

ated from Penn State's two-year program in 1960 and started his long career.

Playing conditions at Ozaukee were always excellent and Wayne was never hesitant to discuss – usually at some length – what programs were working and which ones weren't as successful. I always viewed him as an outstanding plantsman and that trait, coupled with his keen sense of observation, put him on a different level in the golf turf industry. It always seemed he knew more about the successful culture of *Poa annua* than anyone else I knew.

Ozaukee was the first golf course in the country to attain certification in the Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary Program for golf courses, as I discovered from a display while visiting

the World Golf Hall of Fame in Florida. He was out in front of everyone in adopting what has become a widespread and successful program.

Leadership is a characteristic that came easily to Wayne Otto. He did more than his share in our professional organizations, serving as president of the Midwest Regional Turf Foundation and the Wisconsin Golf Course Superintendents Association. He was a director of the O. J. Noer Research Foundation, a member of the USGA Green Section Committee, and a board member of the Wisconsin Turfgrass Association. He was a willing speaker, offered his golf course for UW Extension research and studies, and never missed educational opportunities. At seminars you could usually find him in the

front row somewhere. And you could count on him to ask speakers some really good questions, sometimes the ones no one else would ask.

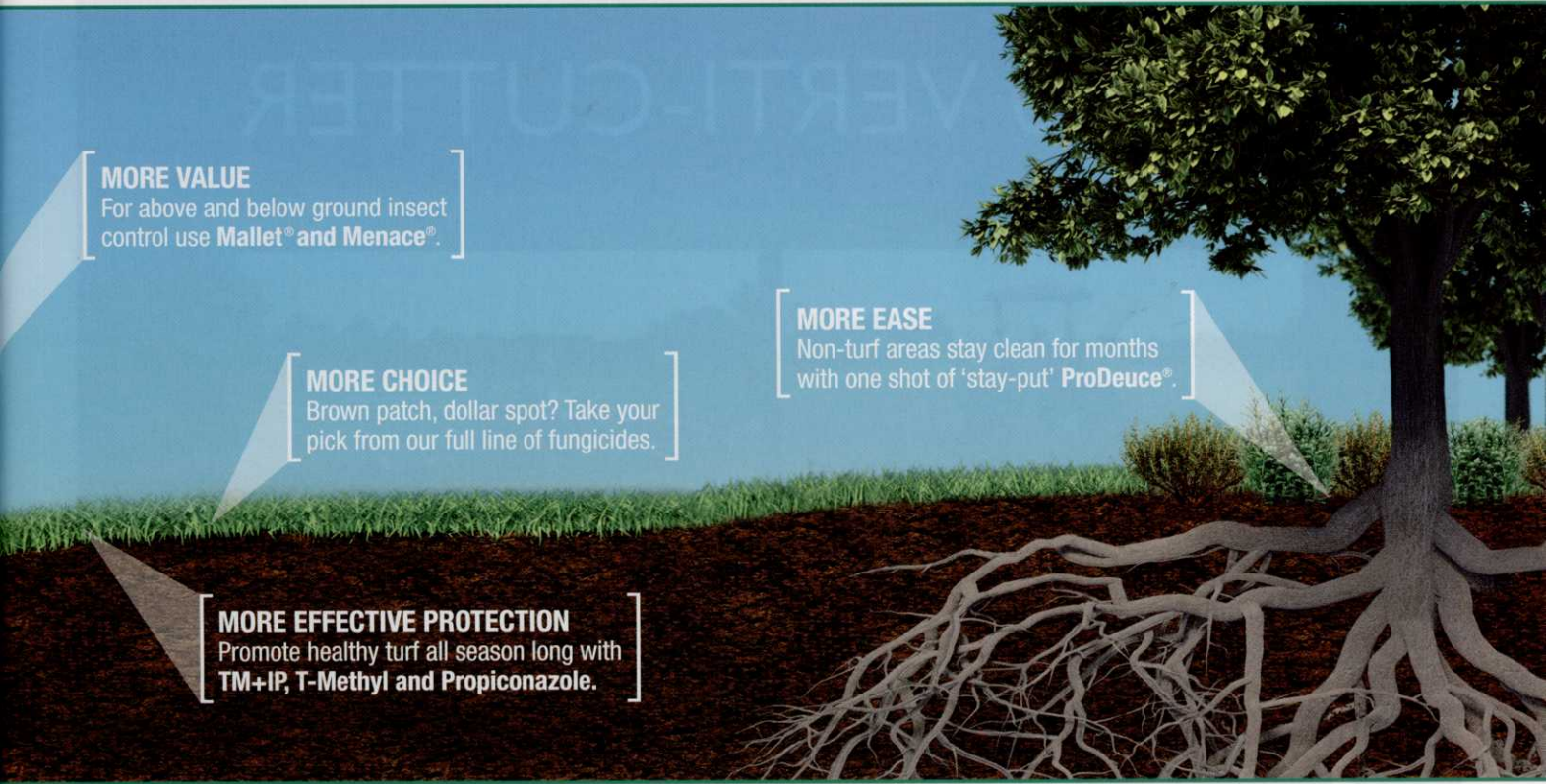
Wayne was one of the first to recognize the GCSAA's CGCS program and was one of the superintendents to be certified early in the program.

He loved to play golf, and was a student of golf course architecture. But it was golf course management that most interested him. Anyone who knew him greatly appreciated his ability to talk to anybody. And when he spoke, people listened. I remember one GIS when I decided I was going to tour the equipment show with him. That didn't last long; he'd go six feet and stop to visit with somebody who wanted to talk with him. I doubt he ever

made it completely through the show floor. I was amazed that one superintendent could know so many people in golf turf from all across the country.

He retired in November 2002. On the 12th of November we held a retirement party for him. Steve Mona traveled to Wisconsin from GCSAA headquarters in Lawrence, Kan., Stan Zontek flew in from Philadelphia, and Club Car's CEO Phil Trailles came up from Augusta, Ga. It was a real honor for me to present Wayne our WGCSA DSA the next morning at the Wisconsin Golf Turf Symposium. That meeting was one that Wayne had helped plan each year for a quarter of a century.

Wayne retired from the golf course, but kept his finger in the golf turf business. He did some



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Johnson hangs this photo of Otto and his dog, Max, in his office to keep Otto's memory alive daily.

part-time work for Milorganite, represented Brookside Labs and established "Turfgrass Support Services," a consulting business. We saw him out and about, at meetings and in the field. Although it was no surprise to those who knew him, he took the time to become an author. He collaborated with his good friend Danny Quast to write *Turf Management Tools and Techniques*, a turf text in which they shared their years of experience. Few among us have the knowledge or skill to write that book.

Then he got sick, very sick. Pancreatic cancer took him from us on Oct. 21, 2004. People were greatly affected by his death, upset over how unfair it was for such a great man to experience such a fate. His death inspired the creation of the Wee One, and his best friend, Rod Johnson was there when it was organized. Rod is the golf course superintendent at Pine Hills CC in Sheboygan, Wis., and tells what has happened and

where the foundation is headed in the years to come.

#### Who was present for your first Wee One meeting?

Well, we started to raise money for Wayne's medical expenses before we were formally the Wee One Foundation. We organized a golf outing at my course – Pine Hills – and held it on Sept. 22, 2004. Wayne was still alive, but very ill. He sprung himself from the hospital despite a very recent stroke, and he stayed with us the whole day, as difficult as it was for him. We raised \$40,000 for him and when we gave him the check he said, "Oh my." He died shortly after that, on October 21.

#### Who organized this outing?

Mike Handrich, Danny Quast, Beverly Quast, Paul Bastron, Pat Sisk, Chad Ball, Dave Radaj, Mark Petitgoue and myself.

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### What happened after this outing?

We got together and decided we wanted to formalize our group, which now included Wayne's widow JoAnn, as well as Beverly Quast, under the 501c3 administrative format and operate as a tribute to Wayne. It was Bill Roberts, past GCSAA president, who rightly noted, "Health issues like Wayne's will keep happening. We need to do something."

We met at Wayne's favorite Mexican restaurant in Milwaukee – it was at a midpoint between Sheboygan and Chicago. We wrote by-laws and benevolence SOP – who will be eligible for help and what criteria will be applied to select a recipient.

### How was the name "Wee One" chosen?

Pat Sisk knew the Wee One story, and Danny was actually present when the Wee One story happened. Stan Zontek, Patrick O'Brien, Danny Quast and Wayne Otto were in Scotland on a golf trip. At one course they had gathered with the caddies and were lining up their bets, which at this course included caddies and side bets. One caddy, in reference to Wayne, said, "My money's on the wee one."

### Did Wayne live long enough to know about your efforts through this foundation?

I never told Wayne, but Danny was able to tell him before he passed. He was at his home where he was confined.

### Obviously you and Wayne had a great friendship despite



The group supports turf professionals with health issues.

### the differences in your ages.

### When did it all begin?

I was working at North Hills Country Club and I was sent to Ozaukee Country Club on an errand. It should have taken a few minutes, but I was there all afternoon! Shortly after I was named superintendent at Pine Hills. The two clubs had a relationship in golf – it was actually called the Pinezaukee League – and that helped us get to know one

another. We roomed together at the first NCTE conference in Arlington, Ill., and ate Mexican food for the first time in each other's company.

### Did you spend a lot of time with Wayne near the end of his life?

I did, as many of his friends did. Most of it was in his house; we watched a lot of sports in the master bedroom, usually avoiding the "elephant in the room." But not once did he ever say, "Why me?" His attitude was, "I know my fate; you don't."

### Did you ever dream the Wee One would grow as it has in these relatively few years?

Never. I was afraid we would see interest dwindle in a couple of years, but after six months or

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## Q&A

so I knew it would continue on. We've been working with it long enough that the majority of our members never knew Wayne. The mission of the Wee One has tremendous appeal to people.

### **You grew quickly enough that you enlisted professional help to run the organization. How has that worked out?**

Great. Initially, we wanted a fundraiser, but Luke Cella was a great administrator. He's looking to move more to the fundraising role and we are really happy for that. We need to even out the peaks and valleys in our funding.

### **I know that Pine Hills has hosted a Wee One tournament every year. The event is legendary in terms of the number of participants, money raised and the good times had. Have you expanded beyond your own golf course?**

We have. There is a Wee One event in Virginia that is heading into its fifth season. Minnesota has had two, with a third coming. Michigan has also had two events with an excellent event last year at Oakland hills in Michigan and has an event planned for this year at Country Club of Detroit.

### **Regarding benevolence, has that effort reached nationwide status?**

We have made donations to superintendents in 19 states, from the East Coast to the West Coast and as far south as Texas. We have generated \$480,000 in the existence of the Wee One, and we will go beyond \$500,000 sometime this July.

### **What's in the future for the Wee One Foundation?**

The officers and directors want to build on our success and we are developing plans for an endowment that will secure the organization's mission well into the future. We need to continue to grow because there is more need than new members. **GCI**

*Monroe Miller is a frequent contributor to GCI, including the column, "The Monroe Doctrine."*

## More thoughts on Wayne

**D**r. Frank Rossi, Extension Professor of Turfgrass Science at Cornell University, developed a relationship with Wayne Otto during his years on the faculty at Wisconsin. He spoke of Otto in terms of "Wayne's World." This world was one of innovation, passion for golf turf and a keen sense of the practical. Rossi recalls a conversation with Wayne about his fertility program. "Wayne said the key to good greens is to put a padlock on the fertilizer shed after May 1." After Wayne's death, Rossi lamented he couldn't imagine the golf turf world without Wayne Otto.

"Wayne was the best grass grower that I've ever met," says Danny Quast, former superintendent at Milwaukee CC and Medina CC. "He had the best looking and fastest greens and the best fairways." Quast, a 2004 GCSAA DSA recipient, calls Otto a great friend. "Everybody who met Wayne liked him. He was well-renowned and well-respected all over the country." That fact may explain a lot of the success of the Wee One.

Mike Handrich, superintendent of Racine CC, recalls when he was a young and inexperienced superintendent and needed some advice, he'd call Wayne Otto for help, and Wayne would come right away. "Wayne was a true pioneer of our industry, and he was never afraid to take chances to find a better method or way of accomplishing something. We continue to reap the benefits from his curiosity and innovation today," says Handrich.

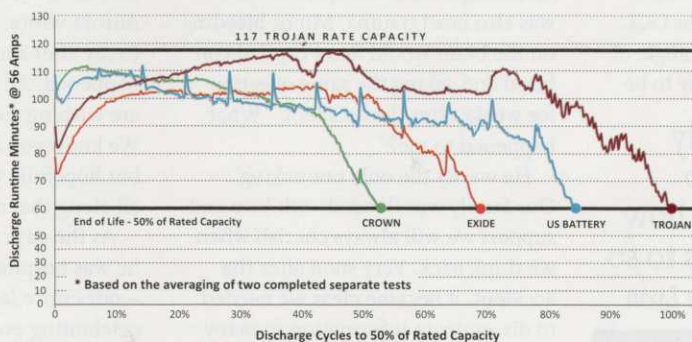




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**Dennis Lyon**, CGCS, is a GCSAA past president. He spent more than 35 years as the golf division manager in Aurora, Colo., and is the 2011 recipient of the USGA Green Section Award. Dennis can be reached at [dlyon@gie.net](mailto:dlyon@gie.net).

## THE RIPPLE EFFECT

### THE RIPPLE EFFECT (BY LANE LYON)

**W**e've all heard of the ripple effect. An online dictionary describes it as "a series of consequences caused by one single action or event." That's about right. Actually, it's spot on. My entire family would agree as well.

Our ripple struck December 20, 2011. I remember the exact moment. I was at my desk contemplating the upcoming holiday and week off from work when the phone rang. My mom was frantic as she explained my father had been in a terrible accident and was in an ambulance headed for the hospital.

Fast forward five days. It was Christmas Day. In an attempt to deliver an ounce of Christmas cheer, I wore a Santa hat to the hospital. It was a nice try. The truth is, the "ripples" were so strong, smiles were hard to come by.

My father, Dennis Lyon has been active in the golf profession for many years. He was superintendent/manager of golf for the City of Aurora Colorado from 1973 until his retirement in 2010. He is also a past president of GCSAA and a columnist for GCI. Now he was hooked up to a tangle of tubes and wires. He was lucky to be

**The "ripple," as truly awful as it was, also opened our eyes to how special our father is to so many people. – Lane Lyon**

alive after being hit by a pickup truck. He was on an afternoon stroll with his canine pal, Putter, when the accident happened. The impact was so intense, his back was broken – along with his collar bone, shoulder, pelvis and tail bone. (Putter, by the way, only suffered a minor abrasion).



Dennis Lyon and his son Lane Lyon, together as Dennis continues to heal from being hit by a truck during the holidays last year.

My dad had other injuries too – his right ear lobe had to be reattached, and he had severe internal injuries, including a lacerated spleen. There was also head trauma. Minor bleeding on the brain would leave my dad confused and asking the same question for weeks after the accident, "What happened to me?"

He wasn't the only one asking. Our family was flooded with love and support we will always cherish when we think back. Very soon after the accident, it became clear we needed to disseminate information to many concerned family, friends and colleagues. My sister, Casey, set up a page on a terrific site, [CaringBridge.org](http://CaringBridge.org). If you want to visit, enter [dennislyon1](http://dennislyon1). The initial Caring Bridge response was from friends and family. Our cousin wrote, "It might be too hopeful to hope each day will be better, but we always hope it will not get worse."

It didn't take long for us to realize the "ripple" was widening.

Two days after Christmas, Doug McNeil a colleague from the City of Aurora wrote: "It's hard to know what to say after something so tragic has happened. All of us in your golf family are wishing you nothing but the best. We know you have a long road ahead, but hopefully you will feel our support all along that road."

As the days and weeks went on – he was hospitalized for seven weeks – our entire family was at his side celebrating every milestone – IVs out, memory returning, pain settling, physical therapy, first steps, a wheel chair down to dinner, even the first trip to the bathroom! The entire time we were awe struck by thousands of page views to Caring Bridge, (there are over 8,300 to date). The page received hundreds of messages, many from golf superintendents from





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around the world. There were also hundreds of cards and e-mails from people who were concerned about my dad. Our family remains truly grateful for all the support.

Fellow GCSAA Past President Steve Cadenelli, one of Dad's best friends, flew from Massachusetts to Colorado three times to help Dad during his most difficult stretches.

The "ripple," as truly awful as it was, also opened our eyes to how special our father is to so many people. One entry read, "I would not be who I am today without Dennis Lyon, and I pray for his full recovery. He mentored me and many others through soccer and through life, and he is a man of many strengths and overwhelming compassion." Whoa.

Occasionally, we'd think of one person who wasn't posting messages or calling us: the pickup driver. We can't stop thinking about the life changing ripples he set into motion that day. Sure, accidents happen. But only when you experience the ripple effect of something like this do you understand how life can truly change in an instant.

The pain, the injuries and the ripples are something our dad thinks about every hour of every day. We family members are thrilled he's now continuing his recovery at home. Special thanks to all of you who helped my dad by sending positive ripples.

**THE RIPPLE EFFECT BY DENNIS LYON, CGCS.** Special thanks to my son Lane for sharing his thoughts in the first portion of this article. My wife Penny and our other children, Corey and Lydia, Casey and John and Jesse have also been invaluable during my healing process.

In keeping with Lane's theme of the ripple effect, I was the stone in the middle of the pond which caused

In keeping with Lane's theme of the ripple effect, I was the stone in the middle of the pond which caused the ripple.

—Dennis Lyon



Above, Dennis with his canine companion, Putter, and below, surrounded by family.

the ripple. However, a stone does not move from the edge of the pond into the water under its own power. In my case, an irresponsible driver caused the ripple when he hit me with his pickup, threw me up onto the hood, and then caused me to fall from the hood onto the pavement. Fortunately for me, the next thing I remembered after the accident came eight days later in the University of Colorado hospital. My family was there at my side. I had fortunately survived eight days of intense pain and surgeries. My family was there throughout this very difficult time. They were wonderful and invaluable.

As the ripple has grown I have been overwhelmed by the support

and prayers I received from City of Aurora employees and other friends and colleagues from the world of golf and elsewhere. The kind words and support I received have brought me to tears many times. The generosity I have received from GCSAA, the Wee One Foundation and many individuals has been amazing and so valuable during this financially difficult time.

Throughout the past several months I have seen and experienced both negative and positive ripples. On the negative side I was severely injured and almost died. My recovery has been slow and at times I have wondered, "Why me?" My family has suffered and paid an amazing emotional price. On the positive side, so many people have been kind, caring and helpful. I have also grown personally. I feel I am a more compassionate person and am committed to assisting others as much as possible.

What then do I need from you? I need you all to avoid creating a negative ripple on yourself, your family, another person or another family. For starters, please make sure you and your employees operate in a safe work environment. You and your family must always live safely. Don't drink, text or even talk on your cell phone while you drive. Always drive responsibly. Don't be like the pickup driver who hit me. Please do whatever it takes to keep from injuring yourself or someone else. Life is short and we have to spend it all with one body and one brain. I am lucky I had a broken back with no life-changing physical injuries. I also suffered a brain injury without life-changing impacts. I thank God and all of you who helped and supported me. Let's all spend our future surrounding ourselves and others with positive ripples only. No negative ripples allowed ever, you are all too important. **GCI**



# HOW ARE YOU TRENDING?

**GCI blows the lid off social media.**

Our experts offer a crash course to get it to work for you.





by John Torsiello

# Social media trending and turf

Is adopting a social media strategy right for you and your turf ops? GCI explores the Pros and Cons.



“Social media also helps address some of the issues you hear about through the grapevine quickly.”

— David Marach  
NorthBrook Country Club

“Twitter is good for those quick little updates but the blog is great to show pictures and videos and expound on them.”

— Tim Johansen,  
Palmer Hills Golf Club

## A brave new world

Social media compliments a professional approach to golf course maintenance.

These days, if you don't stay at least even with the technology curve you'll find yourself swimming against the tide in no time.

Golf course superintendents across the country are turning to social media for a plethora of reasons, including to get the word out about course conditions, communicate with staff, members and the general public, network with others in the industry and research.

Chuck Connolly, superintendent at Greenville Country Club in Greenville, S.C., uses a variety of social media, including Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter and My Blog, although he rarely uses Facebook because he believes it shares too much personal information.

“I use LinkedIn and maintain an up-to-date profile,” Connolly says. “LinkedIn is more professional and less personal, so I use it more. Twitter is used periodically to update course conditions to membership.”

Connolly blogs bi-weekly to reach out to members. He also finds social media a tool to glean industry information.

Ryan Moore, superintendent at Forest Lake Country Club in Bloomfield Hills, Mich., is hooked on blogging. He runs the maintenance blog at <http://flccgreens.blogspot.com> and uses it as a communication tool for membership, to educate and make them aware of things that are happening on the golf course. He's also recently joined LinkedIn.

“The blog is the best communication tool I have seen,” he says. “I am able to convey the message I would like to communicate, when I want and how I would like it to be presented. I have the ability to deliver my message to the entire membership instead of having to relay the message multiple times and have others change the context as they pass the message on to others. It also serves as an archive for projects and different changes that have

happened to the golf course.”

The blog was instituted last winter to communicate with members instead of traditional posted messages and fliers.

Moore says to keep blogs short and to the point.

“Exercise the message you would like to convey,” Moore says. “I have seen many different ways to communicate through a blog that are effective. But I believe short and to the point, with pictures to support, is the best approach. I find keeping the message positive and avoiding politics helps.”

David Marach, superintendent at NorthBrook Country Club in Luxemburg, Wis., uses Facebook to a large degree. It helps explain with pictures why they are doing what they are doing or what needs to be done in the future.

“It also keeps you in touch with the members through the off-season with what is going on in the Grounds and Greens department — reel grinding, tree maintenance, ice or snow issues,”

