

Whatever it is that God will do, we hope you're there to observe it. But before then, have a Happy Year 2000 — and prepare for the **real** new millennium!

Supers seek know-how in late-night sessions

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rolling."

Matt Shaeffer of Columbus Country Club noted: "We roll all the time. But members aren't as concerned with turf quality as you [superintendents] are. If the playing surfaces are exceptional, they don't know that you have dollar spot, yellow tuft, brown patch or that your turf density isn't 80 percent of what it used to be. They are preoccupied with playability... You are your own worst critic. When you think it's bad, it's nowhere near as bad as you think it is."

Bob Figurella of Brookside Country Club in Canton, home to some wildly undulating Donald Ross greens, agreed. "Members don't care about the Stimpmeter," he said. "They don't care about anything but how much movement there is in that putt."

The next hour and a half was non-stop questions and answers from an audience whose numbers never dwindled until Danneberger said, "Time to go home kids." Or words to that effect.

If the organizers of the Ohio Turfgrass Conference and similar events ever begin to wonder if what they are doing is worthwhile, just ask some of those people attending the 7 p.m. sessions. I think you'll like the answer.

perception



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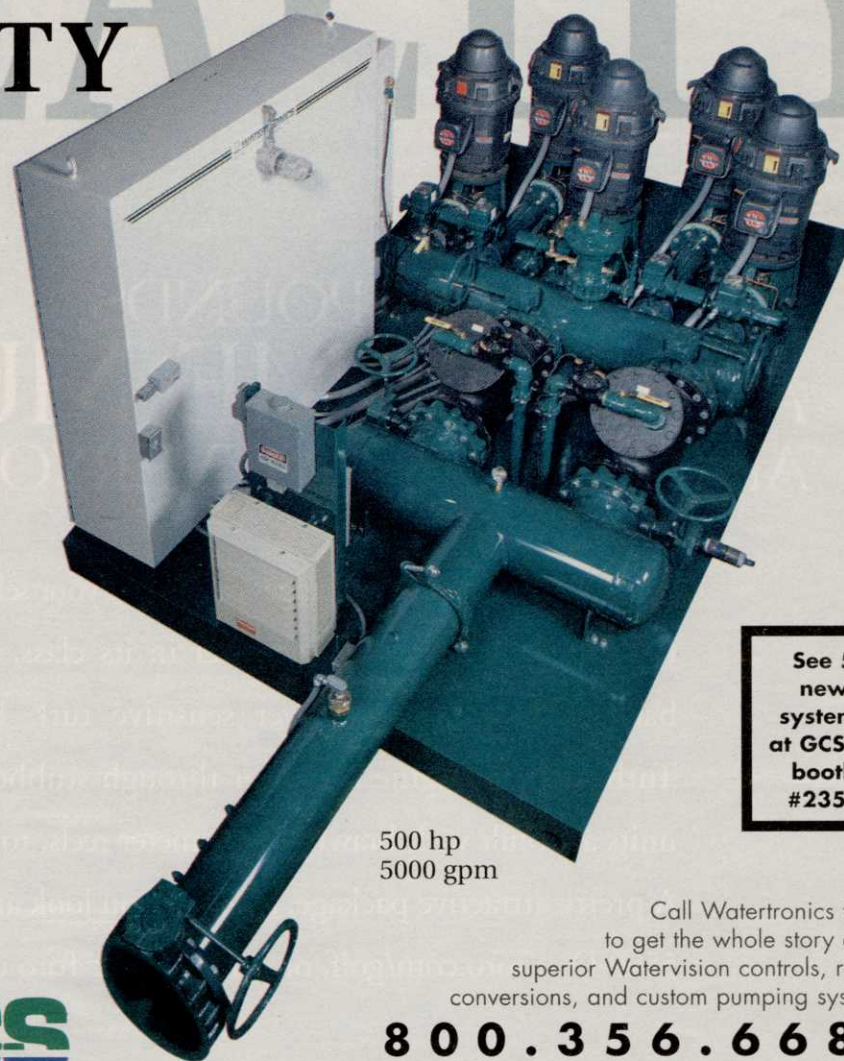
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