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# LIKE FATHER, LIKE SONS

The late George Littrell gets a Father's Day tribute from one of his three superintendent sons.

BY DAVID LITRELL



Though George never pushed his three sons to pursue careers as superintendents, he was surely proud of the family's 172-plus combined years working in the industry.

*I'd like to tell you the story of the greatest superintendent I ever knew — a man who was not only my father, but also a mentor and a friend.*

My father's life began in a rural area of western Kentucky known as Nick. As a child, George learned how to hunt, trap, fish and work like a man. By age 5 he was working in the timber woods with his father on the other end of a crosscut saw.

George continued the hard work in the woods and on the farm until he was a young man and Uncle Sam called him to go to war. The year was 1943. Dad was 18. For the next two years, Dad's life belonged to Uncle Sam. He endured training for artillery with the 884<sup>th</sup> Field Artillery Battalion as part of the 70<sup>th</sup> Division Trail Blazers. In early 1944 he and the rest of the 884<sup>th</sup> boarded the SS Mariposa and headed for southern France by way of northern Africa.

After landing in France, the work began to free the world of Nazis. The battalion endured 87 straight days of combat on their way through France to Germany. After the fighting was over they spent the next few months in Germany before being shipped stateside, where Dad remained until his discharge.

When Dad returned from the front, he made a beeline back home to western Kentucky. It wasn't long before he started courting my mother, Zelda Lee Lindsey, and the family began.

From 1946 to 1956 Dad spent time as a farmer, a migrant farmer and a furnace repair man. After two years of failed crops, he decided to explore the closest job to farming he could find. He settled on golf course maintenance. Back then I think we were called greenskeepers, and Dad quickly earned that title. The first golf course he was in charge of was the old Bowling Green Country Club course in Bowling Green, Ky. It was a nine-hole course back then. Dad was only there for a year or so when the club moved across Highway 185.



He helped with the construction and the grow in. To this day you can see the improvements

he made on the course.

In 1960, Dad got the call to move north to River Road Country Club in Louisville. He worked hard, putting blood, sweat and tears into whatever needed to be done. It was at River Road that my older brothers got their first taste of golf course labor.

In 1965 Dad took a job as superintendent at Wildwood Country Club, where he would spend the rest of his 33-year career. It's where we boys grew up — and where we grew to love the course as much as Dad did. With Wildwood as the backdrop, Dad produced three superintendents in their own right. And each of us took a lot away from Wildwood and the "School of Hard Knocks," as we called it. Also among the crew members of Wildwood were sons-in-law, brothers of sons-in-law, cousins, nephews and uncles. It seemed as though if you needed a job Dad had one for you. Dad was a great teacher and you could learn a lot if you paid close attention. Anyone who ever met Dad could tell you that.

### **Work, and work hard**

Some of the things Dad taught all of us were how to work and work hard. When time allowed, we played and had fun. Then it was back to work. Always, Dad showed us that we needed to be at work on time and put forth the effort needed to accomplish the task at hand, even if it meant working day and night.

Dad also taught us the importance of family. He always led a simple life and got by the best he could. He taught us all various things, such as hunting, fishing, camping and digging

*Continued on page 34*

*Continued from page 33*

ginseng. I did not catch on to that last one very well, I guess. Dad used to joke with me that I was not a Littrell. At least, I think he was joking!

Dad never pushed us to become golf course superintendents. That was our own choice. We understood what the undertaking would be like. And after years of watching Dad, we knew what it took to succeed at it. Not to mention, we enjoyed being outdoors.

There were a lot of firsts in the time Dad spent at Wildwood. He had the first automatic irrigation system in the Louisville area. I was just a kid running around on the golf course when that was installed. Until Wildwood came into the picture I didn't have a clue what my Dad and brothers were doing when they left home to go to work.

Wildwood also was the first course in Louisville to have a riding bunker rake. Boy was I glad to see that machine. Carrying a flat shovel and hand rake around all day long really gets old, especially when your feet are your only means of transportation.

Everything back then was done in-house. I don't remember Dad ever having to bring in an expert from the outside to do a job for us. He always seemed to figure out what needed to be done and how to do it. When I say everything, I mean everything. We built and rebuilt greens, bunkers, tee boxes, even cart paths. There was nothing we didn't attempt to do on the golf course, and the majority of the time it was done right, thanks to my father.

Dad left Wildwood at the age of 65 in 1990, but not because he was old and couldn't work any longer. I think he could see what was coming in the way of technology and didn't want to have any part of it. He decided it was a young man's game. He was more accustomed to a simple way of life.

Dad was a longtime member of the GCSAA and a lifetime member of the Kentuckiana GCSA and the Kentucky



**George Littrell proudly served his country during World War II as a member of the 884<sup>th</sup> Field Artillery Battalion in the 70<sup>th</sup> Division Trail Blazers.**

Turfgrass Council. During his 33 years as a superintendent he made many friends. These friends include all those whom worked for him, fellow superintendents, some golf course members and college professors. Dad cherished all these friendships.

I am reminded of a time just before Dad's passing when we took him to an appointment to have a brain scan. A device used for the purpose of locating a brain tumor was fitted to his head. It was like a grid that conformed to his head. The scan was completed and the cage taken off. As we were helping Dad to his feet, he asked, "Hey Doc, do you think I can go back to work in the spring?"

Right up to the end of his life Dad was still working. He was a landscaper and groundskeeper for a factory in Bowling Green. Dad was 84 years young at the time and very much looking forward to going back to work. He loved his job and the people he worked for. But God had a different plan for Dad, a man who had worked hard his entire life. God called him home to rest with him in February of 2010.

*Continued on page 36*

# The Superintendents Have Spoken!

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“*Golfdom* is always current. I like the way they have articles that are discussed amongst the superintendent community and, quite often, *Golfdom* is ahead of the information curve.”

— *Dave Coote, Wood Ranch Golf Club, Simi Valley, Calif.*



“*Golfdom* does a wonderful job of covering the stories that no other publication covers. There is a lot of great information in *Golfdom* that you just cannot find in other magazines.”

— *Jason Busch, Powder Horn Ranch Golf Course, Sheridan, Wyo.*



“The staff is fantastic, and in general it's a very good read—not just for superintendents, but for owners and GMs and board members, the information is relevant for all parties involved in a golf course.”

— *Brian Anderson, Nemacolin Woodlands Resort, Ohio, Pa.*



“*Golfdom* is always on the cutting edge in research and has great articles that both turf scientists and groundworkers can read and understand.”

— *Robert Carey, Spring Brook Country Club, Morristown, N.J.*



“The best thing about *Golfdom* is information we get on the political issues as well as the technical issues we are being faced with. Also, the State of the Industry Report is huge for us; we have to know where we are headed and what the future holds.”

— *Mark Burchfield, Victoria Club, Riverside, Calif.*



“People don't realize the longevity, how many years *Golfdom* has been in operation. They're a little more cutting edge, they speak more of the truth from what you hear in other magazines. *Golfdom* tells it how it is and isn't afraid to cover the issues.”

— *Joseph Hubbard, Broken Sound Club, Boca Raton, Fla.*

## Golfdom



Left to right, Tony Littrell, CGCS at Midland Trail Golf Club, Louisville, Ky.; David Littrell, author of the story and superintendent at Iroquois GC in Louisville; George Littrell, longtime superintendent at Wildwood CC before retiring in 1990; and Bobby Littrell, superintendent at Long Run GC, Louisville.

*Continued from page 34*

### **Father, mentor, friend**

At the time I am writing this Dad has been with the Lord for two years and two months, and boy do we miss him. Not just because he was our father — he also was a mentor and a friend. Dad had a way about him. The people who knew him were blessed to have known him. And those who never knew him knew of him.

Now it is up to us, his sons, to carry on Dad's proud legacy. Bobby is the oldest of us and has had the most adventure-filled career. He is currently employed with Louisville Metro Government as its Senior Golf Operations Supervisor II. Now in his second year on the job there, Bobby is in charge of Long Run Golf Course, located in the east end of the county. It's the second course that Bobby has headed up for Metro. He was previously at Charlie Vettiner GC, also in the east end.

Bobby is more mechanically inclined than my brother Tony and me, and he has a longstanding love for invention.

Tony, the middle brother, has worked at Midland Trail Golf Club since 1978. You might consider Tony the brains of the operation. He is the only one of us three who has taken the time to become a GCSAA-certified superintendent, an achievement he has held for more than 25 years.

Being the youngest of the three brothers, I've spent several years of my career

working with and for family. I also am currently employed by Louisville Metro Government as a Senior Golf Operations Supervisor II. My course is Iroquois, located in the south end of the county. I have worked in this position for nearly 10 years. I would consider myself to be the problem solver of the three.

If you combine all of the years of experience between Dad, Bobby, Tony and myself, we tally a staggering total of 172-plus years in the golf course maintenance game. I don't think there are too many families who can claim such an accomplishment.

I hope everyone enjoyed reading about my father, my mentor, my friend and my hero. I wish you all could have known him! Happy Father's Day to all of you, and to all of your dads. ■

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*David L. Littrell is the senior golf operations supervisor at Iroquois Golf Course in Louisville, Ky.*

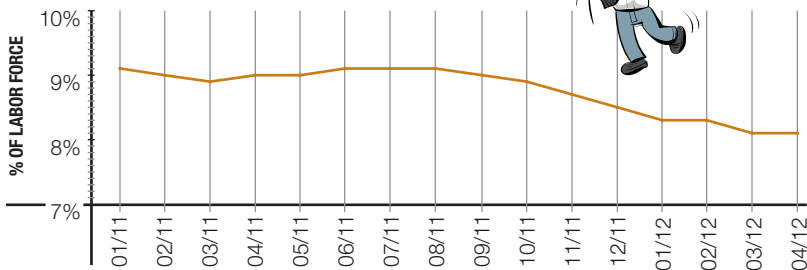
# Around the Web

ALL JUST A CLICK AWAY



## UNEMPLOYMENT RATE

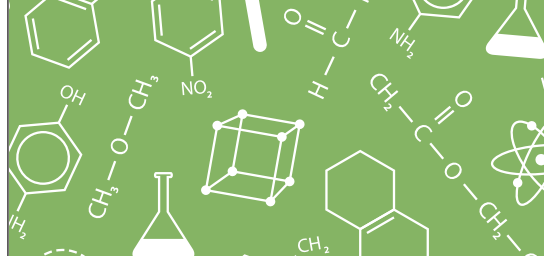
The national unemployment rate since January 2011.



**Low, last 10 years: 4.4**, October and December 2006, March and May 2007

**High, last 10 years: 10.0**, October 2009

Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics



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By Allan Dufoe | FMC

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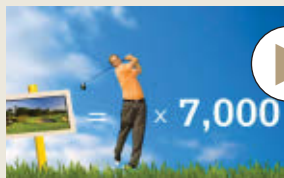
Allan Dufoe is the Northeast Market Specialist for FMC Professional Solutions.



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## MUST SEE VIDEOS



### LIVE ON TURFGRASS

From BASF TurfTalk, an informational video about the benefits of turfgrass — including the fact that an average 18-hole golf course provides enough oxygen for 7,000 people.  
<http://tinyurl.com/cmnofq5>



### MARK LANGNER ON SHOP FIRE

FarmLinks' director of agronomy discusses surviving without a maintenance shop and the support he received from area suppliers following the destructive fire at FarmLinks.  
<http://www.golfdom.com/golfdom-tv>



### SEEDHEAD BREAKTHROUGH

Cornell's Frank Rossi discusses what happens when annual bluegrass seedhead eventually breaks through, and a few tips for the best way to handle greens at this time.  
<http://tinyurl.com/bnbaayk>

## TOP TWEETS

**Nathan Peters**

**@BurlOaksGCTurf:**

Vented, topdressed, hand broom, rolled and mowed greens before noon today. Guys were working hard today.



**John (@grassgoober):**

Trying to start my morning without caffeine was the dumbest idea I've had.  
#givemeadew



**Bob Potter**

**(@HiawathaTurf):**

Just saw our resident coyote run thru the course. For the second time today. Crazy for the middle of a metro area.

# Clark Talks Turf

■ TIMELY TURF ADVICE



## → Is 2012 a Good Year for Nematodes?

Billy Crow, Ph.D., is an associate professor of landscape nematology at the University of Florida–Gainesville and conducts research on managing nematodes on golf courses, including evaluation of nematode control products. He can be reached at [wtrc@ufl.edu](mailto:wtrc@ufl.edu).

### Q What is the level of nematode activity so far this year in Florida?

So far the level of nematode activity is higher this year in Florida and in other coastal states due to the mild winter. Soil temperature didn't drop much and nematodes stayed active over the winter. As the bermudagrass started to grow this spring the nematodes were active and started to feed on the roots. Sting nematode is the most damaging species to turfgrass that we observe in our work in Florida.

We observe more nematode damage on ultradwarf bermudagrass cultivars than older cultivars such as Tifdwarf. The ultradwarfs naturally have less root mass than Tifdwarf to start with and are mowed lower than Tifdwarf, which results in fewer roots. So when nematodes start to attack roots, the ultradwarfs suffer more damage than the older bermudagrass greens cultivars.

### Q Are you seeing more nematode activity across the country?

Unfortunately, yes. As ultradwarf bermudagrass greens are being planted in the transition zone the sting nematode is being spread to new locations where it doesn't occur naturally. Sting nema-

todes thrive in the sand root zone of a putting green, so once sting nematodes are carried along with the ultradwarf bermudagrass sprigs, it is only a matter of time until they start to damage the grass. I am also receiving reports of root knot nematode becoming more of a problem on ultradwarf greens in Florida and as far west as California.

“So far the level of nematode activity is higher this year in Florida and in other coastal states due to the mild winter.”

### Q What cultural practices do you recommend to reduce nematode damage?

Raise the mowing height. This is especially helpful on greens. By increasing the mowing height, the bermudagrass will produce more roots and the turfgrass plants will be able to better withstand the nematode feeding. Alleviate as much stress on the turfgrass as possible. Stimulate microbial activity in the rootzone by using organic fertilizers or compost teas or applying microbes. Stimulating microbial activity overall will help suppress nematodes.

Please notice I said suppress nematodes. Stimulating microbial activity

may help in some, but not all cases. The results are highly variable but it is worth a try to stimulate the soil microorganisms.

### Q What chemical control options are available for nematodes?

For all chemical nematode control products check to make sure the product is labeled for use in your state and your specific location within that state. Each product has unique directions to use the product effectively. Make sure you read, understand and follow all the directions to achieve the maximum performance from the product.

Curfew (Dow AgroSciences), Nor-tica (Bayer Environmental Science), Avid (Syngenta) and Multiguard Protect (AgriGuard) are all labeled for use to control nematodes in certain locations and all have performed well. Application timing is critical to achieving effective control with these products.

There are several other nematicides for turf that are under development.

### Q Is there anything else you would like to add?

Consistent, long-term nematode management must be based on a multi-prong IPM approach that incorporates species and cultivar selection, sound cultural practices and the use of chemical controls. None of these prongs is a silver bullet by itself. All must be used as part of an IPM plan to successfully manage nematodes. We are currently developing comprehensive nematode managing programs and look forward to sharing those with the golf industry.

Clark Throssell, Ph.D., loves to talk turf. He can be reached at [clarkthrossell@bresnan.net](mailto:clarkthrossell@bresnan.net).



# The Company Line

NEW PRODUCTS FOR SUPERINTENDENTS



## Redesigned Website

**Syngenta** has redesigned its GreenCast online product information and support website. These changes will help turf professionals stay up-to-date on current trends and agronomic developments while deepening their understanding of the breadth of Syngenta's product portfolio and technical expertise. Located at [www.greencastonline.com](http://www.greencastonline.com), GreenCast features: quick access to agronomic tools; product portfolios, including labels, and MSDS; multi-media resources; agronomic and news updates; weather tools; and online learning modules.

[Greencastonline.com](http://Greencastonline.com)

## Safety App

**Predictive Solutions** says its SafetyNet app for Android is now available for download on Google Play. Existing Predictive Solutions customers can install the app on their Android phones or tablets and use it to collect their workplace safety observations. SafetyNet is a safety software solution that automates the collection of workplace safety data and performs advanced and predictive analytics to identify trends that can affect workers' safety. With their highest risk areas identified by SafetyNet, customers can predict where injuries are likely to occur and then proactively prevent them. SafetyNet is also available on most BlackBerry devices and is available for download on the App Store for the iPhone, iPad and iPod touch.

[Predictivesolutions.com](http://Predictivesolutions.com)



## Redesigned Website

**Ryan** has launched a completely redesigned website for the Ryan brand, [www.ryanturf.com](http://www.ryanturf.com). The site makes it easier for customers to find the products they need. Ryan has added more images, interactive product demos, videos, detailed product specifications, and new accessories information to help customers be more productive with their Ryan equipment. In addition, the Ryan Dealer Locator is easy to use, a new financing page highlights current retail financing options and special promotions are noted prominently to inform visitors of deals.

[Ryanturf.com](http://Ryanturf.com)

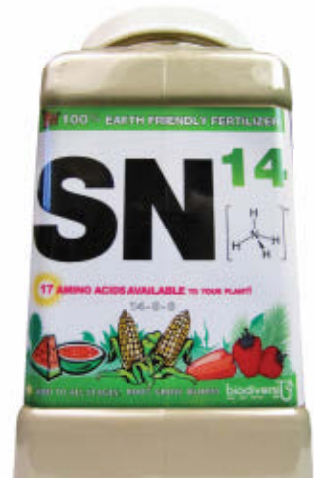
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## The 19th Hole with...

# Jeff Danaher

Superintendent, Aurora Hills GC, Aurora, Colo.

**I'll order a Captain and Sprite.** Try it, you'll have one again, I promise you.

**I got rid of my Harley two years ago.** I've had motorcycles since before I had a peddle bike. That was my third Harley, my wife had a little Harley Sportster then as well. We went everywhere from Sturgis to Dallas to Las Vegas.

**I was having way too much fun.** But part of it was life preservation. I love my daughter, and I want to be alive for her for a few more years. The shenanigans that the cars pull... It's almost to the point where people aim for you. There's been three motorcycle accidents in the past week in the Denver news. People just don't watch anymore.

**I'm leaving Friday morning to go to the lake house.** It's in Lake McConaughy, Neb., three hours door to door. It's a memory-maker. We have campfires, we spend hours and hours water skiing and tubing, fishing and swimming. My wife calls it her little slice of heaven.

**I like everything from AC/DC to Pantera, Disturbed, Linkin Park.** But if I had to pick one artist, it would be Jimmy Buffet.

**Several years ago I saw two nights of Pearl Jam at Red Rocks.** The second night was all acoustic, Eddie Vedder just sat on the stage with his legs dangling down, and they just rocked for three hours.

**I've been married to my wife 28 years, Juli.** We started dating as sophomores in high school. My daughter Jennifer is



16, plays competitive soccer, is an honor student and works two jobs, God bless her.

**LoDo (lower downtown Denver) is an absolute blast.** There's a little bar right by Coors Field called the Giggling Grizzly. Before the game I'll get a Buffalo burger. And after the game, you can get discounted cocktails. The whole atmosphere turns from a restaurant to a hootin' and hollerin' bar.

**The people I run around with, we like to go off the beaten path.** Greasy spoons and tiny bars is where you have the most fun. Everyone gets stuck on the big names — Breckenridge Brewery, Coyote Ugly, The Celtic Tavern...

**...OK, the Celtic Tavern is really pretty awesome, actually.**

As interviewed by Seth Jones, May 16th, 2012.