



# FINISH UP, WIND DOWN

By Monroe S. Miller

Somebody reversed the seasons on us. Again. Record lows at night and record low daytime highs were part of July and August. We seldom ran our air conditioner and on more than a few of those 50 degree F. nights in August, we pulled the covers up. It rained frequently (but not much at a time, at least in our town) and irrigation planning and problems were not part of our working lives.

When September and October arrived, so did the warmer and summer-like weather. The rain stopped. All-time high temperatures were recorded. And golfers were out in droves, enjoying the extended season and using these bonus days to make up for rounds lost during the cold spring.

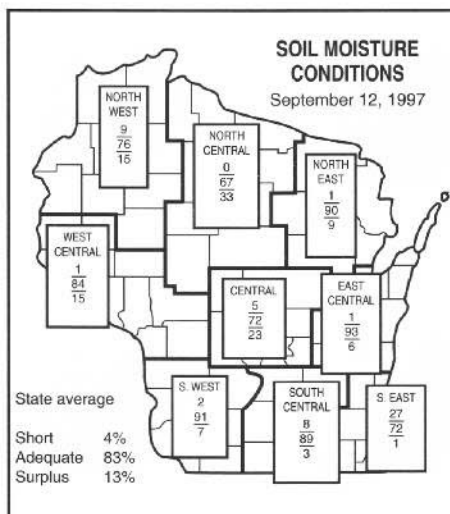
You lucked out if you happened to plan any course constructions projects this autumn. It was unusual luck—remember it because it won't likely happen again for a long time. At our course, the only significant rainfall—0.40"—came on the very afternoon Jeff Porter and his GA-60, along with our GA-60, pulled cores for six hours. It was a heartbreaker—and a holy mess.

It was great fall weather to finish up on the odds and ends that never seem to get done during the rest of the season.

With November comes the chance to wind down the 1997 golf season and great ready for the holidays of November and December. Stats for September and October are here from the Wisconsin Agricultural Statistics Service.

Bill Sell passed away on August 28th. He had been ill for quite some time, and his son Greg wrote to me that his dad was just tired and went to sleep. His heart was working at only 25% capacity, making even the simplest tasks difficult for him.

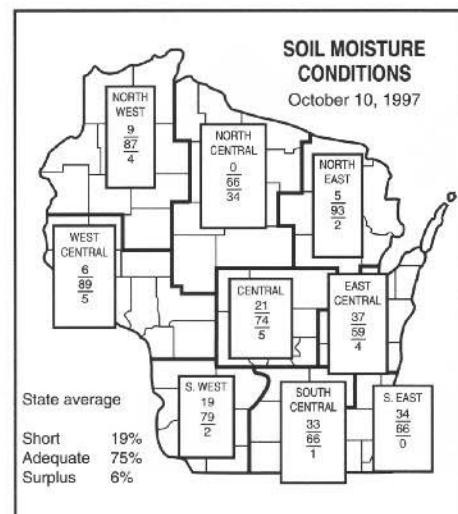
Bill spent 38 years in the golf course business, served as president



of the WGCSA and was a recipient of the WGCSA Distinguished Service Award. And like so many of his generation, he was a proud veteran of military service in WWII in Europe.

For as long as he was able after he retired, he attended several WGCSA meetings a year. It gave him a chance to see those colleagues he knew and enjoy a round of golf with them. It also gave him the chance to keep in touch with the chapter. As his health worsened, so did his attendance.

I had the good luck to hear from him a little more often, usually by letter, but sometimes by phone, too. The inspiration was usually some issue he'd read about in THE GRASS



ROOTS. He was never without an opinion.

Bill performed a great service after his time on the board and as president. He kept a close watch on the chapter and its affairs and never, ever hesitated to speak up when he thought we were headed off in the wrong direction. He was, in a lot of ways, our conscience. He was our watchdog, and he offered what could be best termed "tough love." He told us why previous decisions had been made and generally made certain that common sense prevailed. He did so with plain, straight talk; Bill was always blunt and was never bashful.

There won't be another like Bill Sell. I am going to miss him.

(Continued on page 36)

# AMETEK

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“Fall of the leaf,” as autumn was known as far back as the middle of the 16th century, is a time for enjoying leaf colors. I did my enjoying as a leafpecker in the northeast again this year, overdosing on apple cider, pumpkin pie and maple syrup, and visiting some folks with Wisconsin connections.

I stopped in to see Frank and Barb Rossi in rural New York. They are well settled in at their farm and Frank has his program at Cornell underway and moving forward. He does a lot of traveling since he is a member of the USGA research committee and because he has a 100% extension appointment. Few people realize how big New York state is, and has responsibilities that take him from Buffalo to the tip of Long Island. Hopefully we will get Frank back to the Badger State as a speaker at one of our educational programs.

A search for John Burroughs’ significant historical sites took me to the Hudson River Valley. I spent a night in Catskill, New York, called Steve Blendell and met him for breakfast. He looks great and is enjoying his life “back home.” He was raised in the



L-R: Jerry O'Donnell, Bill Eckert, Tom Harrison, Pete Miller, Monroe Miller, Dr. Jim Love and Randy Smith.

Albany area, 40 miles north of Catskill. Steve and his wife Carol are building a new house on eight acres of land they bought shortly after settling in Catskill. He sends greetings to all.

In his last president's message, Mark Kienert asks, “where have the old-timers gone?” I strongly object to his term “old timers”; it is a poor

choice. I would suggest to Mark that “veteran” would be more accurate. Or “experienced.” That issue aside, I am one of those veteran golf course superintendents in Wisconsin and in a position to answer that question, in part at least. The photo above helps.

Late in the summer we had a reunion of sorts with Professor Jim Love, Peter Miller, Jerry O'Donnell, Bill Eckert, Randy Smith, Tom

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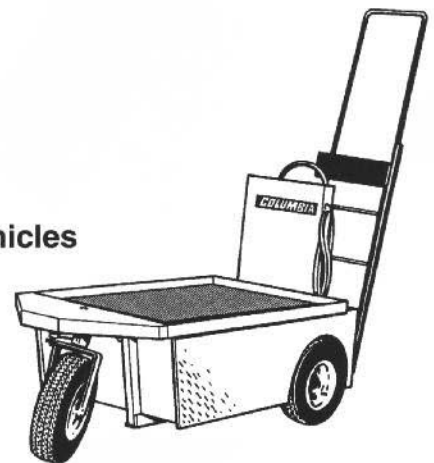


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Harrison and myself. Pete is the former golf course superintendent at Lawsonia, Nakoma Golf Club and Firestone CC. After managing golf courses, he owned a distributorship of turf equipment in Ohio. Today he helps operate a family business.

Jerry was a golf course superintendent before and after a successful career at Scotts. He retired a vice-president.

Bill was the course superintendent at Maple Bluff for a number of years. He left Madison to become manager of a substantial farming operation near Portage. He has been doing that for twenty years.

Randy, as you know, left our profession last year when he left Nakoma. He now owns his own business, which includes some golf course clients.

That leaves Tom Harrison and me remaining as course managers.

I'd guess, as a group, we are fairly typical. The majority in a group of your course superintendents end up doing something else in later years. Who knows? That could be typical of lots of professions.

Many times in my youth, especially on crisp autumn nights, our family would watch the northern lights—the aurora borealis. It seems in my adult life I've seen them less; the reason, I am convinced, is that they were simply more visible in the country where the darkness isn't polluted by artificial lights (street lamps, car lights, lighted homes, etc.).

On September 30th, the aurora borealis was particularly visible, even for townies like most of us. When they are really spectacular, the light flares with long shafts of whitish-purplish-reddish colors from the northern horizon to the very top of the sky. There is movement to them, too, and they can be overwhelmingly awesome. The September 30th show wasn't that impressive, but reminded some of us of one of the few perks for night watering on a golf course!

When I was young I always heard the northern lights were the result of sunlight being reflected from the ice on the north pole. The scientific reality is a little less exciting than that, resulting from the interaction of charged particles in the atmosphere. Sunspots and solar storms send streams of magnetic particles toward

the earth. These "solar winds" amplify the auroras (there are "southern lights"—aurora australis—too) and allows them to be seen farther from the pole.

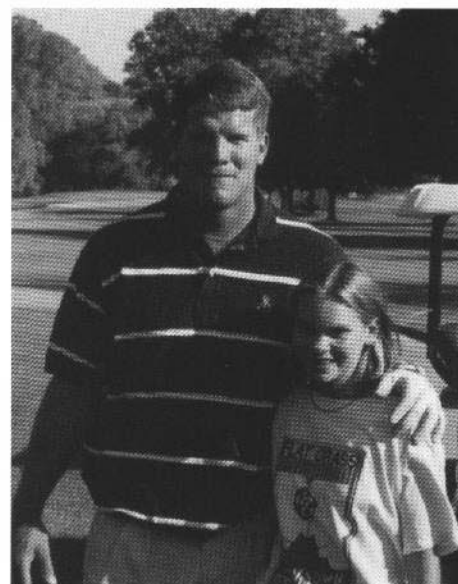
Draw a line through Salem, Oregon, Boise, Des Moines and New York City and it describes the best sighting; we are included in that area.

Northern lights sightings are reported more often in September and March. The reason is simple: the cool, clear nights magnify their visibility.

Did you catch them this fall?

I hope Holly Handrich (don't you love that name?) attends the GCSAA conference with her parents next winter—I want to get her autograph. She got her picture taken with Green Bay Packer quarterback Brett Favre!

Favre, Don Beebe, Mark Chmura and Frank Winters sneaked into Racine for a private, quiet round of golf at Racine Country Club in early October. Of course, somehow word got out that they were at the private facility and a number kids waited quietly and respectfully until they ended their game to ask for autographs and pictures. They were reluctant, but when Favre found out that Holly's dad, Mike, was the course superintendent, he posed with her for the photo you see here. Brett visited with Holly about the course, and he must



Brett Favre with one of his biggest fans—Holly Handrich.

have felt pretty good since he shot a "77 or a 78."

Not only did he have a fun round of golf at one of Wisconsin's premier courses, he gave a youngster a memory she will never forget.

It doesn't seem possible, but another Symposium is here. The program looks excellent and I expect many of us will be there. Until then, be well, do good work and keep in touch. 🍷



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