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# Golfdom

APRIL 2004 • VOLUME 60 • NO. 4



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## In the City

From finding a dead body (and his ghost?) to having to deal with homeless people bathing in the irrigation system, superintendents at urban courses face some unusual challenges.

By Bruce Allar

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"You won't believe some of the things I've found," he says.

By James Patrick Morgan III



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Demands for lower rates and shorter residuals make bringing new insecticides to market much more difficult.

By Frank H. Andorka Jr.

**A Product that Demonstrates 'Merit'**  
Hallmark insecticide is 10 years old and going strong. See page 82.

By Larry Aylward, Editor



# All for One and One for All

The starting lineup of Angels Crossing: (from left) Bruce Matthews III, Mike Hill, Bob Thompson, Jim Thompson and Roger Barton.

## cover story

BY LARRY AYLWARD

Who says a superintendent has to be young to take on a grow-in? Roger Barton proved that theory wrong. But the veteran superintendent will tell you that the creation of Angels Crossing was the ultimate example of teamwork. See stories on pages **28** and **32**.

**About the cover**  
Lansing, Mich.-based photographer Roger Boettcher captured this portrait of veteran superintendent Roger Barton with turf in hand.

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By David Kronman

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## Public Opinion

By Jim Black

This month, Jim Black, a veteran public golf course superintendent, debuts his new column, "Public Opinion." Black's column will run several times this year. This month, Black writes about facing challenges head on — using only what you already have to work with.

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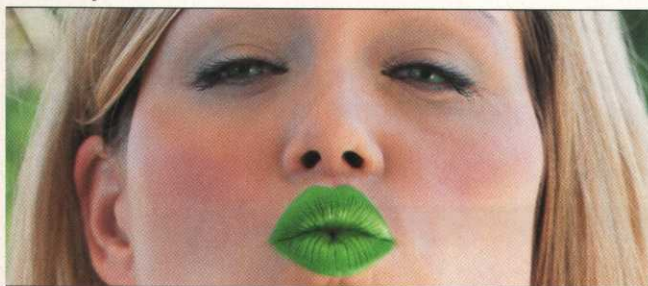
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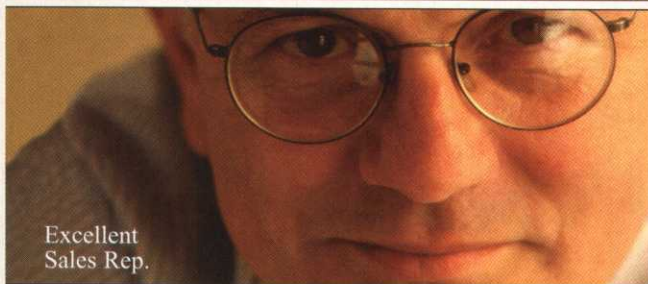
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**O**ne of my “kids” called recently to ask for a favor, and I was delighted to help. The “kid” was Joe Livingston, one of the dozens of young people who received GCSAA scholarships during my tenure managing the old version of the national’s foundation in Lawrence, Kan.

Joe’s now the certified superintendent at River Crest Country Club in Forth Worth, Texas, a marvelous old club with an exclusive membership that includes a Who’s Who of the rich and powerful in the area. His request was simple: Would I speak at his North Texas chapter’s March meeting? I immediately accepted knowing that Texas might be a wee bit warmer than Cleveland in early spring.

As most readers know, these monthly chapter meetings usually follow a predictable schedule: education, lunch and golf. The North Texas GCSA event to which Joe invited me followed that standard schedule, but it threw in a couple of twists I think other chapters would do well to consider.

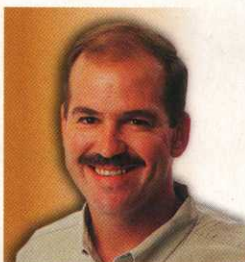
When I received the agenda, I learned there would be another speaker: a meteorologist from one of the local TV stations. I thought this was brilliant. Learn about a relevant weather-related topic — in this case, lightning safety — and get some media exposure at the same time.

So we showed up bright and early at the club hosting the meeting, and I began my presentation. I had them enthralled with my pithy remarks about “Successful Communication with Golfers.” I was 45 minutes into the speech, and all 120 or so attendees were paying rapt attention. Then, like a herd of deer spooked by a noise, all 120 heads swiveled hard and looked toward the entrance where the TV meteorologist had just walked in. Did I mention the meteorologist was female ... and about 6-foot-one ... and really, really *not* unattractive?

Needless to say, I could have been Tiger Woods sharing my top-secret keys to great golf and not one of these guys would have heard a word I said. In card game terms, I was trumped. So I wrapped up quickly, helped the weather lady set up her computer, and

## Chapter Meeting Has a Few Twists

BY PAT JONES



NORTH TEXAS GCSA

FOLLOWS A FORMAT

THAT OTHER

CHAPTERS SHOULD

CONSIDER

skulked away quietly. (Actually, she gave a great presentation. And despite the trumping, the guys seemed to enjoy my humble efforts as well.)

Then came golf at the beautiful Ridglea Country Club in Forth Worth. This too was a bit different. Rather than the usual stroke gross and net play, it was a modified Ryder Cup format. Participants were divided into teams (East vs. West, or, essentially, Fort Worth vs. Dallas) and paired off for nine holes of match play. After nine, you switched to play the other member of your foursome from the opposing team. Each nine-hole match counted for a point. A two-man best-ball score was also kept for a team match for another point. It was a truly fun format that inspired fierce individual and team competition.

What struck me though was that, unlike any chapter event I played in before, there was no prize money at stake. The winning team (which turned out to be the East) laid claim to “Bully & the Bone,” a rather unfortunate piece of sculpture featuring a concrete bulldog and an actual bone which had been found by one of the local superintendents during the event years ago.

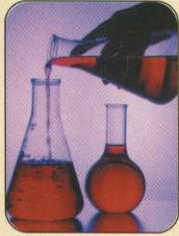
It reminded me of the epiphany moment from “The Grinch Who Stole Christmas” when the Grinch realizes that presents do not make the holiday. Sometimes the prize is in the fun and the competition, not the purse. That’s just one more thing that made this meeting a little more special than most.

The bottom line is that at a time when chapter meeting attendance is declining in many areas, these guys have gotten creative and are trying some different things. That’s a great lesson for all chapters to ponder.

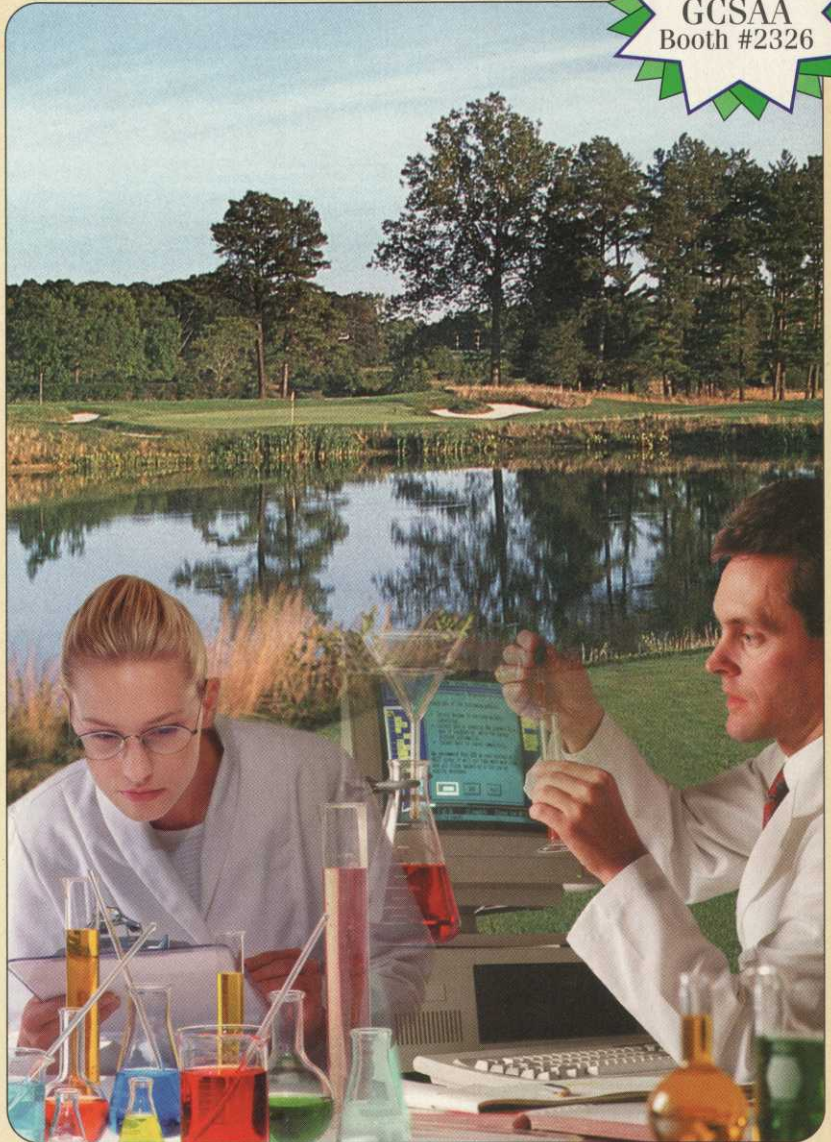
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**W**hat happens when you put a superintendent, a pro, an owner, a general manager, an architect and a builder in the same room for a

few hours? If you believe in labels — and sometimes they're true — your answer would be that Wrestlemania would break out. The conditions — a room full of determined individuals with strong opinions about how things should be done — would be ripe for a knockdown-drag-out fight. Quick, phone Jerry Springer.

Superintendents and pros, after all, supposedly loathe each other. The label on builders and architects is that they get along as well as the Yankees and the Red Sox. And the poop on owners and general managers is that they'll never ask superintendents, pros, architects, owners — or each other, for that matter — over for dinner.

And then there are the circumstances surrounding Angels Crossing, a new golf course in Vicksburg, Mich., that's scheduled to open this spring. When the course's superintendent, architect, owner, general manager, pro and builder were placed in the same room, they consorted more like the congenial Cleavers than the brusque Bunkers.

They sat around a large table — relaxed and unassuming — and talked about how much they appreciated each other. They complimented each other for their work on the project. They weren't pretending, either. One could tell that by the way they looked each other in the eyes — their respect and trust for one another evident on their faces.

They are proud of what they accomplished — an upscale 18-hole course that epitomizes affordable golf at \$38 a round. But they are proud of their accomplishment in a different sense than for what the course is tangibly. They are proud that they were able to work together with such cooperation. They were able to do what they set out to: keep costs down so Angels Crossing could be played by middle-class people who live in and around the small Michigan town.

There goes Jim Thompson, general manager of Angels Crossing, waxing superlatives about Bruce Matthews III, the architect of the course.

"Bruce doesn't get as much credit as he

## Paradise on an Old Paper Mill Site

BY LARRY AYLWARD



UPSCALE AND AFFORDABLE COURSE IS SIMPLY THE RESULT OF PEOPLE WORKING TOGETHER TO ACHIEVE A COMMON GOAL

deserves," Thompson says. "That's because he doesn't spend his days promoting himself."

Matthews says Angels Crossing is the most memorable project he has ever worked on. That's saying a lot for a man who has designed some terrific tracks among his 38 works in the Wolverine state. His comment has nothing to do with his payment for the job, which was less than usual. Angels Crossing, which cost about \$1.8 million, will always be in the good memories section of Matthew's brain because of the people involved with the project.

"We worked as team throughout," Matthews says. "Everybody had a turn as a leader. Everybody listened to each other, and everybody cooperated. It was a very cohesive group."

Because they got along so well, they had fun. And it doesn't take Einstein to figure that people are going to give more of themselves in their jobs if they're having fun doing them.

"This wasn't work," Matthews says of Angels Crossing. "This was sheer pleasure."

There's a message here for the golf industry — a big one. It's that good golf courses (and Angels Crossing may soon be regarded as a great course) can be built inexpensively with lower green fees if the people involved with the projects put aside their egos and work together as one.

"For a \$1.8 million, we got about \$2.8 million in effort," Matthews says. "That's priceless."

The industry has been clamoring for golf courses like Angels Crossing. I challenge industry organizers of conferences and seminars to recruit one of Angels Crossing's makers (or all of them) to sit on a panel and talk about what it takes to create a fine and affordable golf course.

I'm sure a significant and vital section of discussion would focus on the importance of a group effort.

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