

# Off The Fringe

**G**ORDON WITTEVEEN, influential superintendent, author and lecturer, died on Dec. 16, 2010. He was 76. Witteveen was the author of numerous books, including “Practical Golf Course Maintenance: The Magic of Greenkeeping” written with Michael Bavier, CGCS-retired; “A Century of Greenkeeping;” “Keepers of the Green: A History of Golf Course Maintenance” with Bob Labban; and “Keeping the Green in Canada: A History of Golf Course Management.” Witteveen also helped found both the Canadian GSA as well as its magazine, *The Greenmaster*.

“Gordon was extremely loyal to the profession of the golf course superintendent,” Ken Cousineau, CAE, executive director of the Canadian Golf Superintendents Association, said. “He cared deeply about the industry and the profession.”

Palmer Maples Jr., CGCS-retired, was president of the GCSAA in 1975 and had many fond memories of Witteveen from the time when the two were both on the GCSAA board of directors. Maples recalled fondly the 1975 conference and show in New Orleans when their children played together.

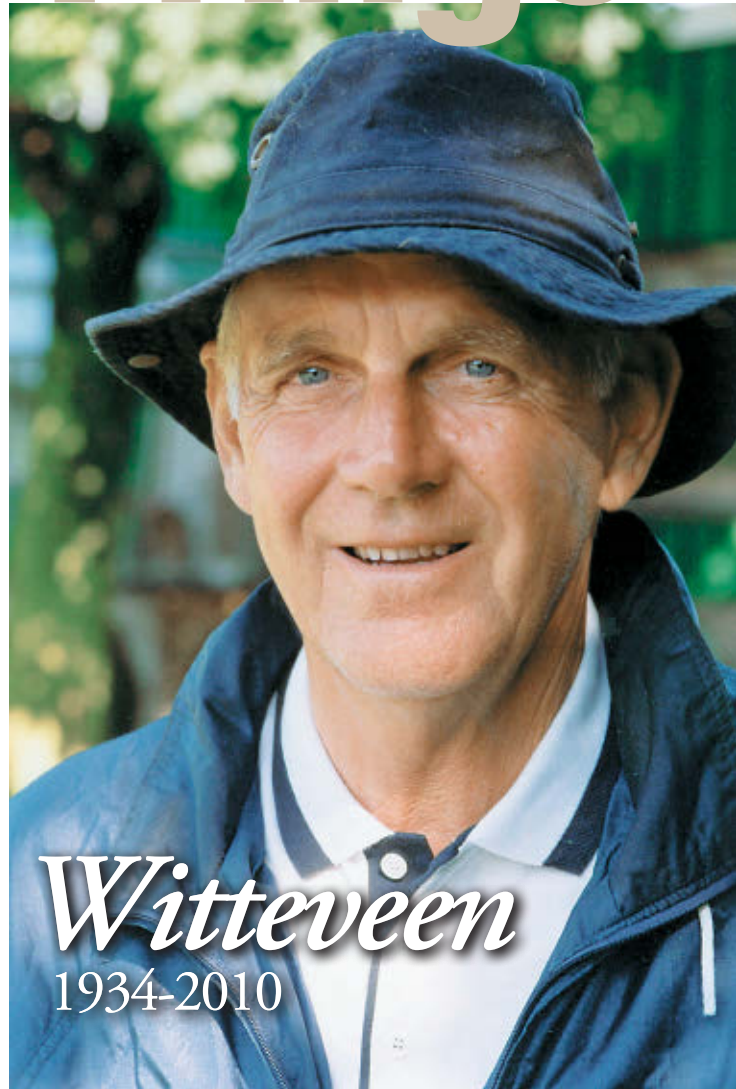
“He was a good, honest, hard-working superintendent,” Maples said. “He wasn’t into going high-tech with your golf course; he believed in dealing with the situation you were in as best as you could so the people playing your course could enjoy the surface.”

Michael Bavier, CGCS-retired, who co-wrote “Practical Golf Course Maintenance” with Witteveen, said he and Witteveen had lost touch these last several years.

“We had a lot of good times back in the ‘90s,” Bavier said. “I wish his family the best.”

Cousineau said one word summarized Witteveen best: inspirational.

“He cared so much, he took the time to speak with so many people, because he was so dedicated to the profes-



*Gordon* *Witteveen*  
1934-2010

## LOYAL TO THE PROFESSION

sion,” Cousineau said. “He was an inspiration to anyone he spoke with.”

Though Witteveen succumbed to leukemia, nothing can take away the many inspirations he left behind to his fellow superintendents, Maples said.

“Look at all the things he’s quoted on today,” Maples said. “He liked to expel that information in case someone didn’t know. He liked to plant those seeds and see them spread like *Poa annua*.” ■



# Assistant rescues woman wrecked in course pond

Greg Leach stands in front of the pond where he rescued a woman days earlier.

Then he saw her move.

"I kicked off my boots and jumped in. The water is about four feet deep," Leach told *Golfdom* the day after the incident. The car door was already open when he got there, but the woman was still wearing her seatbelt. "She was moving and speaking, but she wasn't making any sense."

Leach said he was in the water for less than two minutes, but the 35-degree water was enough to make his lower body entirely numb. The maintenance facility surveillance camera showed headlights going into the pond at 6:30 a.m.

"She sat in there for two, maybe two-and-a-half hours, in chest-deep water," Leach said.

By the time he had her out of the pond, the first police car was on the scene. The woman is expected to recover, thanks to Leach getting her out of the water when he did.

"It was a little bit exciting for what I thought would be a slow Monday morning," Leach said. ■

**S**o much for a slow Monday after Christmas, Greg Leach, assistant superintendent at Lubbock (Texas) CC, said.

Leach arrived at the course around 7 a.m. when one of his crew members came into the shop and told him there was a car in the pond on No. 15.

"I thought he meant someone

stole a golf car and drove that into the pond," Leach said. "I didn't realize it was a real car until I saw it. I was about to call 911 when I saw someone was still in there."

Leach figured the woman in the car was dead. Overnight temperatures had dropped to 25 degrees and there were areas of ice on the corners of the pond.

## Texas A&M Turf professor, wife, killed in car accident

Dr. J. Chris Stiegler, assistant professor of turfgrass science and ecology at Texas A&M, and his wife, Jenny, both died in a car wreck on Christmas Eve near Waco, Texas.

"He was a bright, articulate young man. His best asset was that he worked well with all people – students, faculty, industry. He had a respect for everyone," said Dr. David Baltensperger, head of the department of soil and crop sciences at Texas A&M. "What he brought to our department was a new energy for turfgrass research."

A fund has been established for the couple's infant daughter Emily, the only survivor of the wreck:

Emily Grace Stiegler in care of Citizens State Bank  
4611 West 6th Ave. Stillwater, OK 74074



## Quotable

**"Based on historical trends, on a scale of 1 to 10 with 10 being the busiest, Tuesday, Feb. 8th will be a 1 (at Disney World). The weekend of the 12th and 13th, the parks will only be at 30- and 40-percent capacity. It's really not a bad time of the year to be in Orlando."**

— Seth Kubersky, author of *"Universal Orlando 2011"*



# GCSAA ends LPGA staff agronomist position

**W**hile the GCSAA is ramping up its new field staff program, it's pulled the plug on another program: the GCSAA/LPGA staff agronomist position, a project the association started in conjunction with the LPGA in July of 2007. John Miller, CGCS, who held the position of LPGA staff agronomist, accepted the job of GCSAA field staff representative for the Great Lakes region last month.

"I'm sad (about the end of the LPGA position), but we accomplished what we set out to do," Miller said. "It was a sign of the times — there was no money to fund the position anymore.

GCSAA decided not to renew the contract."

Miller said his favorite thing about the LPGA position was being able to work with superintendents around the globe to make their golf courses the best they could be.

"I was an extra set of eyes that could help out," Miller said. "But it turned out I learned as much from (the LPGA Tour superintendents) as they learned from me."

Miller was wasting no time getting started with his new position. On the day Miller was reached by *Golfdom* in late December, he had already attended an Ohio holiday party for local superintendents.

"I'm really excited about this new position. GCSAA has been working hard on this field staff project, and it seems to be going over well with the membership," Miller said. "I think it'll be fun to take the knowledge that I have — I'm a past chapter president — and working with other chapters to see what their challenges are." ■



John Miller

## Carolinas golf industry gives to research

The Carolinas golf industry has announced grants of almost \$100,000 to turfgrass researchers whose work helps underpin the game's \$8-billion economic impact in the region. The grants to Clemson and North Carolina State universities are the first generated by Rounds4Research, an annual online auction of tee times across the region.



Nearly 700 tee times were available to the highest bidder in last year's auction. This year's auction runs April 10 to 17 at [www.Rounds4Research.com](http://www.Rounds4Research.com).

"We are extremely pleased and proud to be able to provide this landmark support," said Tim Kreger, executive director of the Carolinas Golf Course Superintendents Association, which administers the program. "The golf industry is suffering in this recession just like the universities but we are determined to be part of the solution."

To share your industry news, email Seth Jones at [sjones@questex.com](mailto:sjones@questex.com).

## Fort Collins CC super earns DSA award

Grant Yaklich, Fort Collins CC superintendent and former Rocky Mountain Regional Turfgrass Association president, was presented with the RMRTA Distinguished Service Award recently. As superintendent of the Links at Sierra Blanca, Yaklich improved the course's *Golf Digest* ranking from 10th to 6th while at the same time reducing water consumption by 54 percent. Yaklich has been in the turfgrass industry for 27 years, with the last 12 years at Fort Collins CC.

Grant Yaklich, Fort Collins (Colo.) CC superintendent

