

# GCSAA CONFERENCE TOPS EXPECTATIONS!

By Monroe S. Miller

I sometimes think maybe our conference imitates life. How often has a bad golf season been followed by a good one? Quite often, I've noticed. Sometimes good news follows bad and good weather comes after poor weather. So I am not surprised that the GCSAA conference in San Francisco turned out to be one of the best — a "top five" — I have attended since the first in 1973. After the "dud in Dallas", my hopes were high that this year's meeting would be a whole lot better. And it surely was.

The flight out was the first hint of a good week. Clear skies, on-time flight from Madison to Minneapolis to San Francisco. Old "Northwest" Airlines surprised me—luggage arrived in San Francisco when I did!

And the weather was fantastic! Expecting earthquakes and mudslides, I was an easy one to please. But the warmth was so welcome and felt so good. Bay area residents were as happy as convention goers were. Sunny California really was sunny with 90s in San Diego and L.A., 70s and 80s in and around Monterey and San Francisco. There was a little early morning fog a couple of mornings, but not a drop of rain while I was there. Two weeks after we left, total disaster swept through Monterey, isolating the towns on the Peninsula. Salinas was evacuated. San Jose was ripped by roaring water. Wine country towns like Napa and St. Helena were clobbered again. One day the severe weather even forced the closing of the San Francisco International Airport. It seems we found the perfect envelope of time for conference.

After the hotel fiasco last year, which I still feel lucky to have lived through, I made certain I was in headquarters this year. It was well worth it — the Marriott is literally across the street from the Moscone Center. It was the pinnacle of convenience, albeit it costly. When you pay your hotel bill, you sort of expect you have bought a couch or a chair, too.

By the time I was settled into the hotel, it was mid-afternoon. So I wandered over in the direction of Union



San Francisco this year...



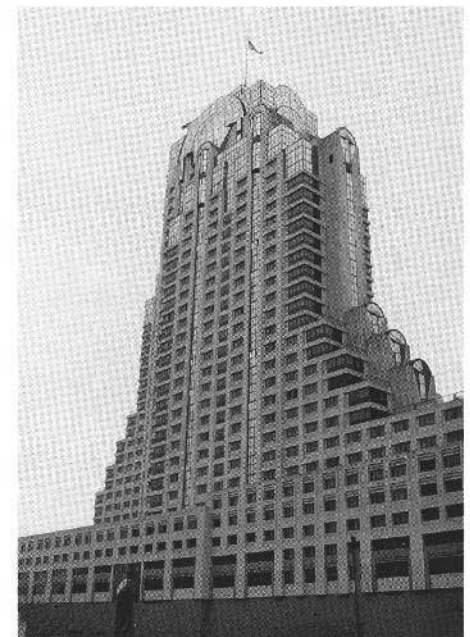
A trademark of San Francisco — the cable car.



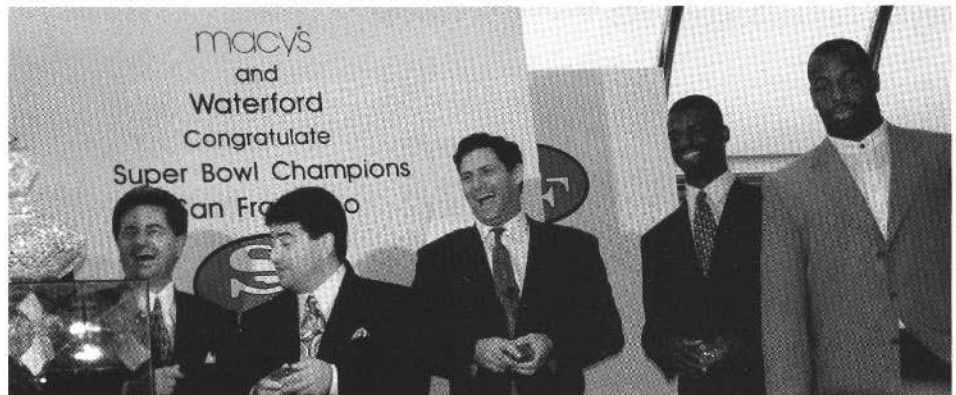
San Francisco's Chinatown.



The park just north of San Francisco named in honor of native Wisconsinite John Muir.



The SF Marriott, headquarters hotel.



QB Steve Young, DB Hanks and DL Stubblefield at Macy's, a few blocks from headquarters hotel.

Square. About three blocks from the hotel was a Macy's, a good place to buy good coffee. I stumbled into a stage area where, in an hour (4 p.m.), San Francisco 49er QB Young, DB Hanks, DL Stubblefield, Coach Seifert and owner DeBartelo were to receive the Waterford Crystal Superbowl Trophy. Since I am both a Packer fan and a rubber neck from way back, I parked myself in the front row and waited for their arrival. As expected, based on experience, they were late. But it was still worth it to see them. Steve Young is bigger than I would have guessed, Merton Hanks has a girlfriend who is at least 6'2" tall, and George Seifert acted like he was in pain from having to attend the event.

The great weather only inspired individuals who love golf courses to see as many as they could in an area where there are lots of great ones. A drive to Monterey Peninsula area presented the opportunity to see Poppy Hills, The Links at Spanish Bay, Pebble Beach, Cypress Point, Spyglass, and Monterey Bay C.C. I was reminded of Yogi Berra's quote "when you come to a fork in the road, take it" at one place in the Carmel Valley. A sign at a fork in the road pointed left with the sign PLAY and indicating a golf course, and an arrow pointing right to PRAY and indicating a church. Golfers do both!

What a great coincidence to be in Monterey on the 50th anniversary of the 1945 publication of John Steinbeck's immortal tale, *Cannery Row*. You can still walk up to the door of "Doc's Lab" at 800 Cannery Row.

The trip to San Francisco can take you through the neat town of Carmel, known for its famous one-time mayor, Clint Eastwood, and his restaurant, The Hog's Breath. It is also a chance to leave the main drag by a mile or so and see Salinas, Steinbeck's birthplace. The whole area of Monterey, Pacific Grove and Salinas was the setting of many books he wrote and that were read by millions like me — *Cannery Row*, *The Long Valley*, *Sweet Thursday*, *East of Eden*, *Of Mice and Men*, *Tortilla Flat*, *the Wayward Bus* and *Grapes of Wrath*.

Some Badgers made it across the Golden State Bridge to Muir Woods, named for a Wisconsin farm boy and a UW-Madison alum, John Muir. The size of the trees in that park defy description. They truly are nature's skyscrapers. Napa Valley and Sonoma Valley aren't far from San Francisco and were popular side trips for many.

### The City

San Francisco is an interesting and historic city. Most I visited with were thrilled to be there — "why can't we have conference here every year?" one asked somewhat rhetorically. Good question. Unlike some of the other cities we seem to have to visit, this one felt somewhat safe. The people weren't mean like they were in downtown Dallas, for a recent example. Granted they had more bums with their hands out than anyone would like to see, but they weren't aggressive. And you wonder where the cops were when one of these slugs dropped his trousers in front of Tony Roma's restaurant to take care of his daily chore. I was walking down Powell Street and when a panhandler asked for money, I pointed out a sign in a window *NOW HIRING*. I doubt he took my advice, likely preferring begging to working.

Great timing for conference in another way, too. It coincided with the opening of a new Border's Bookstore on Union Square. Brand new by a couple of days, it was four floors full of books and music. Open early and closed late. Polite employees were the standard, just like the Border's in Madison. Mike Lee came out as I going in one day and he was loaded down with reading treasures. You cannot beat a good bookstore.

I suppose you would have to be from Wisconsin to notice, again this

year, the strong Wisconsin connection to conference. Let me count the ways:

1. Keynote Rocky Bleier was raised in Appleton, son of a tavern owner.
2. Dr. Milt Engelke, recipient of the GCSAA Distinguished Service Award, grew up in Grant county, received a B.S. degree from Platteville, a M.S. and Ph.D. from the UW - Madison.
3. Dr. Frank Rossi from the UW-Madison Department of Horticulture delivered a thoughtful and persuasive lecture Friday afternoon.
4. Dr. Wayne Kussow was the speaker at the Noer Foundation meeting on Sunday. Wayne has received the largest grant ever made by the Noer group.
5. THE GRASS ROOTS finished first in the chapter publication contest.
6. The show floor was dominated by companies manufacturing in our state — Jacobsen, John Deere, Toro, Foley, Milorganite, and on and on.

### GRADES

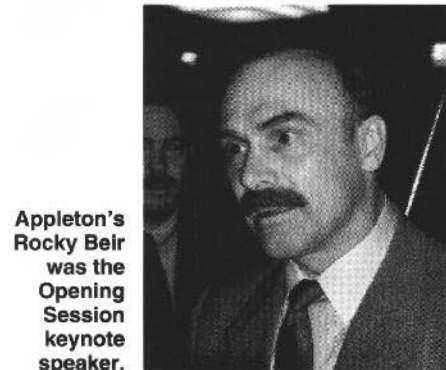
**Opening Session.** Excellent. Reasonable in length, a good job by Joe Baidy in keeping it moving. Bleier was great and we were proud of Engelke. The entertainment was a nice touch but too loud and too busy. Bleier signed autographs at the end until everybody was satisfied. One guy, on the ball, had the Rock sign five different Sports Illustrated covers  
(Continued on page 35)



John Steinbeck's home in Salinas, only a few miles from Monterey.



The 18th at Pebble Beach.



Appleton's Rocky Bleier was the Opening Session keynote speaker.

(Continued from page 33)

that he had appeared on, either singly or in a play with other Steelers. Joe Baidy must have lived in a pretty good neighborhood to have Rocky as a neighbor!

The whole affair earns my highest mark of **A+**.

### Concurrent Sessions

All lectures I attended were good. Some were really good. There is almost too much available — I wasn't the only one who wanted to be two or three places at once. I guess that's why they offer audio cassettes and the Proceedings. The rooms were excellent with good acoustics, chairs for everyone with room between rows, and good audio/visual equipment. The room locations were close to everything, adding to the overall conference convenience I appreciate. Really, the Moscone facilities were superb despite exhibitor grouching about the two separate halls.

This feature on Friday earned a solid grade of **A**.

### The Show

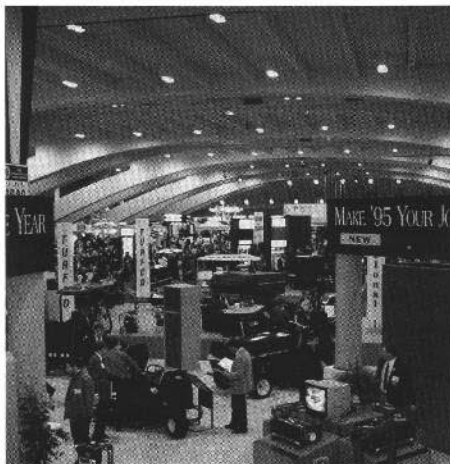
It could be my favorite part of conference week. The show is bigger every year. And better. I cannot find any fault, not even the split show floor areas. Exhibitors put on a great effort at making information about their products available. The isles were wide, the two halls were roomy, and the convention center food was better than anywhere we have ever been before. This year seemed to have been a down year for oddball exhibitors — that's good. Also, the trend toward fewer freebies continued and that is okay as long as the traditional ones remain!

Give the 1995 Golf Course Show a sparkling **A+**.

### Banquet

I thought it was a great evening, due in no small part to the great company at our table; Randy and JoAnn Smith, Wayne and JoAnn Otto, Rod and Janelle Johnson, a couple from Canada and another banquet bachelor like me. He was from Colorado, but his father had gotten a Ph.D. from the UW-Madison in — you won't believe it — Soil Science. This proved once again how small the world really is. The meal was good, head table antics not excessive and excellent entertainment.

Give this event an **A**.



A bird's eye view of one of the show halls.

### Environmental General Session

I had high hopes for this meeting and really was excited for it to happen. I had secured my front row seat so as not to miss a thing and in hopes of getting some hot GRASS ROOTS pictures. Sorry to say, I was disappointed. Everyone did a good job, but it was sort of a mutual admiration group. No arguments, no stimulating speeches, no new ideas. We pretty much knew what John Stossel was going to say. It was a good sized audience with expectations like mine.

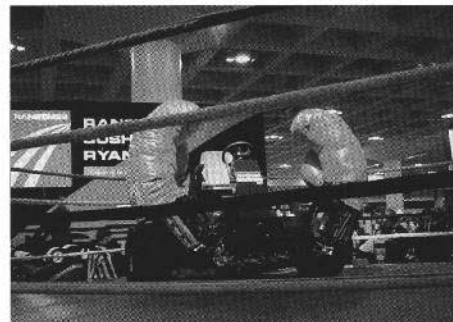
Many felt, at the end, the same way I did. Give this morning a solid **C**.



Dr. Rossi gave one of the best lectures at conference.



Wayne Kussow, Roger and Suzie Bell and Frank Rossi at the UW alumni gathering.



The most creative display?

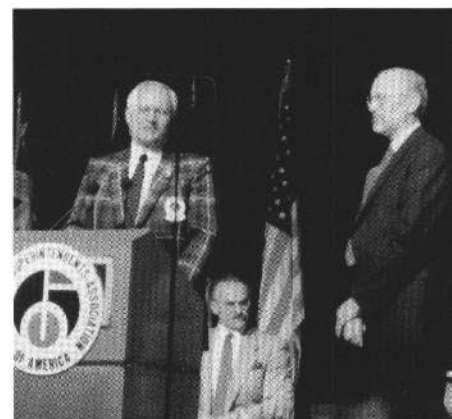
### USGA Green Section Educational Conference

I never miss this one. Good thing, too. This year moved my assessment higher than it has been in the past couple of years. Turf tips are the real reason to go, assuring a grade that never ever will be below a C. The other speakers can move the grade up, and did so this year. Mike Fumento gave a great lecture centered around his book *Science Under Siege*. The outrages he shared with us were enough to drive normal people crazy and inspire you to invite him to Wisconsin to speak. And I thought Ray Keyser, a former Vermont governor who loves golf and translates that love into an active role on behalf of the game, had a great story to tell.

Three cheers and a well deserved grade of **A**.



Mike Semler, Mike Lee and Kendall Markquardt at the alumni meeting.



Native Wisconsinite and UW-Madison grad Milt Engelke was honored as a distinguished service award recipient.

## Overall

No complaints from me, other than the city bums and the excessive cost. Count me among the satisfied customers (members). Thanks to GCSAA staff. Someday I intend to find out just who the shakers and movers are for this annual event.

Some may disagree, although I bet not many, but this meeting earned an **A**.

## It was good to see . . .

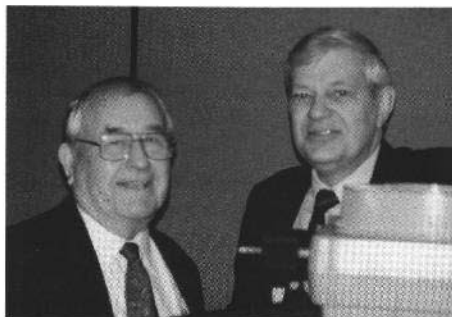
- Lee Bruce attending his first GCSAA conference.
- Clay Loyd on special assignment, a brief respite from retirement.
- Ilona and Bob Gray, 3,000 miles from home
- Willie Roberts sans necktie (a rare sight!).
- A great turnout for the UW-Madison alumni meeting.
- A robust crowd at the Wisconsin/Milorganite Hospitality Room. Terry Ward was a superb greeter.
- Tuck and Becky Tate, looking in the pink of good health.
- Chapter editor friends.
- Stan Zontek, Jim Snow, Jim Moore and the other USGA Green Section guys.

## Final thoughts . . .

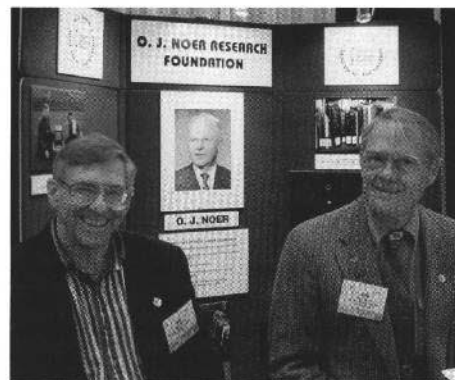
The GCSAA conference was an excellent final tune-up for the 1995 season, and opening day in Wisconsin followed conference by a little more than a month on a lot of golf courses. Lots of memories were made, friendships renewed and business connections established. What will you remember about the '95 San Francisco meeting? Here are a few things that will come to my mind.

*San Francisco is one of America's great cities, great fun and great coffee. Great food, too. It is the Cafe Mozart and Zuni Cafe. Fog City Diner. Fog. It's the San Francisco Golf Club and the Olympic Golf Club. Cable cars and Lombard Street. Fisherman's Wharf and Pier 37. Alcatraz. Union Square and the Westin St. Francis. It's Chinatown, the Transamerica Building and Wells Fargo Bank. Powell Street and Market Street. Border's new bookstore and McDonald's used bookstore. The Moscone Center. Book signing at GCSAA Central. Showtime. The Examiner and The Chronicle. Great memories. Good weather and bad roads. Traffic, air pollution and very visible earthquake damage. Candlestick Park. It is the "City by the Bay."*

*I hope we go back real soon. 🍷*



Dr. Jim Watson and Dr. Wayne Kussow at the Noer Foundation meeting.



Don Stein is entirely dedicated to the NOER Foundation.



Wayne and JoAnn Otto enjoying dinner at the annual banquet.



Lee Bruce visits with Randy and JoAnn Smith.



Randy Witt and Dr. Houston B. Couch discuss "Diseases of Turfgrass".



And Orlando next year!



Jim Hofmeister and David Legg in the Ransomes booth. Jim now lives in Lincoln, Nebraska.

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