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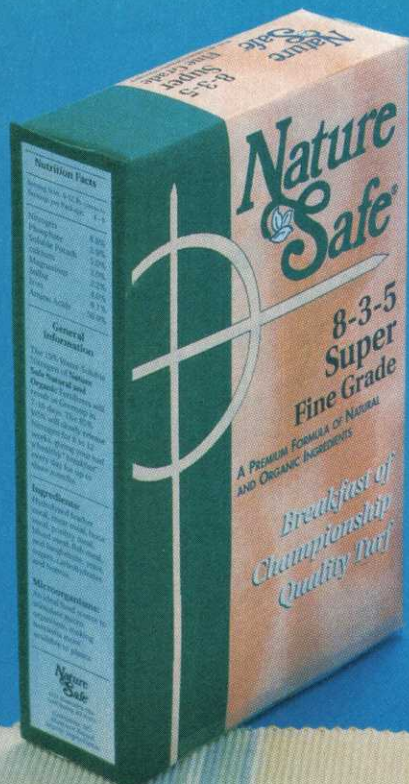
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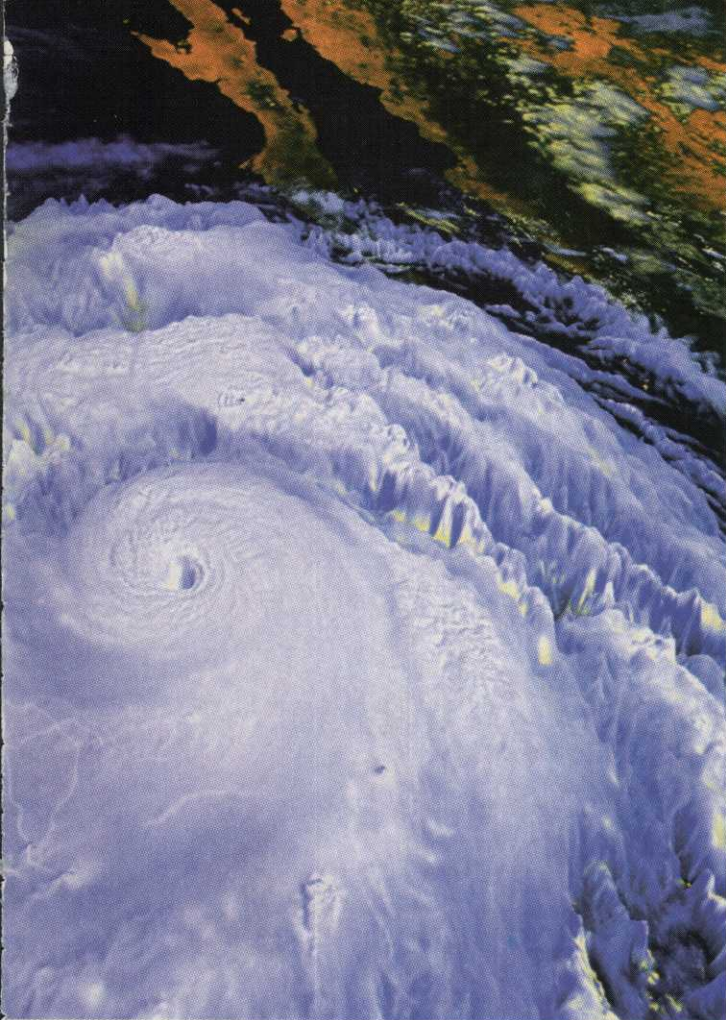
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Ron Lee Brown of Stone Images helped create our cool – we mean hot – cover concept. Golfdom art director Lisa Lehman expanded the concept with her Photoshop finesse.

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Going Postal

■ WE'VE GOT MAIL

Is PDI necessary?

I don't think PDI should stand for "Pretty Dumb Idea," but is it necessary? There are some good points, some that are arguable and some that are just plain bad. While I don't think everyone should drop their opinions about PDI and adopt mine, I would like to raise some issues on it.

No other professional association that I'm aware of tells its members they must complete a self-assessment. While self-assessment is a good idea — it might be the best thing one could do to be a better superintendent and a better person — a professional group should never require such a subjective test.

Testing members to assure competent knowledge is a great idea. Other professional groups, such as lawyers and electricians, have ways of certifying their membership. A class that teaches us how to do that or improve how we evaluate our own weaknesses is a great idea. But a professional association, which is what the GCSAA is, should not assume that responsibility. A superintendent's evaluation should be between himself or herself and that person's supervisor.

Another argument for PDI is that our association needs to raise our average salary. That was a good argument 20 years ago. We should be thankful to the senior members of our association that did all the work to raise our association's professionalism. But these days it's not uncommon for the value of a superintendent's total compensation package to be almost 20 percent of the operating budget and 40 percent of the payroll budget. In the past several years, I've known more superintendents let go for budget-cutting purposes than any other reason. Do we really want

to end up in a situation like the PGA where assistants make under \$20,000 while their bosses sometimes make five times that or more?

One last point: Almost all superintendents are judged on job performance. Similar to professional coaches, lawyers and salespeople, the opinion of our competency is based solely on the product we provide. If a lawyer loses too many cases, he or she won't have any clients. If a salesperson doesn't sell, he or she is going to be terminated. How many times does a coach get let go despite having many successful seasons because he or she has a few bad years?

No collection of letters behind one's name or college degrees are going to protect a superintendent's job when that superintendent fails to meet an employer's expectations. We need to continue to improve the skills that make us successful, but that should be a personal choice depending on what each person wants.

While some members dream of being at a top club and being elected to the GCSAA Board of Directors, others want no more than to earn a good wage, keep their courses in better shape than the ones next door and to coach their kids' little league teams. Our association needs both types.

**Steve Rebhan, CGCS
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Feel like going postal? We want to hear from you. You can e-mail your letters to Pat Jones at patrick.jones@advanstar.com, fax to 440-891-2675 or send them via snail-mail to: 7500 Old Oak Blvd., Cleveland, OH 44130. Make sure to include your name and phone number for verification. Letters may be edited for length or relevance.

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19-21 Turfgrass Producers International Conference and Expo

Spokane, Wash.
Contact 800-405-8873

20 Pesticide Applicators Professional Association Seminar

San Jose, Calif.
Contact 831-899-7548

25 Midwest Regional Turf Field Day

West Lafayette, Ind.
Contact 765-494-8039

25 Washington State University/Oregon State University Turfgrass Field Day

Pullman, Wash.
Contact 253-925-5638

30-Aug. 3 Plant Growth Regulation Society

Kailua-Kona, Hawaii
Contact 215-321-7970

AUGUST

3 New Jersey Turfgrass Association/Rutgers Golf & Fine Turf Field Day

East Brunswick, N.J.
Contact 856-853-5973

5-8 Georgia GCSA Summer Conference

Lake Lanier Island, Ga.
Contact 706-742-2651

9 Ohio Turfgrass Foundation/Ohio State University Research Field Day

Columbus, Ohio
Contact 888-683-3445

14 Utah State University Field Days

Logan, Utah
Contact 877-292-0960

14-17 Turfgrass 2000

Gainesville, Fla.
Contact 800-882-6721

15 Cornell Field Day

Ithaca, N.Y.
Contact 607-255-1792

16-19 Golf Course Builders Association of America Summer Meeting

Louisville, Ky.
Contact 919-942-8922

SEPTEMBER

16-19 Club Managers Association of America Annual Leadership/Legislative Conference

Alexandria, Va.
Contact 703-739-9500

18 Canadian Golf Superintendents Association's Annual Fall Field Day

Winnipeg, Manitoba
Contact 905-602-8873

25-28 Computer Irrigation Installation with HDPE Piping

Ames, Iowa
Contact 515-294-3126

OCTOBER

3 Iowa Golf Course Superintendents State Meeting

Lake Mills, Iowa
Contact 515-232-8222

4-5 Turfgrass Landscape and Equipment Expo

Costa Mesa, Calif.
Contact 800-500-7282

10 Georgia Golf Course Superintendents Association's Assistant GCS Seminar and Tournament

Woodstock, Ga.
Contact 706-742-2651

Let us know about your events. Send information to Frank Andorka at 7500 Old Oak Blvd., Cleveland, 44130. Fax information to 440-891-2675 or e-mail to fandorka@advanstar.com.

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AQUA•AID

Thirteen years ago, I began my career in this business as a cub reporter for *Golf Course Management*. The day I showed up at GCSAA, I knew zilch about turf, had played only three rounds of horrendously bad golf and had never even met a superintendent. My job description was basic: stick around the office, rewrite press releases, proofread copy and try to learn enough about the profession to someday write an occasional article.

Two days after I started, GCM's legendary long-time editor, Clay Loyd, called me into his office and asked if I'd like to take a little trip. It seemed that Chicago's Butler National GC had experienced a bit of a "rain event" the week of the Western Open. In fact, most of the course was underwater. It was golf's version of the *Poseidon Adventure*. For me, it would be baptism by flood.

Just a few frenzied hours later, I stumbled into Butler's maintenance facility dazed, damp and dangerously ill-prepared. At that moment, I met my first superintendent: Oscar Miles.

Oscar was an island of calm in a sea of turmoil. He was smiling, patient, relaxed and genuine. He took the time to proudly introduce his team (and, of course, his wonderful wife, Mardelle), as helicopters buzzed by and TV guys screamed at each other. He actually laughed as he showed me dozens of carp flopping around in the shallows that used to be the No. 1 fairway. It was surreal to me, but Oscar made it seem like just another interesting day at the office.

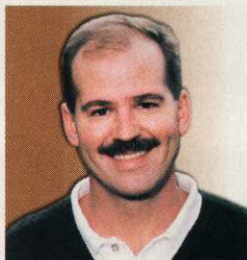
The story of how Oscar and his crew managed to salvage nine holes of "Lake Butler" and work with a nearby muni to play the 1987 Western is now legendary. It was an amazing feat by any standard. For me, it was a remarkable introduction to the profession by a truly remarkable man.

Flash forward to 2000, and I once again find myself walking into Oscar's office. This time, however, the sun is shining, only bluebirds buzz by, and the 17 ponds that dot the Merit Club are minding their manners and staying within their banks.

In the years since I met Oscar, I've played many more rounds of horrendous golf, learned

Thank God for All of the Oscars

BY PAT JONES



THEIR NOBILITY

ATTRACTS BRIGHT

YOUNG PEOPLE

TO THE BUSINESS

LIKE FAITH

ATTRACTS PRIESTS

TO THE ALTAR

just enough about turf to be dangerous and met thousands of superintendents. Oscar, however, is seemingly unchanged. He's still smiling and sincere — always teaching and always promoting others over himself.

There's Penn State memorabilia everywhere, and five computers scattered around Oscar's office. He's in the late stages of preparing for the U.S. Women's Open and has assembled a huge, incredibly well-organized notebook of plans, contingency plans and schedules.

Labor will not be a problem. Everyone wants to work with Oscar. In fact, he will have to turn away some fellow Chicagoland superintendents and "TurfNet buddies" who have volunteered. It's probably the hardest part of the job, he says.

Oscar isn't concerned about how the Merit Club will hold up to the scrutiny of network television and the critical examination of the players. Instead, his goal is to ensure that the event is a major showcase for women's golf. He also isn't interested in being in the limelight. Instead, he insists I talk with and photograph his assistants and club president Ed Oldfield.

What's the point of this tribute to a man who wants no tributes? Oscar Miles and the hundreds more like him around the country are what make this profession great. They are mentors and innovators. They share ideas and help their colleagues with no strings attached.

They have a nobility about them that attracts bright young people to the business like faith attracts priests to the altar. They have that special ability to not only create great golf conditions, but to create greatness in others.

Thanks Oscar (and all the other Oscars). This column's for you.

*Pat Jones is the editor/publisher of *Golfdom*. He can be reached at 440-891-3126 or patrick.jones@advanstar.com*

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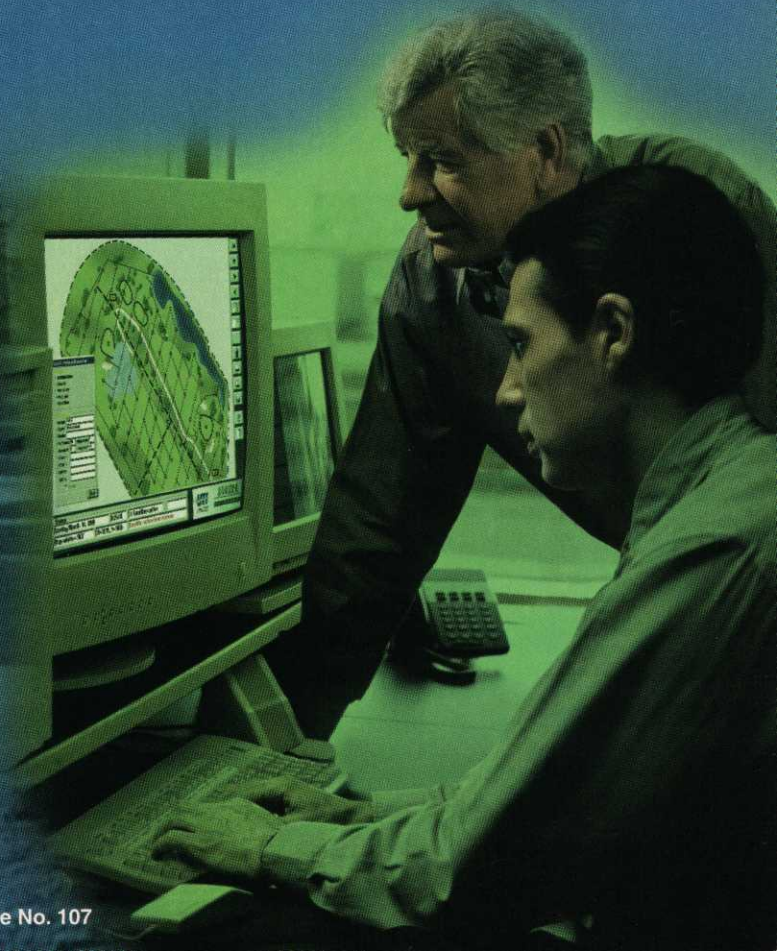


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