



The Shop—Home Away From Home

By Monroe S. Miller

There is no place quite like it. For me and a lot of my friends who are golf course superintendents, there aren't too many other places we'd rather be than in our own golf course shops.

A shop certainly doesn't compare with home or the golf course itself. But on the other hand, it is much better than "the office" so many people work in. It is rarely that I say to Cheryl, "I'm going over to the office."

Ah, the shop. Why is it we all like these places so much? Why are we so interested in them?

What inspired Bob Erdahl to write so many thousands of words about Wisconsin golf course shops? Could he have done that if his shop was no more than a 10' X 10' office?

I doubt it. These places, where we spend nearly as much time as we do on the golf course, have some universal appeal that nearly everyone who has ever been a golf course superintendent can relate to and appreciate.

This will probably get me crucified, but one well of appeal as far as I am concerned is that the shop is a man's place.

As a rule, shops are big; they have lots of room to move around in, room you do not find at home or that your neighbor cannot find at his office.

A shop is filled with all sorts of things men like, things like machinery and tractors. Shops are loaded with tools—wrenches and table saws, drill presses and compressors. They have everything the world's most serious handyman would love to own and cannot because of space and money limitations. And aren't we lucky because we know how to use them all. Whether you know it or not, your shop is the envy of neighbors and friends and family!

A shop is a place where you can go and be yourself—no false airs necessary. If you rap your knuckles, you can go ahead and say whatever words come out! You can play the radio as loud as you like and listen to whatever station or cassette tape your heart desires. You can't do that at home, and your

neighbor cannot do that in the bank where he works.

Most golf course shops are comfortable to us because they are symbolic of a corner of the world we control, a place that is ours. Shops usually, in fact, are a reflection of the golf course superintendent himself. If it is neat and clean and organized, chances are pretty good that the golf course is also. "Well run shop equals well run golf course" is a truism more often than not.

One is almost always comfortable in a place he is familiar with, and the amount of time spent in the shop surely leads to familiarity.

For some of us, a shop and its significance in our life goes back to youth. I quite agree with Bob Erdahl and his survey observations about the many dairy barns used for years as golf course shops; his comments addressed their inadequacy for this alternative use. He's right, of course.

But at least part of why I like the shop and like being in it is because I had the same feeling about the dairy barns on our family farm. When I was a kid, a lot of hours—free hours—were whiled away in one of those barns.

A lot of other hours were spent in those barns working, just as in my shop of today. A dairy barn was really busy twice a day—milking time in the morn-

ing and in the evening. A shop has its peaks, too.

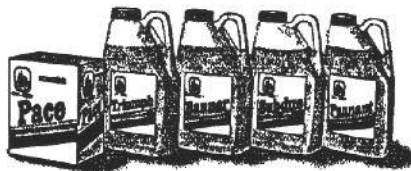
The barns I grew up with had a key feature every shop has—a radio. Granted, back then it was an old dusty bakelite tube radio that went on when the light switch was turned on, and not a new, small AM/FM Cassette model like we now have. Even today, I like the Philco radio better than a Sony.

In those days the programs I most liked didn't have much music—Gunsmoke, the Jack Benny Program, The Lone Ranger or Dragnet. Our barn was where I went to listen to Wisconsin football games in the fall; the Badger basketball games in the winter.

Listening to the "television of the mind" created images of news reporters and commentators not seen on television in the 1950s. Often the best way to spend a quiet, lazy summer Sunday afternoon was in the barn listening to the great Milwaukee Braves and imagining the heroics of Adcock, Aaron, Mathews, Spahn, Burdette, Burton and the rest of that great team. Nowadays, I might find an assistant waxing his car in the shade of the shop on a summer Sunday afternoon, listening to the Brewers on the radio. Different time, different players, same script.

A barn had many other familiar sounds; its residents provided the most

How to Keep Things From Turning Ugly.



From nutsedge to nightshade,
fire ants to fungi, nobody works
harder to protect your turf and
ornaments than Ciba-Geigy.

For All Your Turf and Ornaments Needs See...

Don Spier
Marketing Specialist
10 Devine Way
Sycamore, Illinois 60178
(815) 895-7860



CIBA-GEIGY

familiar. The sound was a comfortable blend of cows and calves, cats and sometimes kids. You could hear the cows' rhythmic chewing of hay, the clatter and bang of stantions, and the steady pulse of the milking machines at milking time. They were all very comforting.

Stop and listen closely in your shop sometime. You will find, as I have, that it has a chorus of sounds found nowhere else—laughter, greensmowers, a compressor, clanging wrenches and the big furnace blast. Every shop has creaking doors and pipes that rattle. I'll bet those sounds that you know are peculiar to your own shop and probably reassuring and comfortable to you.

All three of my daughters have, on innumerable occasions, commented on the smell of the shop.

Often I stop at the shop on the way home from church in the winter and run in to make certain the furnace is working or to pick up something from my office. It usually only takes me a couple of minutes.

But the instant I get back into the car and close the door, one of the girls pipes up with "you smell like the shop!"

They do not imply it is a bad smell, just distinctive. In fact, when Christie comes into the shop with me, she frequently stops as soon as she is in the door, draws a deep breath and lets it out slowly and says, "Boy, I like the smell of the shop, Dad."

It is a difficult aroma to describe—a mixture of gas, oil, machines, fertilizer and paint, I guess.

Whatever it is, that smell will be with her forever. The smell of a dairy barn will be with me forever, distinctive and pleasant. I liked it—an aroma of animals, hay, feed and wood. And, like Christie, I also love the way my shop smells.

Unfortunately, the modern shops of today are looking more and more alike. Almost all of us build rectangular metal buildings. Pretty boring architecture.

Architecture is another one of those things I love about rural Wisconsin barns. I was really lucky when young because I had an uncle whose farm had a round barn. What a unique and fascinating building that was.

Bob Erdahl and Carl Grassl are in situations that required their new shops NOT look like most of ours do. I readily admit I'm jealous. Their buildings have a style and shape that set them apart, just the way Wisconsin barns used to be.

The only two characteristics of a Wisconsin dairy barn that I was able to design into our shop during its planning

were a loft and a site that was dug into a hillside.

Most barns had the better part of three sides into a hill, leaving one side exposed. It was a practical design for a couple of reasons. This feature let you drive implements into the hay mow area at a ground level, which in turn made the unloading of hay and grain a lot easier. It also let you use that drive for equipment storage for part of the year.

A barn built into the hillside meant, for practical purposes, that the milking was done in an exposed basement. This made for a very warm parlor in the winter and a very cool one in the summertime.

The other old time feature my shop has is a loft, albeit a partial one.

A barn loft was one of the greatest places on a farm. It was a great cathedral kind of place; you had to tip your head way back to see the peak. Light streaming in through cracks between the boards created an eerie atmosphere at times.

When the loft was full a hay you could climb to the very top and rest against a roof rafter and touch the ridgepole. A look down the ladder/haychute into the lower barn scared the living bejesus out of a kid. We would knock off wasps' nest, scare the pigeons out and dangle our feet over the edge of the stacked bales of hay.

So I was able to get a partial loft built into our new shop. It is weak in comparison to a barn loft, but a fairly rea-

sonable compromise. The guys who spend many winter hours there like it a whole lot—it's warm, cozy and somewhat isolated. It is kind of quiet—a wonderful workplace when you need some solitude.

Those who concern themselves with status, whatever that really is, prefer to call the shop by some other name. I've always found that curious, but never as much as when I overheard two club directors in a conversation. One is a lawyer; the other is an accountant.

The attorney asked the CPA something about "his shop". My ears immediately perked up.

"What in the world are they talking about?", I wondered, nearly aloud.

He used "shop" a couple of other times and I finally figured out that what he meant was "office"!

Some of our guys are avoiding the word "shop" and here were two other professionals using the same word, very comfortably.

Fact is, neither a law office nor an accountant's office is a shop. They are too small, too clean, too quiet, too sterile, too restrictive, too boring, too sophisticated and too refined to ever qualify as a "shop". Nice try, but it doesn't work.

I'm the one who works in a shop, who relaxes in a shop, who even recreates in his shop. What a place—home away from home.

I think I'll head over there right now.

In Remembrance of

Karl Junginger

November 30, 1991

Karl was one of America's greatest plantsmen and spent his life's work at McKay Nursery. He was known for his generosity, his kindness and his intellect.

Those who knew him will miss him.