



A Life Well Lived

By **Monroe S. Miller**, Golf Course Superintendent, Blackhawk Country Club

The thought of him comes to me at odd times - in the dimness of twilight while I'm reading, at midnight when I should be sound asleep or in the bright sunshine when I am working on the golf course. It makes me feel somewhat guilty - I am thinking of Jim Belfield more now that he has left us than when he was here among us. I took him for granted, I guess.

Or, I am now realizing what a truly great man he was, right in our midst, as close as a phone call. There clearly was a subconscious comfort in that. If someone, anyone, needed something, he was there.

Tom Harrison and I went to the visitation together. We visited about Jim most of the way to Milwaukee and back home to Madison. The conversation we had about Jim was probably like hundreds of other conversations about him between then and Fathers Day when he was killed. Everything that was said about him by Tom and me was positive because that was the kind of life he led.

We sat in my truck in the parking lot of the funeral home for awhile, gathering the courage to go and see him for the last time. I was wondering what a person could say to Bev that would offer any comfort. Now I know that would have been impossible. After all, who would know better than his family what a wonderful person he was; no one could have told them what they already knew.

Almost all of the photos assembled in the hallway of the funeral home were family pictures, making it clear Jim was a man who had his priorities straight.

Yet I knew him as a result of our common career. He was a real leader, displaying maturity back in the early eighties that was beyond his youth. Many times I sought his opinion during the time I was president of the WGCSA. After all, he had preceded me in that office and had gotten the chapter positioned to really move forward. He made it easier for those who succeeded him.

Then and now, I was impressed at how much he had accomplished while so young. I am sure he was the youngest person ever honored with the WGCSA Distinguished Service Award; and surely he was one of, if not the youngest president ever elected by our members.

And I never heard anything but good about the course he managed for so many years. Excellence was also what Jim was about. He was open with his golf course operation, sharing what he knew and had

learned, and he had lots to share with us.

For me, more than anything, the most telling thing about Jim Belfield was that everyone, and I mean absolutely everyone, spoke highly of him. Have you ever heard even one negative thing about him? I never have. He was able, by simply being himself, to win the hearts of all of us.

It seems so lame, so inadequate, to use the trite phrase that Jim's life was a life well lived. But it was. He accomplished more in his short time on earth than most could hope to in a long life.

They always say, when a good person has passed on, that he is in a better place. That may well be. But I still, desperately, wish Jim was with us.

I am really going to miss him. ♣

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