



Watching and Waiting

By Monroe S. Miller

That seems to best describe what many of us are doing as we stand on the threshold of another golf season in Wisconsin. Watching and waiting are, for me, harder to handle than the worst days of a bad summer. We cannot do much about what we see.

I'm anxiously watching the weather, wondering what kind of conditions await us. In our town, it was a miserable first half of winter - too much rain on frozen ground, too much melt water with nowhere to go, and frightening temperature drops. The water quickly became ice and we had twenty perfect skating rinks on top of our putting greens.

It seemed like I was back four years ago when even worse ice covered the course. A person could strap on his ice skates on our 7th tee and skate down to the 7th green, do some figure skating and return. That wasn't a pretty spring.

Matters were complicated because the rain and thaw and subsequent deep freeze of early January were followed by a foot of snow. It was too early to do anything, like remove the snow. And if that had been the choice, snow removal followed by ice melt (or removal) followed by snow replacement would have taken a lot of time. It surprises some to learn that we DON'T have a lot of time to do our winter work. To make that kind of sacrifice in terms of man hours requires some assurance of benefit.

In the winter in Wisconsin there is no guarantee of anything, including peaceful, quiet and worry-free days.

I've found myself watching and waiting a lot lately for the geese to return north. Although we are probably forty miles from the Horicon marsh, we still see hundreds of flocks each fall and early each spring.

As Aldo Leopold once said, "one swallow does not a summer make but a skein of geese heading north is spring."

While I was waiting for my flight to Anaheim and the GCSAA conference at the Minneapolis airport on January 24th, I noticed a lot of folks returning from the inauguration in Washington, D.C. It reminded me again that millions of Americans (like 57% of us who DIDN'T vote him) like me are watching Clinton and waiting for him to start keeping the promises he made during the election.

He was persistent in reminding George Bush of his promises of four years earlier. Clinton now has the responsibility of fulfilling those he made.

I can hardly wait for my middle class tax cut. All of us in the middle who are carrying the weight of too many deadbeats and losers and bureaucrats have earned that tax break. We expect it; he promised us. Gosh, I wonder how many extra sawbucks will be in my paycheck?

Won't it be interesting to see how Clinton and Gore are going to halve the deficit in four years? I mean, they promised in unequivocal terms. The long term prosperity of our country depends on it. And he did promise.

Our club has struggled with funding health insurance for its full-time employees, as have most small businesses. According to our new president and his shadow, those worries are over. He's going to implement health care reform (or is his wife going to?). He's promised to cap increases in medical costs and drug costs, to "pool" small businesses and form large groups which will lower insurance costs. "There will be universal claim forms," he says. Millions are waiting to see all these things happen.

I am waiting to see if he really passes legislation giving the U.S. stronger sanctions "if other nations refuse to play by our rules." We need this now.

He and Donna are going to reform welfare. They promised to allow only two years of free dole to able-bodied (vast majority) recipients. We really are waiting for this in Wisconsin, welfare haven for thousands of Illinois residents.

More cops, campaign finance reform, help for public schools (obviously a great concern of his since he placed his kid in an exclusive private school), and competing exams for students.

Some of us are watching with interest how the first act of business by the first draft dodger ever to be elected president dealt with the military and a controversial issue affecting them. Of course he has no idea of what is involved—when he should have been in the service like the rest of us able bodied were, he was protesting in Russia. Some are watching how tough it will be for him to send Americans into battle when he was afraid to go himself.

And so on and so on go the promises. He is going to be really busy keeping them.

Last year, when the economy seemed in trouble, our club tightened down on the finances. Happily, all department heads cooperated. We finished our fiscal 1992 golf course operation almost \$40,000 below the approved budget. This is what normal people do.

Today's *Wisconsin State Journal* had a headline that Clinton's plan is to "increase spending and increase taxes." First, that isn't what business is able to do. And second, I didn't hear any of that during the campaign.

Every sensible American hopes he succeeds. We are hoping, watching and waiting.

And remembering all the promises.

You'd laugh if it didn't make you so angry to watch. Apparently the Kuwaitis like golf as much as Americans do (would you call that gulf golf?).

At least the ruling Al-Sabah family does. They were playing golf and riding their thoroughbreds on the Kuwait Hunting and Equestrian Club and having a grand time. Oh, they didn't like the sand greens and the horses stirred up a lot of desert dust. But those were small problems compared to Saddam's invasion of two years ago.

The latest episode involving Hussein's violations of U.N. sanctions have put Kuwait at risk again.

And again, they were unable to protect themselves, so American troops were moved in. Part of the U.S. defense force brought along Patriot missile launchers to protect the Kuwaitis from Iraqi Scud missiles.

The GIs decided the best place to put the Patriots was on the KH&EC, the gulf golf course!

"I know national security is a priority, but this is another form of invasion," grumbled a 30-year old Kuwaiti who had become a golf aficionado while attending the University of Oregon.

He was, along with other players, not happy about losing six holes on the back 9 to the Patriots and the GIs. The holes were blocked off with concertina wire and six foot sand berms.

To add insult to injury, the Joes also took over the clubhouse for a mess hall and rec room! Oh, the trials of a gulf golfer!

Of course, if it is all that bad, the Kuwaitis could send us home and defend themselves.

I always take a little heat after a "real" superintendent feature appears. Heat like that, some will be sad to hear, is part of the fun and motivation for me. You've got to love it when you cast the line out and someone takes the bait, big time.

I especially love those comments from out-of-state readers. Many articles from *THE GRASS ROOTS* are reprinted in other chapter publications all across the country, and generate comment in those places, too.

Exceptionally rewarding is a nasty little note from someone who is too cowardly to sign his own name, if you can imagine. There is pleasure in

knowing a few words can be such a big burr under his saddle.

Anyway, the little man who wrote me a note recently complained the "real" pieces show I don't like change.

He'd probably be shocked to learn that he is partially correct. I do not believe that all changes, whether we're talking about golf turf management, higher education or society in general, are good. No one should be that naive.

Case in point: the *CQ Researcher*, a publication of the Washington, D.C.-based Congressional Quarterly, recently listed the top problems in the public schools as identified by teachers in 1940 and in 1990.

In 1940 the top problems were: talking out of turn, chewing gum, making noise, running in halls, cutting in line, dress code infractions and littering.

In 1990: drug abuse, alcohol abuse, pregnancy, suicide, rape, robbery and assault.

Obvious, to me at least, not all change is good. Remember, these are public school problems.

What a difference fifty years makes.

It is a pleasure to report on a Wisconsinite who has done well in the golf industry.

Dean Knuth is a native of Eau Claire. He has recently been promoted to Senior Director of Golf Handicapping, Golf Handicap and Information Network (GHIN) and Green Section Administra-

tion for the USGA. He formerly held the position of Director in all these areas.

Knuth's responsibilities include administering the USGA Handicap System; conducting research to improve the System; assisting state and regional golf associations in handicapping and course rating procedures; overseeing the GHIN service; and administering the Green Section Turf Advisory Service and the Turfgrass Environmental Research Program.

He was named to his Green Section duties in 1990.

Knuth graduated from the U.S. Naval Academy in 1970 with B.S. in mathematics. He later earned a M.S. degree in computer systems technology at the Naval Postgraduate School in Monterey, California. He remains in the Naval Reserve today.

Congratulations on the promotion.

If you want evidence that things can always go from bad to worse, check out the January issue of *MONEY* magazine. It contains *MONEY's* annual state-tax rating.

Wisconsin moved even farther up the list of tax hells in America. The politicians and bureaucrats now have us in second place when taxes paid are measured. Last year we were sixth; this year we are ranked second among the states. Every citizen in Wisconsin should be absolutely furious.

Only New Yorkers and Washington, D.C. residents pay more taxes than we do. For a typical two-wage family of four set up by *MONEY*, the New York tax bill was \$10,016, D.C.'s was \$9,348, and Wisconsin's was \$8,770.

On the other end of the spectrum is Alaska with \$1,632. Wyoming weighs in with \$2,945, Nevada with \$3,539, Florida with \$3,846 and Tennessee with \$4,038 for the same family of four.

I cannot figure out, for the life of me, why we put up with it. All you hear from the capitol is crying about how tight money for state government is. They float ideas about tax increases all the time.

How would you like to run your golf course that way? Put another way, when conditions dictate it, we substantially lower what we spend. Tough decisions are made.

Why cannot public employees and elected officials grasp that concept? Raising taxes is not the only option.

That's all here, folks. Say a prayer for healthy turf this spring and some nice weather for the next few months. 🌿

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