



WINTERLUDE

By Monroe S. Miller

I don't remember where I first read this word - Winterlude - but it has remained with me for years. I like it not only for its pleasant and relaxed sound, but also because it probably better describes than any other word could this season we are now in. I think all Golf Course Superintendents not only like but really need the break winter gives us. We can, briefly at least, return to some normality.

How many times in your career, even if it's a career in its juvenile stages, have you been asked, "What do you do all winter?" Years past I actually tried to explain to those inquisitive folks the work that needed to be done in the cold months of winter to keep a golf course running in the warmer months of spring, summer and autumn. Seldom did I get more than barely started before they were off in another direction. Most really don't care. So nowadays I tell people, "We play euchre during most of the weeks, spend a lot of time in Florida, and draw unemployment when we've tired of card games."

If you were to ask Cheryl Miller about my job in July, she likely will say to you, "It's a mistake he's never overcome." But ask her the same question in winter and she'll probably tell you I've got the best job in the world. We have little choice on our golf courses during the season but to put forth any and all time required to get the job done. Usually that means long days for all seven days in a week. But when winter comes, it is oh so nice to work normal hours and lead a normal life. It's during the winterlude that you realize this business of managing a golf course is a way of life, one to which you become accustomed. It is also during winterlude that you remind yourself that it is a good way of life, too.

Wayne Otto put it in perspective several years ago when he told me, "They ought to give us all our salary in June, July, and August—that's when you really earn it." Wayne is right. I always heard from Peter Miller, in my youthful years on a golf course, that

there were 100 absolutely miserable days on a golf course, days when you cannot convince yourself that the job is enjoyable. Challenging? Maybe. Enjoyable? No way. But Pete always pointed out that the salvation was the couple of months in the winter when you could do the things everyone else does and maybe a few more besides.

For those of us who are still young(!) and have children in school, our profession gives us room to go to school for conferences, plays, concerts and any of the many other activities our children are involved with, **even** if those events are during working hours. I've gone to some and been one of only a handful of fathers there. Being able to do this somehow assuages the guilt we feel from not being with our kids as much as we should during the other seasons.

The winter holidays, those that **aren't** forgotten, give wonderful opportunity for celebration. In our house, planning for Christmas reaches nearly absurd proportions. All in our family love it, and my profession gives us time to celebrate like we want. Same for Thanksgiving.

And quite frankly, we have all learned to really enjoy winter vacations. Those anxious trips to the southland fill us with great anticipation. The warm weather of Georgia and Florida is incredibly welcome in January, just like a cool day in July is welcome at that time. We go nearly every year and never tire of it. Not everyone has a profession that allows this kind of freedom in the winter. It makes up for not ever having the luxury of leaving our golf courses during the summer vacation months.

Winter, in our home, lets us do almost everything on a schedule again. Among the things Cheryl and I like most about our winter schedule is evening coffee. Now that I'm a "Mr. Mom" and have serious responsibilities in preparing our dinner, habits have evolved that I seldom allow to change in the winter. Cher gets home

from her job at 6:20. Just before the dinner hour I build a fire in the fireplace. After we have eaten, cleaned the table and sent the kids to their rooms to study, she and I love to sit in front of the fire with a big steaming cup of freshly brewed coffee. One of my favorite poems was written by an 18th century author, William Cowper. In his immortal poem "The Winter Evening", he wrote what we feel:

*Now stir the fire,
and close the shutters fast,
Let fall the curtains,
wheel the sofa round,
And, while the bubbling and loud-
hissing urn
Throws up a steamy column,
and the cups,
That cheer but not inebriate,
wait on each,
So let us welcome peaceful ev'ning in.*

I drink coffee whenever I feel like it, which is frequently during every day. But it tastes so much better in winter, by a fire with my sweetheart. Winterlude makes it so.

Should I be given a quarter for every time I've visited my favorite spot in the last 15 years at Blackhawk Country Club, I could take a long and extravagant trip around the world. But seldom do I go there in the winter months—no need to. This seasonal interlude offers endless other opportunities for solitude. I believe, as I believe practically nothing else about our profession, that one of a Golf Course Superintendent's greatest needs is for occasional solitude. We need time for contemplation about our work and our goals. We should take time to listen, undistracted, to that inner voice that so seldom gets the chance to be heard, especially during the months from March through November. In the wintertime those times are easier to find.

Our lives for so many days of the year are dictated by the demands of the golf courses we manage. That's okay, understandable, acceptable. But it also is wearisome. By the end of

November I'm tired of those structured demands, of the unforgivingness of impulse. I like Christopher Morley's words from "John Mistletoe". They could have been written for us:

If there is any appalling and spiritually murderous sensation on earth, it is the knowledge that on a certain date or at a given time and place you have got to be somewhere doing some set, prescribed, definite thing. This winter we shall keep our horizon perfectly, crystallinely open, ready every day for the scouring gales of impulse.

We spend our whole working time trying to change and improve our golf courses. But no more can be done for them for awhile. This is a good time to take pleasure in the changes we have wrought and to think of what remains undone. The beauty of this time is that all future changes and improvements are still possible as we plan without burden of reality.

The golf course is lovely and peaceful now, seemingly in need of this time as much as we are. Although the year turns slowly on its axis, the geese will soon fly north, the crocuses will bloom and patches of green will be peeking through the snow. Use these days in the best way—Enjoy!

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Butte des Morts Country Club Hosts Seminar On Wheels

By Scott Johnson

Steve Schmidt, Golf Course Superintendent at Butte des Morts Country Club in Appleton, served as host to a stop on the 16th Annual "Agriculture Seminar on Wheels", October 12. "Seminar on Wheels", sponsored by Wisconsin Farm Progress Days Inc., provides the opportunity for junior and high school counselors to learn about careers and opportunities in agriculturally related businesses. While at Butte des Morts, the group of 25 counselors learned from Steve the duties of a golf course superintendent, career paths, and opportunities for young people in the industry. Steve also gave the group a brief tour of the facilities and literature about the industry for the counselors to take back to their career files for students. Following Steve's presentation, the group had lunch at the Club before continuing their tour. The visit to Butte des Morts was part of the first day of a three day program which toured businesses in east central Wisconsin. Other stops included places such as Lied's Nursery, Chief Implement, Pillsbury-Green Giant, 21st Century Genetics, Hillshire Farms, Knigges's Guernsey Farm, Flanigan Brothers Kraut, Navarino Wildlife Area, Wayne Feeds, and Fox Valley Technical Institute.

"Agribusiness Seminar on Wheels" rotates to a different area of the state each year with all expenses for participants covered by Wisconsin Farm Progress Days Inc. Planning and coordination is done as a joint project of Farm Progress Days, the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences at UW-



Madison, the Colleges of Agriculture at UW-Platteville and UW-River Falls, UW-Extension, and the Agribusiness division of the Wisconsin Vocational Adult and Technical Education System. This was the first time a stop at a golf course was included in the tour; however, because of the interest generated efforts will be made to include similar stops in future tours. The goal of "Seminar on Wheels" is to allow school counselors to gain a greater appreciation of careers relating to agribusiness and natural resources through on-site visits to employers. Participants are encouraged to take the knowledge they gain back to their colleagues and students. Counselors can also gain continuing education credits that may be applied towards the renewal of their teaching certification.

The sponsors of "Seminar on Wheels" wish to thank Steve Schmidt for his fine presentation, the Country Club staff at Butte des Morts for opening on a normally closed day for lunch, and Monroe Miller of Blackhawk Country Club in Madison for his help in identifying a convenient location for the 1987 "Seminar on Wheels". We look forward to working with this association next year as "Seminar on Wheels" moves to Southeast Wisconsin.

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