



Is It Time to Leave the Pfister?

By Monroe S. Miller

What a terrible question for a traditional, cautious Wisconsin born and educated golf course superintendent to ask.

The Pfister has been home to the Wisconsin Golf Turf Symposium for all but a couple of its 26 meetings. The meeting and the meeting place have been hand in hand so often that to suggest, or even mention, a change of venue seems a near sacrilege.

I attended, years ago, one of those meetings not held at the Pfister Hotel. The Marc Plaza was adequate, but it wasn't the same as the Pfister. It wasn't acceptable. Fortunately, we haven't returned there.

The Pfister is a traditional kind of place and offers an ambience you'll never see in newer facilities. It has also been an excellent place to spend the night. The tower rooms have been reasonably affordable and comfortable. The hotel stay for the Symposium was almost a visit to the past. It was enjoyable.

The meeting room we have always used is perfectly sized, also comfortable and very suitable for our meeting needs.

The banquet facilities have worked for us, too. The Old English Room provides the perfect setting for the speaker dinner on the eve of the meeting itself.

For those staying at the Pfister and for most of those driving to the Symposium each day, the hotel provided parking. It was easy, convenient, safe and enclosed.

The downtown location has been a plus, to my notion. Great restaurants, the Grand Avenue Mall, some great bookstores and a generally secure setting made the trip to the Symposium a little bit special.

Although Cheryl and I have never been able to do it, spouses of some attending the meeting have come along to enjoy Milwaukee for a day and a half.

I am, however, starting to question my affection for the Pfister as a meeting place for the Symposium.

Fast changing conditions in Milwaukee specifically and society generally have precipitated the question in the title: "is it time to leave the Pfister and downtown Milwaukee?"

As soon as I arrived on Monday afternoon I was greeted by the headline of the *Milwaukee Sentinel*: "Six killings push city murder toll to 146." I thought maybe I was in Detroit or Houston or Chicago. But Milwaukee?

Wisconsin's largest city just isn't safe anymore. The downtown area, which for so long has been inviting, now sends shivers up my spine. I find I am not alone in that feeling, either.

A walk from the hotel to a restaurant, by myself, brought me harassment from a miserable looking panhandler who lowered his request from "a couple of bucks" down to a quarter. When he realized I wasn't going to donate to a bum, he started shouting. An incident such as this one is a bad moon on the rise. The next beggar might have a weapon.

The Pfister is slipping a little bit, too. Parking, provided as recently as last year to registered guests, is now \$8 a day.

The room was overpriced and not especially clean. The sound system in the meeting room still doesn't work, and other audio/visual aids failed.

And I'd love to know how much the two cold sandwiches and potato salad served at the noon luncheon cost. My guess is they were probably priced over the \$4.95 the meal was really worth.

Put all these negatives together just after the meeting and the title question doesn't seem so outrageous.

Forced to answer "yes" or "no" to my own question, I am not certain how I would answer at this moment. And I don't have an alternative to offer, either.

But I do believe the Symposium committee needs to make this issue a part of the planning process for 1992.

It would be a shame to wait until someone is hurt to decide that "yes, now is finally the time to put history and tradition by the way and leave the Pfister."



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