



## *It Was A Strange but Nearly Normal Winter*

By Monroe S. Miller

Freeze/thaw repeated five times. Lots of snow falls yet never much on the ground. Not very cold, at least for any extended periods. Snow at inopportune times—Reinders conference, USGA regional conference—but within a few inches of the average. Statistics will say it was a “typical” winter.

That was winter where I live in Wisconsin; most likely it was different where you live, especially if you live up north, say Oshkosh and beyond. We were getting ready to open in Madison and Randy Witt hadn't seen any of his course yet in Green Bay. In northern northern Wisconsin, by mid-March Hurley had recorded almost 260 inches of snow! Jeff Gregos' snow mold field days should be very revealing this spring.

Anyway, when spring does finally arrive and golf courses open from south to north, most of us are ready for it. Fresh air, green grass, players, new machinery—they all make for bad cases of spring fever for most golf course superintendents. Summaries from Wisconsin Ag Statistics Service are here for your records and comparisons.



Twenty-five year members in 1997, L to R: John Krutilla, Chuck Frazier, Don Ferger & Monroe Miller. Jim Belfield wasn't able to attend.

Our course wasn't opened by Easter this year. The sacred Sunday was early in 1997. It falls from March 22 to April 25, so some years Easter brunch at the Club has members and guests looking over a very green golf course. Not this Easter.

“Why?” you might ask? (I did). Here's the reason: Easter is celebrated on the first Sunday after the first full moon after the vernal equinox. Therefore, this date involves a lunar concept to it.


The exception to this rule is if the first post-equinox full moon falls on a Sunday. Celebrating Easter on that day would coincide with Passover, which always begins at the full moon. Easter, in this case, occurs one week later.

Best bumper sticker seen since the last issue of *The Grass Roots*: How can you tell when Slick Willie Clinton is lying? His lips are moving!

I hadn't given it a thought until Charlie Shaw called me sometime in mid-winter to make certain I would be attending the WGCSA spring business meeting. Along with four others, I was going to receive a plaque recognizing 25 years as a WGCSA member. Of the group—Ferger, Belfield, Krutilla, Frazier and Miller—four had spent their entire 25 years at the same club! Only in Wisconsin—Belfield at Tripoli, Ferger at CC of Beloit, Frazier at Nakoma GC and Miller at Blackhawk CC. And it isn't like John Krutilla has moved all over God's half acre, either.

Community, stability, persistence—those are marks of the boys from Wisconsin. And as I think back, the 25 year classes of the past have pretty much been the same.

Last summer was a tough year for Wisconsin in the battle with gypsy moths. The Wisconsin Department of Agriculture sprayed 970 acres around Kellner, which sits on the Wood and  
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Portage county line east of Wisconsin Rapids, but it was an ineffective treatment. WDATCP officials aren't sure why, but it could have been the rainy weather.

At any rate, the acreage set for 1997 treatment for moth control has increased by 900% to 10,240 acres along the Wood/Portage county line, almost one-fourth of the total acres scheduled to be sprayed in Wisconsin this year. All told, 40,000 acres at 24 sites in 13 counties will be sprayed to kill the caterpillars which eat leaves of more than 300 tree and shrub species. Defoliation can kill these valued landscape features.

The gypsy moth problem took a new turn in late March when the U.S. Department of Agriculture ordered Wisconsin to inspect all products sold by orchards, nurseries, Christmas tree farms, lumber companies and "anything that is stored outside" before it is sold. The inspectors will look for eggs of the moth in four counties in northeast Wisconsin—Brown, Door, Manitowoc and Kewaunee. Fourteen other counties in the northeast are labeled "transition" counties. All 18 may be quarantined by WDATCP.

Extensive trapping by WDATCP (we have participated for years) hasn't turned up huge numbers of adults, but state inspectors discovered lots of egg masses in these counties along the Lake Michigan border.

Quarantines aren't cheap. We now have only 1 1/2 state employees dedicated to the gypsy moth program; in contrast, Michigan has 50 - 60 full-timers who do nothing but search the state for egg masses.



Bob Brame has visited Wisconsin twice this spring to speak for the USGA green section — at the WGCSA spring business meeting and at the USGA regional conference in Kohler.

This problem is clearly a bad moon on the rise.

The last issue of GCSAA's *Newsline* reported on the results of a member survey. I completed the questionnaire myself and was dumbfounded by one of the questions. To paraphrase, some genius in GCSAA asked "if we should start a PAC."

It was a breathtaking question, considering the stench coming out of Washington, D.C. since the election of Clinton and Al (he's your pal) Gore. Their political fundraising schemes—

from putting the touch on Asians at a Buddhist temple, the sale of the Lincoln bedroom and freebie rides on Air Force One, free coffee with Willie at the White House, to God only knows what else, has disgusted nearly everyone in the country (except politicians). GCSAA doesn't need to be in on that nonsense.

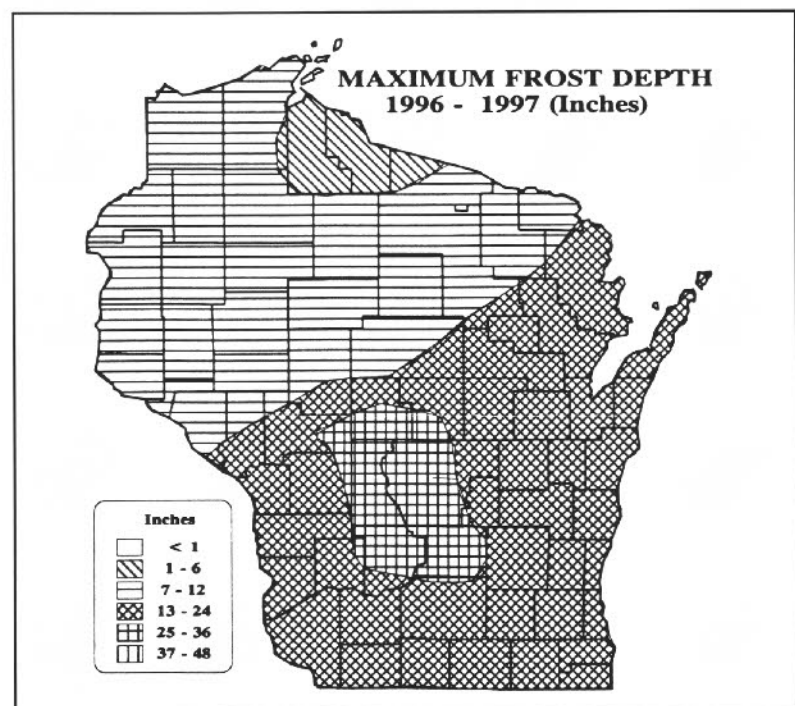
Since the question was posed, one wonders if somebody in Lawrence actually thought we should engage in such wasteful silliness. Would GCSAA members have had a vote in how such money would have

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### Wisconsin Average Precipitation October 1, 1996 - March 31, 1997 1/

District	Total	Normal	Departure from normal	Percent of normal
Northwest	13.40	9.40	4.00	143
North Central	12.79	9.70	3.08	132
Northeast	12.99	10.43	2.56	125
West Central	13.59	9.19	4.40	148
Central	10.60	10.11	0.50	105
East Central	10.47	10.69	-0.22	98
Southwest	11.88	10.03	1.85	118
South Central	11.18	10.86	0.32	103
Southeast	11.14	11.67	-0.54	95
State	12.30	10.01	2.29	123

1/Preliminary. Source: Matthew Menne, State Climatologist.



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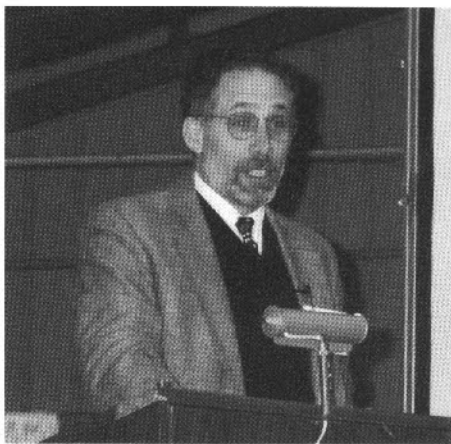
been spent? Would we have held an election to decide on who was to receive our endorsement and money?

Fortunately, members responded with a 63% negative response. That should answer the question for a long, long time. Like forever.

I received a nice letter from Dr. John Stier a few weeks ago. He and his wife Valerie have purchased a home in the Stoughton area; you cannot miss the coincidence since O.J. Noer grew up on a Stoughton farm.

John will pick up the responsibilities of the turfgrass extension position in the Department of Horticulture in late April. Most likely he will spend the summer familiarizing himself with the turfgrass industries in Wisconsin and all the problems that will require his attention. He also has a course in turfgrass science to teach this fall and that preparation will require some of his time.

Then there are grant proposals to write, research to get organized and a hundred other things that go along with any new job. Whenever we can, we can be counted on to lend a hand to this new faculty member. We will get him to some WGCSA meetings and start his career as a *Grass Roots* author. And maybe Tom Harrison can give him some lessons on living among the Norwegians. Stoughton has more than a few!



One of the most accomplished speakers at the UW-Madison, Phil Pellitteri addressed golf turf insect problems.

Thanks to Reinders and to the USGA for two excellent late winter conferences. Only those among us who have served on committees that



The busy crowd at Reinders 13th turf conference grew to 1,300!

Snow and Frost Depths, Winter 1996-97

Month	Snow Depths						Frost Depths					
	1995-96		1996-97 1/		Normal 2/		1995-96		1996-97 1/		Normal 2/	
	Date	Inches	Date	Inches	Inches		Date	Inches	Date	Inches	Inches	
Early December	12/1	6.9	11/29	3.3	2.6		12/1	3.7	11/29	3.2	1.7	
Mid-December	12/15	6.5	12/13	3.4	4.4		12/15	6.8	12/13	2.5	4.4	
Late December	12/29	6.3	12/27	8.6	5.9		12/29	9.2	12/27	5.0	7.4	
Mid-January	1/12	8.6	1/10	8.7	8.0		1/12	12.0	1/10	6.7	11.1	
Late January	1/26	18.0	1/24	7.9	9.9		1/26	14.8	1/24	10.5	14.5	
Mid-February	2/9	14.0	2/7	12.2	10.1		2/9	18.8	2/7	11.9	17.0	
Late February	2/23	8.8	2/21	8.2	8.6		2/23	19.9	2/21	10.4	17.7	
Mid-March	3/8	7.7	3/7	5.6	7.2		3/8	18.5	3/7	8.1	16.3	
Late March	3/23	2.0	3/21	6.9	3.8		3/23	13.9	3/21	5.5	10.6	
Averages		8.8		7.2	6.7			13.2		7.1	11.2	

1/Survey dates vary between 1995-96 and 1996-97. 2/ 1961-96 and 1962-97 averages.

Mean Temperature and Departure from Normal, Fahrenheit, Winter 1996-97

Location	October		November		December		January		February		March		Six months	
	Avg.	Dep.	Avg.	Dep.	Avg.	Dep.	Avg.	Dep.	Avg.	Dep.	Avg.	Dep.	Avg.	Dep.
Madison	48.5	-0.4	28.7	-6.7	22.6	0.9	15.7	-0.3	24.1	3.5	34.1	1.8	30.2	0.8
Milwaukee	52.3	2.0	33.1	-4.6	27.1	2.7	20.4	1.5	28.2	5.2	35.9	2.6	33.2	1.6
Green Bay	46.7	-1.3	28.5	-5.9	21.7	1.5	15.1	0.8	21.1	2.8	26.9	-1.1	28.3	0.6
La Crosse	51.7	1.5	29.2	-6.4	19.9	-0.4	14.7	0.3	24.8	4.9	33.9	1.1	30.2	1.2
Duluth	43.6	-0.1	23.9	-4.5	11.2	-1.6	7.0	0.0	14.8	2.5	23.1	-1.3	20.6	-0.8

Source: Matthew Menne, State Climatologist.

Total Precipitation and Departure from Normal, Water Equivalent Inches, Winter 1996-97

Location	October		November		December		January		February		March		Six months	
	Total	Dep.	Total	Dep.	Total	Dep.	Total	Dep.	Total	Dep.	Total	Dep.	Total	Dep.
Madison	3.14	0.97	1.01	-1.08	1.27	-0.57	1.36	0.29	2.50	1.42	1.54	-0.63	10.82	0.40
Milwaukee	3.00	0.59	0.63	-1.88	1.53	-0.80	1.26	-0.34	2.47	1.02	0.66	-2.01	9.55	-3.42
Green Bay	2.93	0.70	0.80	-1.36	1.89	0.36	1.81	0.66	1.40	0.37	1.92	-0.13	10.75	0.90
La Crosse	2.98	0.78	4.45	2.72	1.42	0.15	1.80	0.87	1.16	0.26	3.09	1.13	14.90	5.91
Duluth	3.08	0.59	3.95	1.80	0.86	-0.38	0.94	-0.28	0.37	-0.43	1.39	-0.52	10.59	0.78

Source: Matthew Menne, State Climatologist.

Total Snowfall and Departure from Normal, Inches, Winter 1996-97

Location	October		November		December		January		February		March		Six months	
	Total	Dep.	Total	Dep.	Total	Dep.	Total	Dep.	Total	Dep.	Total	Dep.	Total	Dep.
Madison	0.0	-0.2	5.9	2.1	6.7	-4.3	13.1	2.7	15.0	7.2	2.7	-5.6	43.4	1.9
Milwaukee	0.0	-0.2	1.8	-1.4	9.2	-1.1	23.6	10.5	10.7	0.7	0.5	-8.1	45.8	0.4
Green Bay	T	-0.2	3.7	-1.2	19.4	8.6	17.2	6.3	15.5	7.1	20.7	11.8	76.5	32.4
La Crosse	0.0	-0.1	12.2	7.8	11.3	2.2	11.1	1.0	10.9	2.9	20.4	11.4	65.9	25.2
Duluth	0.3	-1.2	15.9	3.2	42.2	26.8	35.5	18.4	8.5	-2.8	23.6	10.2	126.0	54.0

T=Trace. Source: Matthew Menne, State Climatologist.



plan these kinds of events can really appreciate the enormous work that goes into them. To Ed Devinger and his crew at Reinders, and to the USGA regional office and Bob Vavrek's green section office, a sincere "thank you". Our golf courses will be better for your efforts.

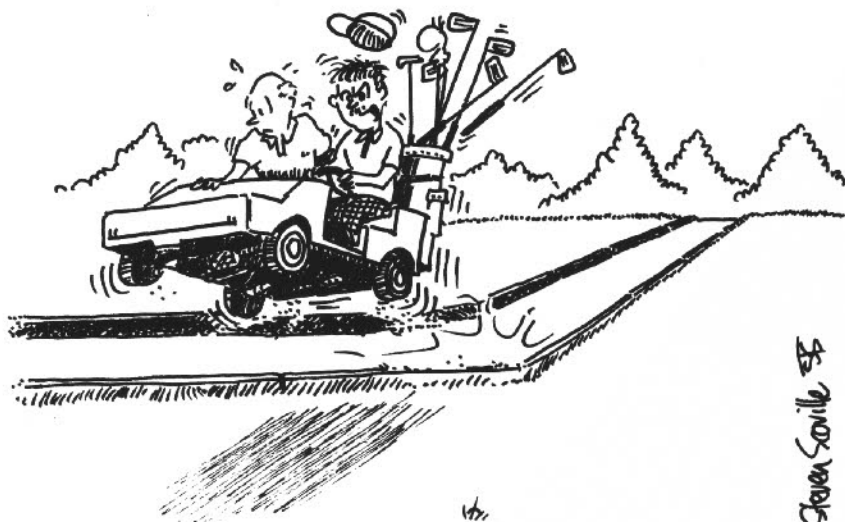
Remember last October when a Packer fan won a radio contest and received two game tickets and a "Packer Backer Tractor"—green and gold with a big "G" on the hood? Well, Wisconsin manufacturer Simplicity, which has made millions and millions of pieces of grass and landscape machinery for the world over the years at its Port Washington factory, has taken the next logical step. It has added several teams to this special tractor lineup—joining the Packers will be the Vikings, Chiefs, Colts, Steelers and Panthers from the NFL, and Wisconsin, Iowa, Michigan, Michigan State and Penn State from the Big Ten.

The Simplicity CEO described them as "tough as a linebacker, agile as a wide receiver and pinpoint accuracy of an all-pro quarterback!

We are in the "inbetween" days now, the time that straddles Wisconsin's two most harsh seasons. Spring is synonymous with hope and fresh beginnings, and there could be no better symbolism of that than a

golf course as new grasses rise from the ground. The new season came into our city like a lamb on March 21, nice and calm.

My hope is that the new golf season starts and finishes the same way for all of us. 🍷



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