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SOME GOOD NEWS FROM MICHIGAN

There isn't much positive news coming out of Michigan these days. The economic crash hit the auto industry hard, and that means it hit Detroit and Michigan really hard.

Nobody is cheering the misery caused by the bankruptcies of GM and Chrysler, but there isn't a lot of sympathy, either. Years of incompetent and greedy management by auto execs, coupled with outrageous and excessive benefits and pay for the unions, got them to where they are today.

Detroit is a mess. The mayor was recently sent to jail, and the wife of U.S. Congressman John Conyers is also headed to jail for accepting cash bribes as a Detroit City Council member. Average homes are valued at a few thousand dollars, and crime is almost out of control. The only good things I can think of that I like in Detroit are John K. King Used and Rare Books and the farmers' market. It seems doubtful I'll ever visit either again.

But I am going to Michigan this summer to immerse myself in the places you aren't reading about today. They all involve golf.

Golf has a rich heritage in Michigan. My wife, Cheryl, is from Frankfort, a quaint town on the Lake Michigan shore. Nearly everyone involved in golf knows about Frankfort; it's the home of Crystal Downs, the Alister MacKenzie gem that is on everyone's list of best classic golf courses in America. CDCC is also well known for its excellent golf course superintendent, Mike Morris. Mike is one of the best and is also a native of Frankfort.

Frankfort has a prominent place in Michigan golf history for other reasons. People my age are well aware of how important Tuck Tate was to golf turf. He has been gone a number of years now, but I still think of him frequently. Tuck owned the Frankfort

Golf Club; he was a leader in the Northern Michigan Turf Managers Association and a strong supporter of turfgrass research at Michigan State University. Bill Bengeyfield, retired national director of the USGA Green Section, succeeded Tuck as owner of the Frankfort Golf Club, which he purchased from Tuck when he retired. Bengeyfield sold the course to a developer two years ago.

My in-laws live in Traverse City, and in the twilight of his career, one of my favorite golf characters spent most of his time in that part of Michigan. Walter Hagen owned a home on Long Lake before he bought one on Lake Cadillac. Two of my favorite golf books are about Hagen – "Sir Walter" By Tom Clavin and "The Walter Hagen Story" by the Haig himself. Hagen, of course, was one of the greatest professional golfers ever and captivated crowds on golf courses all over the world. He was a showman, as well, and was hired as the first club pro at Oakland Hills Country Club in Bloomfield Hills.

A trip to Michigan would be incomplete without a visit to The Gerald R. Ford Presidential Library and Museum in Grand Rapids. There you're reminded of President Ford's love of golf and his erratic driving of the ball into crowds gathered to watch him play.

It's a short run from Grand Rapids to East Lansing, home of Michigan State University. MSU has given us some of the best turfgrass researchers and instructors in the country. Think about Dr. Jim Beard, who started his career at MSU and spent many highly productive years there. Professor Joe Vargas will be long remembered for his contributions to pathology; his legacy will include outstanding grad students who filled turfgrass faculty positions elsewhere. Peter Cooking-

ham has done a masterful job managing the Turfgrass Information Center at the MSU libraries. And then there's Dr. Paul Reike, one of the brightest, most humble and dedicated men I have ever met.

Michigan has given so much to golf turf. Just think – during my career, five GCSAA presidents came out of Michigan – Ted Woehrle, James Timmerman, Gerald Faubel, William Roberts and Jon Maddern. The roster of GCSAA's John Morley Award winners includes many Michiganders and the state is well represented on the USGA's Green Section Award recipient list. The MTF and Gordon LaFontaine set a great example for the rest of us for years, and environmental stewardship had an early and strong foothold in Michigan.

Are you looking for a golf course architect? In Michigan you'll find men like Tom Doak, Ray Hearn, Jerry Mathews, Paul Albanese and others. Michigan has hosted some of golf's most important championships and tournaments, has more outstanding golf courses than I could name, and she has golf course superintendents the whole country knows about.

From a history that includes William Beal and Liberty Hyde Bailey, MSU continues with its important role today, despite an extremely depressed state economy. That said, I still hope Wisconsin rolls over them in football and basketball later this year!

From my home I can get to Michigan by plane or by car ferry. I can drive around the horn through Chicago, or I can cross the big Mac on the northern route. However I go, the last thing I'm thinking about is the bad news from the auto industry and Detroit. I'm thinking about golf and how much this state has given to all of us involved in the great game. That should make the entire state proud. **GC**