

A Shared Anniversary

By Monroe S. Miller

It didn't occur to me until I was invited to be a part of the Editors' Anniversary Tour — Jacobsen and my club of nearly a quarter of a century were founded the same year of 1921. More coincidence — my father was born that year. And curiously, the day I spent with the Jacobsen folks was only a couple of days before my 50th birthday.

Like many of America's golf course superintendents, I have a long history with Jacobsen. The very first

piece of golf course equipment I operated on my first day of work at Nakoma Golf Club was a Jake walking greens mower powered by a 321 engine. In 1968 I was one of the students in the first class invited by Jacobsen for their School for Turf Students. Many of my employees over the years have attended the same school, including Tara Zabkowicz this year. There were a few years when I would travel to Racine for a day to talk to these

classes. The highlight of that 1968 school was our introduction to the prototype riding triplex greens mower. There were three in the country and we had a chance to operate the one under wraps in Racine. We spoke in hushed tones about how revolutionary the machine was, wondering whether or not it would work and if superintendents would drive such a thing on their putting greens! We were seeing the future and did not know it.



Editors were shown the Jacobsen product line at Meadowbrook CC. Product manager Terry Herlihy is sitting on the new GK V triplex greens mowers. Jacobsen has a great relationship at Meadowbrook CC and Ric Lange.



The editors got a look at the full Jacobsen line at Meadowbrook CC.



Rod Baltzley, director of operations, explains Jacobsen's use of laser cutters during the Racine plant tour.



Dan Sikora, Jacobsen general supervisor of production control, points out a manufacturing process during the Editors' tour.

Over the many years I have purchased a lot of Jacobsen equipment, much of which we still have on our golf course. There was a time not too far back when we were mowing fairways with seven Greens Kings! They were a long way from seven gang pull frame mowers with ten bladed reels.

I have also had a number of chances over the nearly 30 past years to visit the Jacobsen plant that has operated in Racine since 1921. Each trip offered something new or something I'd missed earlier or hadn't been shown. There were always changes to note between these trips.

But never have I seen, between visits, changes I noticed with the Anniversary Tour. When Phil Trailes introduced us to the facility, he made note of the age of the buildings. To me, it looks like thousands and thousands of factories across America that gave us much of our prosperity of the past one hundred years. Newly built factories look more like my shop — metal buildings rather than brick, no architectural personality, etc. Phil was sort of apologetic for the age of the plant.

He didn't have to be. The resemblance to other factories was superficial. Inside, I saw a work place that was bright and clean. I would love to know how much money management has spent on paint in the past couple of years! The colors selected were cheery. The floors were not like those of old. Instead of hydraulic oil and grease and metal filings and all else, they were spotless.

I noticed, on this July summer day, how quiet the plant was. Laser cutters have replaced massive stamping machines and presses. High tech has taken over for hard tooling. They were cutting parts instead of punching them. The steady background drone of metal saws punctuated with clanging metal parts as they hit the bins, present on past trips through the plant, has given way to a building where you can talk in normal tones with the person next to you. It was a pleasure.

The engineering is almost all done on computer CAD/CAM programs. The days of the drafting board and paper and pencil are gone, too!

The Racine Jacobsen plant, as near as I could tell, is where reel
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The Anniversary Tour wasn't all work. Senior Tour player Bob Brue provided some entertainment after lunch and before golf at Meadowbrook CC.



Bobby Brue, golf pro at Ozaukee CC for many years, is sponsored by Milorganite. There is something special about a Wisconsin company supporting a Wisconsin golf talent and legend.

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products are manufactured. Rotary mowers are assembled in their factory in North Carolina.

It struck me, about mid-morning, that the new look of the Racine facility sort of coincides with the new look of the equipment they manufacture. And even though the equipment has that 90s look, it still has the good engineering, solid construction and

high quality that Knud Jacobsen insisted on when he started his company 75 years ago.

I was thinking about this as we drove past Johnson Wax headquarters: I wonder if these pioneer Wisconsin industrialists — Jerome I. Case, Sam Johnson and Knud Jacobsen knew one another. Did they golf together? Did they know O.J. Noer? Did they discuss busi-

ness philosophies? My answer was "they must have." They offered the world quality products, good customer value and fair prices. They stood behind their products. They were fair to their employees.

This town had more than its share of great Wisconsin companies. And to this day, Jacobsen carries on that long held tradition. I was proud to be their guest again. 🍷

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