



# Kidd

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

He was as black as coal and showed up at our shop one morning in early June. Although he had an attitude, he was friendly with everybody on the crew. We thought that surely somebody was looking for their pet cat.

He was kind of scrawny and skinny and looked like he'd been in more than his share of fights, even though it was equally obvious he was a young cat. His fur was roughed up, matted and dirty, certain clues he was not as domesticated as the cats some of us had at home for pets. We still believed that somehow we would find his owner - a phone call from a neighbor, an inquiry from somebody on the course perimeter looking for him, or a "lost pet" notice in the paper. We even called the Humane Society to see if people looked there for lost pets.

No luck. We made him feel welcome, feeding him table scraps and a little milk. Dave even stopped at the

Farmers' Coop on the way home one night and bought five pounds of Purina Cat Chow, thinking the dry food diet would be better for him. We poured some Oil-Dri in an oil pan to serve as a scratch box for him. He hung around the shop, getting plenty of sleep. A pile of drop cloths in the loft became his favorite nap place. He also liked window sills when the warm sun was shining in.

The guys on the crew got to calling him Kiddo, so when it got to the point when we could tell he was going to stay around for a while, they formally named him Kidd, adding a "d" for distinction.

He didn't eat much, and as we observed him over those first couple of months, it was easy to know why. He was a great hunter. We never had mice in the big shop, but the lower buildings and the fertilizer shed definitely had those rodent inhabitants. Until Kidd showed up. He elim-



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inated that pest problem.

We would see him, early early in the day, on the golf course, hunting. He was back at the shop early enough to avoid players. But it was common to see him slinking around with a gopher or a chipmunk in his mouth, a warm and fresh and tasty meal for him. And, believe it or not, we were able to make him understand that in our world birds were to be listened to and enjoyed, not eaten. We only had to swat him a few times for dragging a bird back to the shop, or knock him off a tree branch as he moved with stealth toward a robin or nuthatch.

Pretty soon, he was one of us. We deferred to him shamelessly. He was arrogant and confident, and we loved it. If Kidd wanted to be scratched, he had many volunteers. He would jump up on our laps and stay as long as he wanted, and then either moved to somebody else or went for a nap. He was even accepted in Green Committee meetings if that was where he wanted to be.

At least as distinctive as his 100% pure black coat was Kidd's ability to purr. He sounded like a diesel engine idling or an old Chevy 409 slightly out of timing. It was hilarious - his purring rattled the dishes in the cupboards

in the lunchroom! And he was generous with it; he was purring most of the time he was in the shop.

Kidd was a hunter, we knew that. But he was also a fighter, at night we suspected and more often than suited us. Several on our staff were farm kids, and they offered an obvious solution - neutering. "No big deal," Matt said. "I've castrated hundreds of cats in my life, and most of them lived."

He laughed. And so did Val. And Jared. Frankly, I saw it as a perfectly reasonable solution and nodded approval.

Matt insisted on doing the surgery himself. Val wandered to his toolbox and opened a new single-edged razor blade. Jared went upstairs and retrieved a pair of waders we used to install and removed intake pipes from the lake. I got the alcohol from the medicine cabinet and grabbed Kidd as he was rubbing along my legs and purring. A few scratches on his head and he was relaxed and completely unsuspecting of the drastic change about to happen.

I handed him to Jared who had turned the waders inside out down to the boot portion. He stuffed Kidd into the left boot head first. Val poured alcohol first on the razor blade and then on Kidd's most personal area. I was



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smart enough to stand back.

As soon as Kidd figured out we were up to no good, from his point of view, he let out a blood curdling yowl. And he let out a strong stream of urine, too, all over the guys. That's why I was standing back! But with lightning fast moves in succession - incision, squeeze, cut and incision, squeeze and cut - Kidd went from a he to an it. He was yowling, the guys (except for Matt) were laughing. A dash of alcohol on the tiny wounds and Jared let loose of the wader boot. Kidd was off like a shot.

Matt was proud of himself. "Another delicate surgery executed successfully," he said. "Next!"

We wondered if Kidd would be back. Fact is, we didn't see him for several days. But he came back, even though he was walking lightly at first.

The city boys were wondering if it was worth it. The surgical team, well experienced in the matter of farm cats, told them nothing was worse than a mean, old tomcat and insisted that is what Kidd would have become. "Plus," Val said, "a tomcat roams a lot, for obvious reasons, and is fighting constantly. Kidd ran a real risk from being run over by a vehicle, captured by an animal control officer or eventually killed by another tomcat. He's better off this way."

And he was. He almost always was around the shop. We cut a small trap door with a rubber flap and a 90

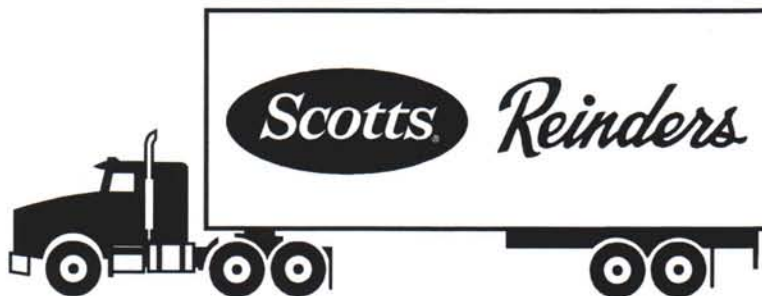
degree turn in the shop wall so he could come and go as he wished, even if we weren't there at work. He became a bit of a nuisance with a habit of his, even though we thought it funny. He was always hitching a ride, so to speak, onto the golf course. He like riding a golf utility car with whomever was cutting cups each morning. He still hunted, but less and less as the years went by. We never did break his habit of using the sand bunkers as his own personal, king-sized scratch boxes. They were like his own rest stations. So we watched him close so we could clean up after him.

I was flattered that he liked to ride along with me early in the morning during the season when I toured the course just after daybreak. He was a genuine pal, purring that loud and unmistakable purr.

Kids loved Kidd, especially as he grew older and more docile and a little fat. Heck, he even got gray, which showed up well against his black, shiny coat.

Kidd lived with us for nine years. When he died, we moped around for days grieving the loss of a real friend. We buried him next to the row of lilacs that are on our eastern border. When they bloom in profusion each spring, the blossoms serve as a reminder of a tough little guy who was awfully easy to love. We have never tried to replace him. He was the only shop cat we will ever have. ♻

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