



# HALLOWEEN at the COUNTRY Clubs

By Monroe S. Miller

"Heh. Heh. Heh." Pee Wee Ellis chuckled to himself as he tapped the last hinge pin into the steel door of the new rest station at Holstein Hills Country Club in southwest Wisconsin. Pee Wee's glee had less to do with the satisfaction that the new rest station would be appreciated by the players at HHCC, and more to do with the simple fact that the Huffland boys wouldn't be able to tip it over on Halloween.

Johnny Huffland and his three sons were the friendly competition over at the Golden Guernsey Golf Club a few miles away. The Ellis' and the Hufflands had been friends for years, as long as the kids could remember and for as long as John and Pee Wee had owned these two golf courses. Both men had been born on farms in this driftless, unglaciated hilly part of Wisconsin and loved living there. Neither, however, enjoyed all the work involved with a dairy herd—milking twice a day, every day of the year—and had found owning and operating a golf course a reasonable compromise.

Make no mistake about it—these two golf clubs were "country" clubs through and through. They are, literally, in the country, surrounded by contoured fields of corn and oats and alfalfa. A look in any direction from any green on either golf course yields a view of red barns and blue silos and herds of dairy cattle—Guernseys and Jerseys and Brown Swiss and Holsteins (and even a herd of Ayrshires at the Noble farm just east of GGGC).

Out here, country club has a more literal meaning. For example, denim attire by patron golfers was common and, at a time when many country clubs ban denim, both Pee Wee and John viewed it as the best wear for outdoor activity. "We don't even look down on a golfer who happens to wear bib overalls," Pee Wee said. "At

least as long as they are clean," John added.

Green fees are five bucks at both places for 18 holes of golf, and carts are eight dollars for a full round. Score cards are bare bones, as is most of the tee and green equipment. Signage is mounted on steel fence posts, ballwashers are found only occasionally and water coolers do not exist. Sometimes during the season, when they are really busy on the golf course, charges are on the honor system: "Leave the money in the empty golf ball box in the pro shop," the handwritten sign instructed.

Both of these country clubs are clean and neat and well kept; simplicity seems their guide. Landscaping is natural and low maintenance. Flowers are plentiful but consist of old fashioned varieties like hollyhock, morning glory and big, bright and bold sunflowers.

But course conditions are really good, especially the greens. Green speed isn't an issue, so heights are at 3/16" (or more during stress periods). There is little disease, and when there is an outbreak, only those infected areas are treated. Golf courses and golf course management are really different in the country.

Pee Wee and Johnny work together all year long, or almost all year long. They share aerifiers and a couple of crew members when that time rolls around; if one experiences a breakdown of any sort, the other is there to help; and supplies are swapped back and forth as they might be needed.

But all cooperation and communication are out the window when the middle of October rolls around. For generations out in that neck of the Wisconsin woods, neighbors and friends were all looking over their shoulders with suspicious eyes when Halloween was around the corner. Halloween has no philosophical or

patriotic background like most holidays do. It is a risky holiday in rural communities, however, when being a little bit naughty is perfectly okay. A lot of creativity has gone into that naughtiness over the years.

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Everybody has heard how, years ago when outdoor privies were common, most of them were tipped over at Halloween. John and Pee Wee had, during their younger years, tipped over their share. That is why Pee Wee was so happy with his new outdoor privy—no more standing it back up and cleaning it on November 1st.

Ellis and Huffland had white washed dairy cattle on Halloween, cattle that had been locked in barns for safety; that had only made the challenge greater! Trick or treat! They had cleaned out pumpkin patches, let the air out of tires on farm equipment in the old neighborhood, and a thousand other tricks that would ring familiar with anyone who grew up on a farm.

Funny thing—when they became golf course owners instead of farmers, the Halloween holiday traditions stayed the same; only the tricks were different.

There was the time, for example, when Pee Wee sneaked over to the Golden Guernsey golf course at 2:00 a.m. Halloween night with his kids. They had several bags of Sacrete, some water, trowels and empty pails. Using the smallest flashlight to get around the course, in two hours they had carefully and neatly cemented every flagstick into the cup on all 18 greens on the course and the 9 half cups on the putting green. They all giggled on the way home, proud of their coup over the Hufflands. They got home, slept a few hours and went to work on their own course.

The first thing they found was their shelter house on its side. "Damn that Johnny Huffland," Pee Wee grumbled.

Another year, the Hufflands had saved bulky trash for the whole year—fertilizer bags (they used Milorganite, so they had lots of them), boxes that everything thing from Banner fungicide to Titlist golf bags had come in, 2 1/2 and 5 gallon plastic jugs, and hundreds of one gallon milk cartons. You name it and they had probably saved it. "This has been a real pain in the neck," Johnny complained with a smile as he and the boys loaded the whole collection into their pickup truck, one-ton Ford dump truck and the chopper boxes they had borrowed from their neighbors.

At the stroke of midnight the cara-

van of trash sneaked over to Holstein Hills. One of the boys went ahead, scouting the route and reporting back over their Motorola radios. They quietly and carefully dumped it all at the entrance to HHCC, thinking it their best all-time Halloween pimp on Pee Wee.

Until they got up the next morning only to find the Ellis' had loaded it all up and hauled it back to their shop yard! They hadn't been nearly as neat as the Hufflands—it was a holy mess!

One cold, rainy Halloween two years ago the weather was so miserable that the Hufflands had let their guard down and gave up their plans for any trickery at Holstein Hills. "It is just too lousy out," John said to the boys, subconsciously thinking Pee Wee would look at it the same way.

He was wrong, very wrong. Pee Wee had spent a couple of days lining up a loader tractor, a 100 h.p. tractor that could handle a 240 bushel PTO manure spreader. Until this rain it had been dry, opening the door for Pee Wee's plan to fertilize the Golden Guernsey roughs. "It wasn't that bad," Pee Wee said later. "The big Ford I borrowed had a cab and a heater and I was toasty warm while watching the spreader beaters cast fresh cow manure between fairways! And it was from a herd of Holsteins!" He loved

his victory and the thought of the fresh country air golfers would experience the last few days of the golf season pleased him endlessly.

Over the years these two families tried everything at Halloween. Ponds on the courses had been dyed odd colors, and the greens had also. Huffland had wired a 4-wheel flatbed trailer to an old woven wire fence in Ellis' shop yard and when PeeWee hooked up to it the next morning he pulled 16 rods of that old fence out! Pee Wee had stuck John Deere decals on all of Johnny's Ford equipment, making him madder than a wet hen. They had tied women's underwear to flagsticks, pulleyed pieces of equipment into trees, and somehow gotten sod pallets on top of the barn that served as a shop. The air had been let out of every single tire of an entire golf car fleet, and the next year it became a copy cat trick!

Which all brings us back to Pee Wee's new shelter house and Halloween this year. The Huffland boys had the last laugh. True, they couldn't tip it over like they had the old one so many times in the years before. But a steel door, a steel door frame, and portable welder and a generator...

Happy Halloween from the COUNTRY clubs! ♣

