



# Romey Orth's Wisconsin Golf Course Museum: Conclusion

By Monroe S. Miller

Romey opened the double glass doors to the museum, took Betty with his right arm and led the way in. The Orth boys were next with their families, and the throngs pushed close behind. I had muscled my way so that I was right behind the Orths.

Large healthy indoor potted plants filled either side of the vestibule area and another set of double glass doors opened to the museum. I stepped through them and, literally, gasped.

On either side, as if to greet us, were full size cut outs of Old Tom Morris (at the left) and Arnold Palmer on the right, heroes of everybody who would ever walk through the museum doors.

You were taken by the brightness inside the central area of the museum. The height was formidable—I'd guess something over 25 feet at the center. Obviously Romey had installed high intensity fluorescent lamps so we wouldn't miss anything. Several large ceiling fans turned lazily.

Equipment took up the central area of the floor. At the perimeter were a number of rooms, on both sides and across the back. Those across the back were open to the floor area. Above them was a mezzanine with a stair case at each end of the four corners.

I looked at Tom Morris and Bogey Calhoun. Calhoun was speechless—a rare moment—and I thought Tom was going to pass out. In fact, I was a little light headed myself. There were rows and rows and rows of bright, shiny, perfectly restored equipment. I didn't know where to start exploring.

The big speakers in each corner of the building gave forth soothing classical music. I guessed it was Dvorak's New World Symphony, perfect for our rural surrounds. It was quiet; guys were talking with one another, but only in hushed tones.

The shock of what we were experiencing was wearing off.

The first rows of equipment were pickup trucks. It is unlikely there has ever been a golf course superintendent who hadn't had a pickup truck, at least since the time of the Ford Model T.

Romey's trucks were stunning. The first one was, in fact, a Ford Model T, the beloved Tin Lizzie that is so much a part of American history. This one was a 1925 Runabout. It had a louvered hood, a canvas top that folded down and a trusty Ford four-cylinder engine. The bed of the box was maple wood, left with a clear finish. Romey even had the toolbox on the passenger running board filled with tools of the time—a ball pein hammer, a pipe wrench, a pliers and a couple of wooden handled screwdrivers. The vehicle had a shiny, deep black finish.

Somebody said to Romey as he walked through the crowd, "Don't tell us you painted these, Romey!"

"I didn't," he said with a broad smile.

Next to the Model T was a 1931 Chevrolet pickup. It was the first year Chevy offered a complete factory-built truck. "They have always been behind Ford," Tom mused as we looked the old truck over closely. This one had a "Stovebolt" six-cylinder 194 cubic inch, 50 horsepower mill for power and solid steel wheels and bed box, an advance over the wood that had been used in the 1925 Ford Model T. Romey had it painted in the authentic factory colors of "Blue Bell" blue and black and accented with precise gold pin striping. It also had a canvas top.

Next in line was another Ford, this one a 1935 model, right out of the depression. It was black, too, but the 16-spoke wire wheels were painted bright red with chrome hubcaps. They were beautiful accents. The tires were whitewalls. Romey had the driver's side half of the hood up, showing the 88 horsepower, 221

*(Continued on page 32)*



## ENVIRONMENTAL SOLUTIONS FOR THE GOLF SUPERINTENDENT

- Disposal of pesticides, fungicides, and hazardous wastes
- Free cost analysis for disposal of waste inventory
- Lab analysis for unknown substances
- Turnkey waste disposal includes waste profiles, labels, manifests, packaging, and transportation
- RCRA and DOT compliance
- 25+ years in the hazardous waste industry

**Liesch Environmental Services, Inc.**  
6000 Gisholt Drive, Suite 203 • Madison, WI 53713  
(608) 223-1532 • Fax (608) 223-1534

(Continued from page 31)

cubic inch V-8 engine. It was painted a soft linden green. The fabulous paint job was highlighted by chrome trimmed headlights, a gracefully sloping front grill and a unique "V-8" emblem on the grill.

I looked around, wondering if I was the only one looking at the pickup trucks. I wasn't, but the crowd of superintendents had dispersed over the floor of the building; some of the guys were even upstairs by now. Jim Orth came by, put his hand on my shoulder and said, "Well, Boss, what do you think?"

"I'm almost speechless, Jim. This is beyond words." Jim was, I could tell, proud of his father.

Parked next to the '35 Ford was a stunning vehicle, one I'd not seen very often despite my 50 years of age and rural upbringing that included lots of trucks. It was a deep, rich cardinal red 1937 Studebaker pickup. It was the first year that Studebaker made a pickup and this one was strikingly good looking. It had a smooth round design, whitewall tires and chrome hubcaps. The chrome

grill and stylish side-mounted spare tire all spelled elegance (if there is elegance in a pickup!). It was powered by a six-cylinder engine. I wanted to hop in, start it and drive it away.

I'd never once seen any of these trucks, nor had I heard Romey (or Jim, for that matter) talk about them. Half an hour had gone by and I had only looked at four of them. There were several to go before I even got to the grass machinery and tractor displays.

Ford's 1942 pickup was introduced in December 1941 just as the war broke out. It was the last pickup Ford would produce until after the war; car and light truck production gave way to the manufacture of war equipment. I loved this old truck; I remembered the model from my farm youth when they were actually quite common in the 1950s. The sheet metal from the cab forward was distinguished by its unique waterfall grill and squared-off, flat front profile. It was the first in Romey's collection of trucks that had the headlights mounted inside the fender.

Like the Studebaker and the '35 Ford, this one also had whitewall tires. The hubcaps were chrome and had the famous Ford winged logo. Romey had it painted up in the original village green with Tacoma cream trim. The spare was mounted at the side of the box and the fuel filler cap was chrome, a nice touch for a great truck.

"Hey, Tom, look at this one," I said to Tom Morris as we went down the line. "I'll bet each of us has driven this truck before."

"You're right," he said as we leaned on the fender of a 1953 Chevy 3100. It was a common site when we were growing up in the 1950s and 1960s. Romey's was green and had the standard "Thriftmaster" six-cylinder engine under the hood. The curved windows at each rear corner of the cab were what I liked best about the appearance of this truck.

The first truck I drove was a 1954 Ford F-100; Romey had a 1956 F-100 that was very similar. It was finished in cardinal red, an original color. Romey did everything authentically, I was discovering. It had a

# For Your Fall Projects

Check With **ProGreen Plus**  **LLC**  
A WISCONSIN COMPANY

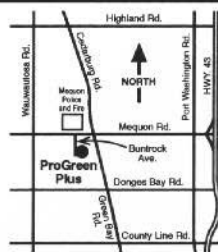
- ✓ **AERIFYING** - PSA Calcined Diatomaceous Earth
- ✓ **FERTILIZING** - Green, Tee, Fairway & Rough Fertilizer
- ✓ **SEEDING** - Seed, PennMulch, Terra-Sorb Seedcoat Gel
- ✓ **SNOW MOLD** - PCNB Granular & Flowable

**CALL...JORDAN SENSIBAR**  
GOLF COURSE SALES MANAGER

CAR... 414 418-9101 • PAGER... 414 318-4280

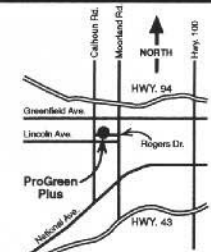
**TOLL FREE... 1-888-PRO-GREEN**  
7 7 6 - 4 7 3 3

## MEQUON



11020 Buntrock Ave.  
**242-9100**  
Fax: (414) 242-2117

## NEW BERLIN



16600 W. Rogers Dr.  
**789-9550**  
Fax: (414) 789-9509



Plant Health Care, Inc.



wrap around front windshield and the rear window wrapped around both rear corners. It was cool. The truck grill had the classic widow's peak motif, and the bed box was back to a wooden floor, obviously because of experience with rust. I'd hauled a lot of loads of grain to the grist mill in my hometown in a truck almost like this one.

I smelled coffee, followed the delicious aroma to a table where Romey had set up a coffee maker. I drew a cup of the hot brew.

"I don't know about you," Tom said, "but this is my fave, hands down."

He had a point. The 1957 Dodge Sweptwide D100 Romey had found and restored had fins like so many of the vehicles from the nifty fifties. It was a sharp truck, painted cherry red and white and rolling on whitewall tires. The radio antenna was mounted at the front center of the roof. Rather than a neutral colored interior, the seat covers, dash and floor carpeting matched the two-tone color of the truck.

"Finally, Tom, we are near the end. I'm about exhausted!" I said as I sipped the coffee. He was looking at the Dodge so intently he didn't acknowledge me.

Romey's next two trucks were Chevys, a 1957 Cameo Carrier and a 1958 Apache. The Cameo was a dazzling, high-style pickup, kind of like the Dodge. It was red and white, too; the inside of the box was painted high gloss white! "Very impractical, Romey," I thought to myself. It almost looked like a car. The spare was concealed beneath the bed, a 283 cubic inch, 160 horsepower V-8 was beneath the hood. Like the '56 Ford, it also had a curved front and rear windshield. A sunvisor covered the front windshield. The red and white interior also matched the exterior.

The blue Apache marked the first year of dual headlights for pickups. It had the same engine as the Cameo, but unlike the '57 Chev it had a small running board. The shine on the blue paint was a mile deep.

We bumped into Calhoun, Middleton and Fennimore as we finished the trucks and headed to Romey's tractor collection. Bogey still was overwhelmed by the size of Romey's museum. "Boy, this is like the Smithsonian of golf courses," he commented. He was close to the

Superintendents, at least those my age, like tractors almost as much as they like trucks. For much of our careers, tractors were the power sources for large area mowing equipment; it seemed for me only yesterday we were mowing roughs and fairways with tractors and gang mowers, and tractors were needed to tow spreaders and sprayers and trailers. PTO was a common feature for shredders and spreaders and chippers. But not these days. And that simple reality made Romey's tractor collection even more sentimental for me.

Just as Morris and I were starting down the aisles of old and not-so-old tractors, Romey walked by. "Spend some time here," he encouraged me. "It takes somebody who has been around awhile to appreciate these antiques. It doesn't hurt to have a farm background, either."

The first iron horses were all Fords, lots of them. He had them parked by age—Model F (painted in original gray with red steel wheels), a Model N and a 2N (both were all gray in color and on steel wheels

which were also gray), an 8N and a 9N (both had red "bellies" and were from the 1940s, a 1953 Golden Jubilee NAA, and all red Model 640 Workmaster, and a 1961 861 with a Select-O-Speed transmission.

Those trannies were a disaster on goof turf," Tom said as we passed by the 861. "We had one of them and every time you geared it up the rear tires would nudge a little turf loose. It was a good transmission for a farm, but on golf fairways it was bad news."

Romey also had a 2110 LCG, circa 1973, that was finished in the original yellow sheetmetal and blue belly. The 8N had a mounted two-bottom plow and the 9N had the famous Ford read blade on the three-point hitch.

"Here's a genuine golf course antique tractor," Tom noted as we stopped by a huge IH Farmall F-20 "Fairway Tractor". My head barely reached the hood of the darn thing. It was on steel wheels that had small spuds threaded into the wheels instead of the directional bars found on ag tractors of the day. It was likely the first honest turf tractor.

*(Continued on page 34)*





(Continued from page 33)

He had an IH 8-16 tractor that ran on kerosene from the 1920s like the Ford Model F. No Farmall collection would be complete without a B, and Romey had one that was refurbished so that it looked like it had just come off the production line in Rock Island. An IH 240 with a loader was parked next to the B.

Next to the Farmalls were the Allis-Chalmers, which had all been manufactured here in Wisconsin at West Allis. He had a big old 1937 WD on steel and a 1939 Model C (under 20 horsepower!) on rubber.

We doubled back to see the others. Also made in Wisconsin at the Racine plant started by Jerome Increase Case were Romey's Case tractors—a Model VAC from the 1930s and a Model L, larger than the VAC and probably at least several years older. The VAC was orange and the L was gray. He also had a row crop 1957 Case 350, painted in the "new" Case colors of that day—yellow/cream on the hood and fenders and the original dark orange on the engine and drivetrain. It was a beauty.

There were two Oliver tractors—a 1938 Model 60 narrow front and a 1956 Model 55 with a wide front. The 55 had turf tires on it, wide and smooth and squat.

We were at the John Deere aisle. "I don't ever remember seeing or even hearing old timers talk about John Deere tractors on golf courses during the times of their "Johnny Poppers", Tom said. "Maybe their distinctive sound was too unsettling to golf players."

As I thought about it I agreed with Tom. JDs were popular tractors, for sure, but other than as a loader tractor I didn't remember much about them.

Speaking of those old tractors with the big cylinder and the big flywheel, Romey had a few of them - a GP on steel, a Model LA (a very small tractor) and a Model B.

No sooner had Tom wondered when we'd get to pure golf course equipment than we were stopped in our tracks by four immaculate, new-looking Toro tractors. "Wow!" was all either of us could come up with.

"Wait until the boys from Minneapolis hear about these," Tom

said as we walked from one end to the other end of the Toro tractors. The first vehicle, a Toro Model A "Master", was on steel wheels and had a manual dump body. Next to it was a Model B "General"; it was on rubber tires, but had an appearance similar to the Master—square front end with an exposed radiator.

The coolest looking one was third in line—a Model C "Bullet". The name fit perfectly as the grill that covered the radiator came to a point on the center line of the tractor. It also had metal engine skirts, not unlike those on the Oliver 60 tractor Romey had. There were louvers on either side.

The final vehicle was a Model D "Park Patrol", more familiar to superintendents my age. It had a six-cylinder Continental engine with overhead valves—a real powerhouse of an engine. All four Toro tractors looked like they were ready for a good day's work!

Romey was impartial. Next to the Toros were Jacobsen tractors—the short and square G-10 towing tractor with its Ford four-cylinder engine, and a F-6 fairway mowing tractor with its



# WOLOSEK Golf Course & Athletic Field Mixes

We understand the needs of professional groundskeepers – quality and time are important!

## Say no to:

- Delayed Deliveries
- Contaminated Sand
- High Prices

## Call Wolesek's, the company who cares with:

- Consistent Particle Size
- Proper pH
- On-Time Delivery
- Affordability

**GUARANTEED!**

We Offer:

**Kiln-Dried Sterilized Top Dressing Sand**  
**80/20 Top Dressing Mix**  
**Construction Mixes**

Bunker Sand • Reed Sedge Peat • Cart Path Aggregate  
Bark, Boulders & Decorative Stone  
**Custom On-Site Blending**



**(715) 423-3909** Fax (715) 423-4215

*Product meets standards for putting green root zone mixes as specified by the USGA.*

elaborate cable system for lifting the heavy gang units. "I have mowed a few thousand acres with one of these," Tom mused, almost to himself.

The F-6 finally led us into the area devoted to mowing—reels and knives and even sickles. Romey had a horse drawn sickle mower next to a Ford three-point hitch version of it. There were gang mowers—too many of them. From horse-drawn three gangs to Worthington Airfield Blitzers, from tractor drawn Spartan nine-gangs to English equipment even Morris and I weren't acquainted with, Romey had them all. "How many," we thought, "did that man rescue from the junkyards?" Probably most of them.

Big machinery occupied the floor area of the museum. Under the mezzanine that went all the way around the second level, Jim had designed arrangements of smaller equipment. These displays were segregated by walls and portable barriers, arranged in odd shaped rooms and areas. They made the museum seem even larger than it already was. The back walls of the variously shaped rooms were painted white; others were "papered" with life size golf course photographs. There were pictures of tractor plants in Wisconsin, of Jacobsen's factory in Racine, Brillion Iron Works, the Briggs and Stratton engine plant in Milwaukee and The Kohler Company engine factory in Kohler when the engines were indeed made there.

"We're never going to get through this, Tom," I said as I was looking around for a place to sit for awhile. We had to look through irrigation equipment and hand mowers. We both wanted to look at the old Jake 4-acre mowers and the ancient Toro Whirlwinds. Romey even had an early triplex Greensking—the early praying mantis-looking machine. It was an antique in our business, yet both of us could remember when it was introduced.

Romey and Jim knew people would need to rest every once in awhile, so he had a number of "tee stations" about the museum floor, each one different with a history of its own.

We looked across the floor to where the bunker equipment was, and Tom spotted an old Stan Clarke power sand trap rake, one of the first (if not THE first) power rakes. That represented a giant step in improved

course maintenance—especially on courses with 60 or 70 sand bunkers.

Bogey came by, still full of energy, and said breathlessly, "wait until you see all of the aerification equipment. Romey always talked about his good friend Tom Mascara; I guess they were close. He has most of Tom's West Point equipment on the other side of the building. And all the old, early Ryan pieces, too. And some hand aerifiers."

Equally interesting were the turf trucks—Red Ryders, Smithcos, Cushmans and more. And he preserved the history of Wisconsin's prominent place in the golf car business with his collection of Harley Davidson golf carts and the Universal that was made in Madison. It had a 4-cylinder water-cooler Continental engine. All eyes were on the Cushman Model 650 "bullet" golf car from the late 1960s—18 horsepower engine included!

We were drawn to the back wall of the museum, also under the mezzanine, by the crowd that had gravitated there. Small wonder.

Two walls perpendicular to the back wall divided the area under the mezzanine into three rooms. Each room depicted a golf course shop from days gone by—the left one was obviously from the early years of the century, the center room was fitted with shop equipment from the 1920s, and the art deco shop radio in the third bay told you it was typical of the 1940s.

All three rooms were roped off to keep people out of them, but with your toes right on the line you could enjoy every detail that Romey and Jim used to date each one. Horse harnesses, calendars, antique spark plugs, hand tools and hundreds of other small things took you back in time. It was awesome.

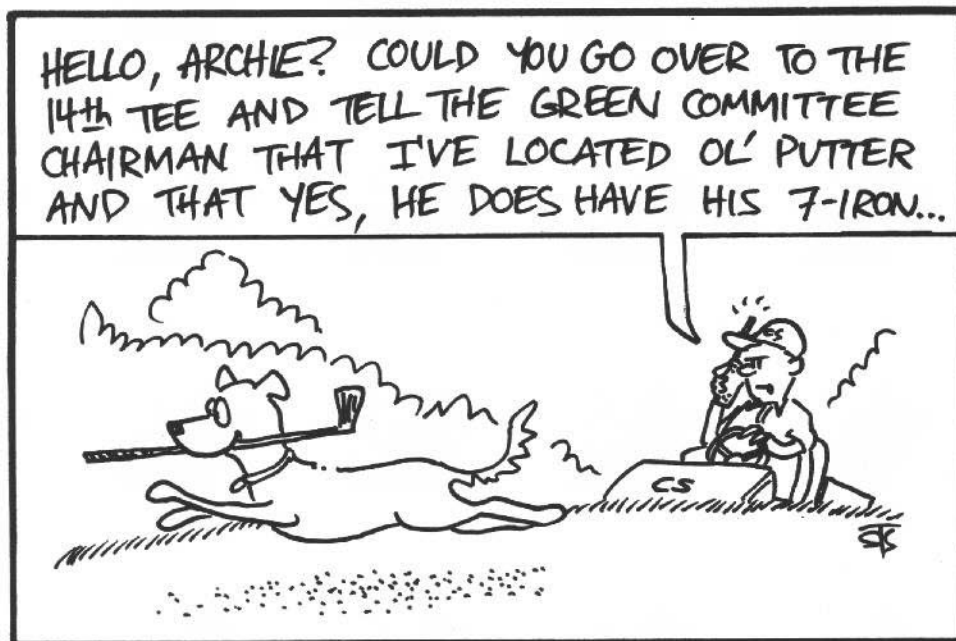
Tom and I continued to wander, looking at spray equipment and a collection of seeders and spreaders. Then we climbed the steps in the nearest corner to see what surprises were upstairs on the mezzanine.

We had looked at it from all angles below; it was a combination of open areas with displays, rooms (both large and small) and the hallways connecting them. From the floor one could not see what was showing in each. We reached the top of the stairs, turned right and started our tour of the top floor.

We walked through an opening into an area enclosed by 8 foot walls on either end and along the edge of the mezzanine; the wall of the museum served as the back wall of the room.

Inside was every imaginable green and tee tool known to man. Cup cutters, soil samplers, divot repair tools, and pieces we couldn't identify. They were hanging on the four walls.

Flags, sticks, cups, tee blocks and ballwashers from years ago were there. The display included the old Lewis Line wooden paddle/tin bucket  
(Continued on page 37)



(Continued from page 35)

washer made in Watertown for decades. Romey's collection of flags was impressive—from old, faded cotton flags tied to galvanized swivels to personalized flags from the Anderson Consulting tourney at Blackwolf Run. His flagsticks included ancient hickory sticks, short five-foot sticks and one red/white striped pole 12 feet tall that had served as a blind shot target on a green somewhere in Wisconsin. Romey likely knew which course!

There was a photo display—old pictures of WGCSA meetings, members, golf courses, shops, O.J. Noer, Love, Worf, Newman, Koval and everything else and everybody you could think of. Tournament pics were identified. Among my favorites were those taken of horse drawn mowers, push mowers and old tractors like those we looked at on the floor. All past presidents of the WGCSA were on the outside wall, the "Wall of Fame" as Romey had dubbed it.

On around we went, through the hand tools—wooden handled shovels, wooded tooth rakes and the like—and to the irrigation equipment.

Big brass three-wheeled Buckners with adjustable nozzles, several models of the Raintrain, hoses of every stripe, and even a brand new Rainbird 808. Tom wanted to linger there longer than I did, so I continued to the place I was most anxious to visit from the moment I had spied it—the "Orth Memorial Golf Course Library." A bronze plaque identified it as such, and I opened one of the heavy double doors and entered.

The room was carpeted in a thick dark green pile; the walls and shelves were finished in a deep mahogany. It felt and smelled like a library. The center area had a large wooden table, similar to one you'd find in a board room, and a dozen comfortable chairs were arranged around it. Elsewhere plush chairs covered with a subdued fabric invited you to sit and read about golf and golf courses and golf turf.

The shelves were filled with books of golf turf like were found only at the Noer Collection at MSU. Romey had known O.J., and several of Noer's books were here, too. Jim Orth had visited Golf House in Far Hills and

followed their security plan, a sad commentary on the times but a prudent move.

The library led to Romey's toy collection, on show in locked cases and cabinets that were lighted. Morris walked through the library but I caught up with him here as he drooled at the old toy tractors and trucks and course vehicles.

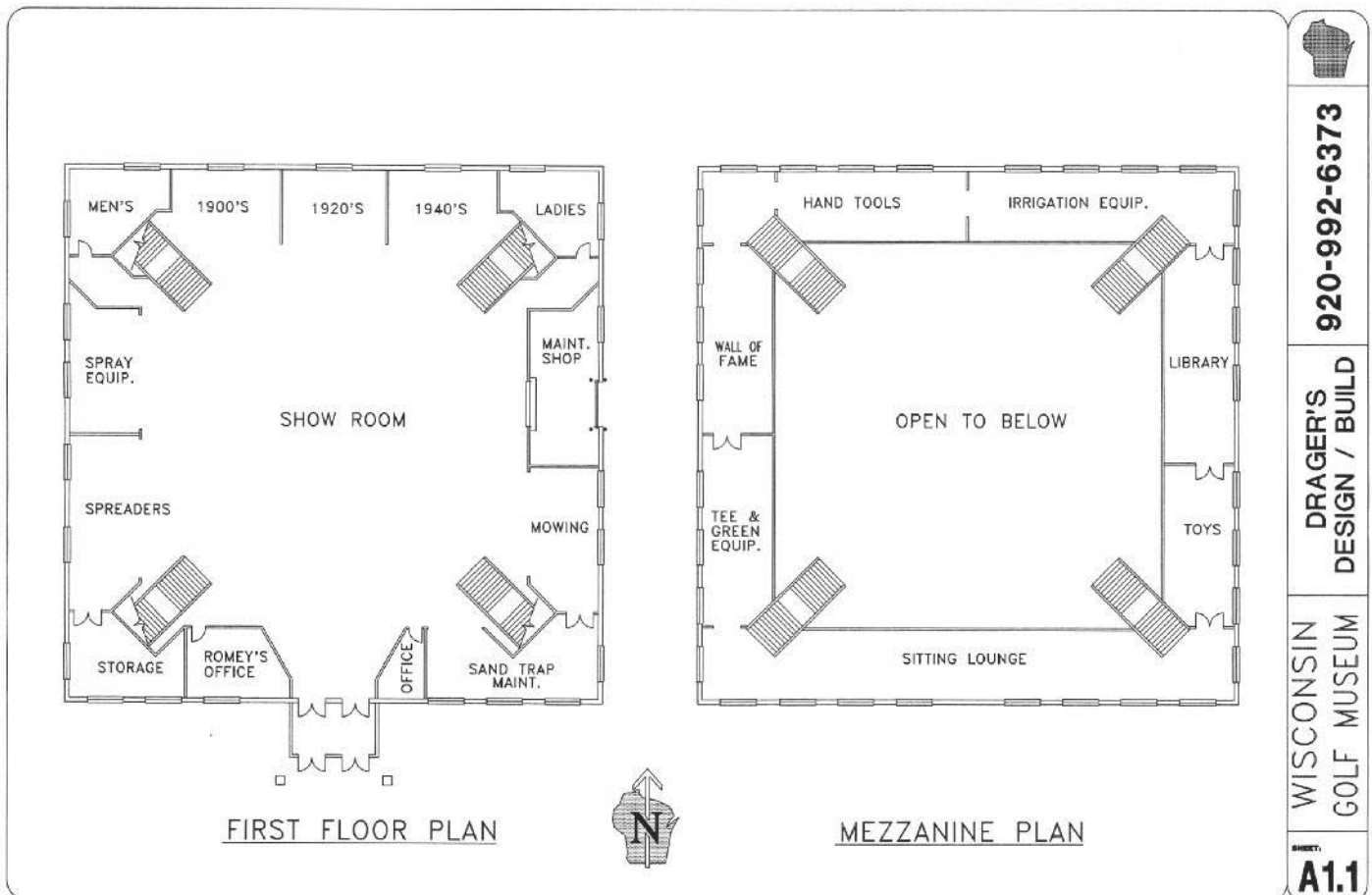
It was here Romey showed his mementoes from almost 50 GCSAA conferences, many regional shows and field days and meetings. There were Jake hats, Penncross seed bags, pens and pencils, keychains, golf balls, more hats—you name it and Romey had saved it and put it out for all to see right here.

We made it back to the stairway we'd climbed a bit ago and joined colleagues on the museum floor. Calhoun, Fennimore and Middleton wandered over to greet us.

"I can smell that roast pig," Bogey said, licking his chops. "I'm hungry."

We all agreed and made our way with the rest of the guys to the front of the museum.

(Continued on page 39)





(Continued from page 37)

I stopped for a moment, even though the rest were leaving. It was inspiring to me to see what one man could do to affect and influence so many others. Romey's total and complete dedication to golf and golf courses was way beyond what anyone before him had shown. His sense of the importance to preserve our history—my history—at his own cost spoke of an unusual man, an unselfish man, a humble man. Romey knew that when history is

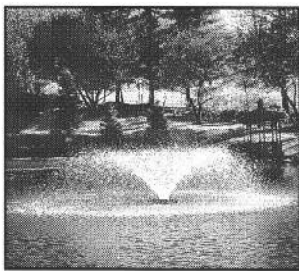
unrecorded, it is forgotten. He wasn't going to let that happen to Wisconsin's golf courses. What Romey Orth didn't realize is that his commitment to an idea and principle will be a monument to him. Long after Romey is gone his museum will remain. Others from around the country may try to duplicate it in the years to come, but no one will come close. And only Romey will ever be first. There couldn't be a greater tribute to a man.

The trip home was surprisingly

quiet. Even Bogey spoke in lower tones. Whatever contribution any one of might have made to our profession over the years seemed insignificant next to Romey's. We talked of memories from the courses we had worked on, employees and players and tractors and machinery. We made plans to get back to the Wisconsin Golf Course Museum shortly, for a longer stay.

And we all thanked God we were on earth at the same time as Romey Orth. It was a privilege to know him. 🙏

## OTTERBINE®.... Your Water Quality Management Specialists



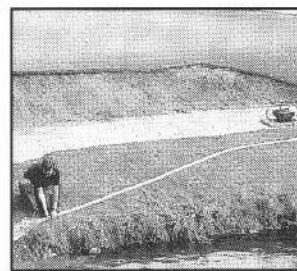
**Surface Aerators**

- Reduce the problem of algae, aquatic weeds and odor.
- Introduce O<sub>2</sub> into the pond.
- Available in a variety of spray patterns and sizes.



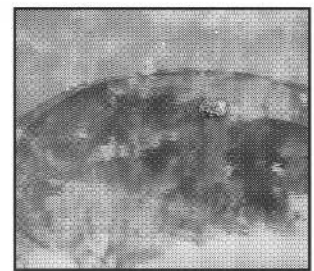
**Sub-Surface Aerators**

- Introduce O<sub>2</sub> into the pond bottom via Sub-Surface or Diffused Air.
- Perfect for shallow ponds.
- No visible spray pattern.



**Bunker Pumper**

- Removing water from bunkers, excavation sites or swimming pools.
- 280 GPM pumping rate.
- Floating, self priming portable - only 85 lbs!



**Ottershield Lake Dye**

- Transforms muddy water into healthy blue water.
- No stained clothes or hands - you never touch Ottershield.
- Neat, clean, packets.

**Reinders**

ELM GROVE  
13400 Watertown Plank Rd.  
414-786-3306  
1-800-785-3306

- "Ask For A Free Demonstration"

MADISON  
4618 A Tompkins Dr.  
608-223-0200

APPLETON  
900 Randolph Dr.  
414-788-0200

STEVENS POINT  
3501 Dixon St.  
715-342-3600

## WGCSA 14th ANNUAL WEEKEND EXTRAVAGANZA

October 3rd and 4th in LaCrosse  
at Drugan's Castle Mound Golf and Supper Club

Contact Bruce Worzella at 414-338-0540 for additional information