

# A Somber Time

By Monroe S. Miller

So much of what goes on in our lives these days pales in significance when compared to all that is happening in the Middle East.

There are a few who argue there isn't such a thing as a good war. This one we are now engaged in is about as close as you'll come to one, from my view.

The fighting isn't about oil or invasions or Palestinians. It is about a horrible person who has to be stopped right now. Sometimes we have to do things like we are now doing.

So I am in full support of President Bush and our military leaders. And I'm really proud of the brave soldiers who are serving there.

Where I live, we're subjected to the rantings of some old, worn out hippies of my generation who are trying to relive the days of the war I had to serve in during the 1960s. They are pretty much being ignored. Frankly, I think they ought to hang their empty heads in shame.

My thoughts are with those so far from home, working to do what is right. So I send prayers for a safe return, advice to keep their heads down, and respect reserved for very few others. When they come home, the applause for them will be deafening.

It's pretty hard not to sense that spring is in the air. Warm and moist air is doing its darnedest to return to Wisconsin, despite the cold air that still has a relatively strong grip.

These opposing forces undoubtedly account for the windy days we have, as well as the wildly variable weather. You know, melt water on low fairways one day and brutal cold the next.

Like a lot of others, I am beginning to feel like Rob Schultz felt two months ago when he closed his SPORTS PAGE article with "The golf season starts again in Wisconsin in four months. I can't wait." Now we can measure the wait for opening day in weeks.

Suddenly, I'm ready for winter to end. The blue moon of the last day of 1990 and the white snow of the last few months interest me little; I'd rather see some green grass and pink blossoms.

And with the obviously longer days, green grass is only around the corner. We will have over 1½ hours more daylight at March's end than we have now at its beginning. The average daily temperature will rise by a good 11 degrees F.

After that we see April, a month we know belongs to golfers. After a long winter pretty much indoors, these people are enticed by the warmer temperatures to the places where we work. Gosh, it's good to see them again! Even the ornery of the ornery is in good spirits in April.

Well, most of the time in April.

There's never a lack of bad news when it comes to taxes in our state.

Lo and behold—the bad news continues. *MONEY* magazine's January issue again listed Wisconsin as a "tax hell" We have the dubious distinction of ranking No. 4 in the unfavorable category in terms of the tax burden on families.

Washington, D.C. was first, followed by New York and Massachusetts. After Wisconsin came Maryland at fifth. Bringing up the last five in the top ten were Hawaii, Utah, Idaho, Minnesota and North Carolina.

And the rankings didn't even include property taxes! I wonder if that little item had been factored in where we would have ranked?

A typical family income of Wisconsin pays \$5,494 per year in taxes.

Of course, the bureaucrats and politicians came crawling out of the woodwork whining about how unfair such a categorization is.

B.S.—facts are facts. And one very evident fact about this state is that the taxes are too damn high.

Remember this the next time an election rolls around and you decide

not to vote because the line at the poll is too long and you don't want to wait for 15 or 20 minutes.

That wait could be time well spent.

There was an interesting essay in the Monday, December 31, 1990 issue of the New York Times. It was a piece written by a gent named Stewart Edelstein in which he proposed a major overhaul in the calendar we now use.

I was especially interested because of the impact Stewart's proposal would have on the golf season life of a golf course superintendent.

"The calendar is an arbitrary clustering of days," he said. "It's a human invention. . . There is no reason to have 28 days in one month and 31 days in another month. What sense does that make?"

He proposed that each month be made up of four weeks that alternate between seven and eight days. That way there would be two three-day weekends each month, and our current holidays could be scheduled on those extra days.

If you do the arithmetic, you'll discover Edelstein's new calendar only adds up to 360 days. He solves that by calling for a five-day holiday at the end of the year.

"Hang on, there are other problems," you'll say.

Right you are. With 24 three-day weekends and five holidays, each year in this calendar gives us the equivalent of 29 holidays, far more than most employers currently allow. Stew would have employees make up the extra time by working one extra hour three days a week.

"By staggering the extra hour, we could reduce traffic jams and auto pollution," he said.

I'm not so sure that all of his proposals don't add up to just about as much confusion as the calendar we now have.

And although some aspects of it are appealing, can you imagine having a three day weekend every other week? It would be a golfer's dream come true—imagine the events—and a superintendent's nightmare—simultaneous two weekends a month.

Assuming an eight month golf season, that means we would face 16 three-day weekends. In a geographic

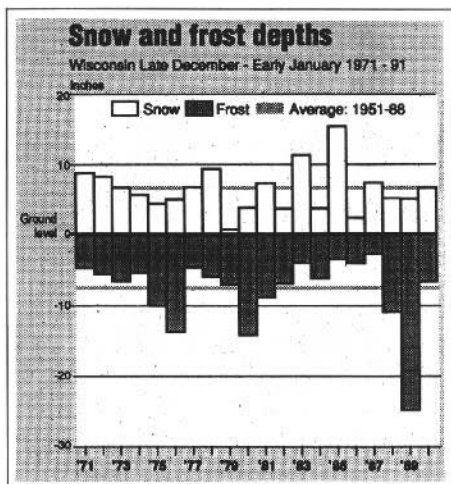
(Continued on page 9)

(Continued from page 7)

region where golf is almost never played (seriously) at the end of the year, we'd be in a perfect position to accept the five-day holiday at the end of the year. I wonder what our colleagues in Florida and other southern states would do about five days of double time pay?

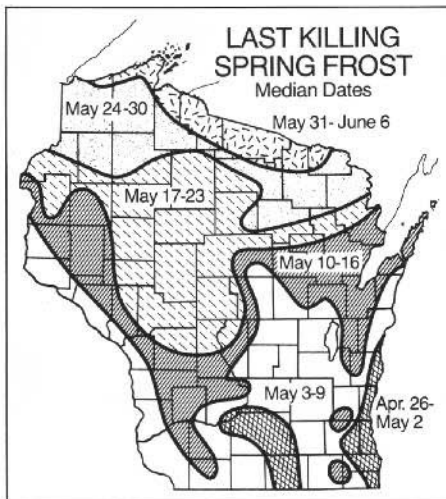
It is a safe bet that this calendar idea won't get much farther than the New York Times article. That may be best.

The Wisconsin Agricultural Statistics Service keeps track of some fascinating things, many of interest to us. The graph below shows the snow and frost depths for the past twenty years at mid-winter. Both appear somewhat "nor-



mal" for the 1990/1991 winter, a relief to nearly everyone. I've observed that golf course superintendents pretty much like normal weather.

For agriculturalists like us, the growing season traditionally begins after the last killing frost in the spring. From the Wisconsin State Climatologist Office comes the following graphic which shows when that median date for all of Wisconsin is. I'd love to map out, over a period of time, the correlation between the last killing frost and opening day. It would appear that opening day precedes the last frost by about a month.



# NATURAL ATHLETIC TURF INC.

GOLF COURSE RENOVATION & NEW CONSTRUCTION

*Specializing In*

Green & Tee Renovation/Rebuilding  
USGA & "Purr-Wick" Systems

**TERRA FLOW and Regular Drainage Systems**

**Also: ASTROTURF CH-4 "DRAG MATS"**

*By Contract or "T & M" Basis*

**ROY G. ZEHREN**

11040 N. Buntrock Ave.  
Mequon, WI 53092

**(414) 242-5740**

## Robert Schmidt Receives NOR-AM Scholarship

John Turner, sales representative for NOR-AM Chemical Company, presented Robert Schmidt a \$1,000.00 scholarship at the Wisconsin Turfgrass Association Winter Conference held in Oconomowoc on January 8, 1991. Schmidt, a senior in turfgrass management at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, was recognized for his leadership and academic achievement. The annual scholarship assists turfgrass students in meeting their educational needs.



Bob Schmidt (L) accepts NOR-AM Scholarship from John Turner.