

# Touched By a Friend

By **Bruce Worzella**, Golf Course Superintendent, West Bend Country Club

Now that a year has passed since the tragedy of a very close fellow superintendent, but more so a very dear friend, I have found the courage to write an article that was asked of me eight months ago. When you lose someone that had a lot of influence on what you do today, it takes time to prepare yourself to try to reminisce and dedicate a tribute to a person who touched you for over thirty years.

April 22, 1999, Dave Murgatroyd lost his life like so many others, driving his vehicle to a certain destination, and not even thinking of what could happen. Unfortunately for Dave, his life ended here on earth. Now, Gloria, Ann, Crystal and Mary, their lives are filled with sorrow and wonderful memories.

So many friends have so many memories. To you Dave, I know you can hear me. And to his family, relatives, friends, and all the people he has touched, I give you a few words of what he meant to fellow employees and acquaintances.

## **Fondest memories from Joe Deschler:**

Pat and I attended many national turf conferences with Dave and Gloria and have had some really great times. His last GCSAA conference in Orlando, Dave and Gloria, Greg and Lynn Kallenberg, and Pat and I spent the entire week together. We toured the equipment show each day and attended various functions each night and we all had such a great time. Dave told me that it was the best time ever at a convention. Gloria and Dave have been our golf partners for the past few years at the Superintendents' Dinner Dance and we enjoyed this tremendously. Dave was always kidding around and having a good time. He would say, "Hey Joe", in the middle of my back swing and then laugh the rest of the day because I took about a 12-pound divot and missed the ball.

We will also miss the many visits to our home and evenings out for dinner. Dave and I go back so far that I think dirt was still called "dirt". We will miss him as a great friend and customer as will Dennis Robinson, Greg Kallenberg, Grant and John Mortimer, and everyone else at Horst Distributing.

Dave's death has changed our lives forever. We have lost a true and great friend and will miss him tremendously. We also hope that Gloria will continue to be part of our lives and attend the various golf course functions with us.

## **Kind words from Dale Marach:**

In a person's life you are lucky if you meet one person

with honesty and genuineness that David had. I feel lucky to have worked with him and counted him as a friend. He was always proud of his family and enjoyed talking about them.

David had an attitude about enjoying life that was amazing. He worked hard and played just as hard. When I left the Ridges, after working with him for seven years, he always had time to answer a question or listen to how my golf course was coming. I know for a fact that I was not the only former employee who felt his concern for us or his pleasure in seeing our golf courses. I have never met a man who could maintain a golf course with so little and still produce a challenging course. If I had never met Dave or he had never given me that first job, I would never have found the profession I am in today. He never tried to motivate us to go into the golf business, but he showed us how to have fun doing a job that you love. He may never have gone to college, but he was a great teacher.

I am grateful for having the privilege of working with him. There are many people that have worked at the Ridges and with David who are better people because of him.

## **A real influence from Jeff Ruesch:**

The first time I met David Murgatroyd, his father employed me as a rock and stick picker when they were building the back nine at the Ridges. I had managed to get an old gray Willis Jeep and trailer stuck on what is now fourteen fairway. A fifteen-year-old kid walks up to David doing some backhoe work and tries to explain to him that he just buried a Jeep and trailer with a ton of rocks on it. (For those who knew David, you can appreciate what his reaction was.) Little did I know what an influence that man on that backhoe would have on me the 28 years I knew him.

In the months since his tragic death, I can find very few things that I do on the golf course that do not remind me of him. In those days as a teenager at the Ridges, we built bridges, roads, shops, clubhouses, and a golf course. Back then, if it needed to get done, you just did it. The things you learned, the fun you had, and the great stories that came from those experiences, were true gifts. The greatest gift of them all was having the friendship of a man like David Murgatroyd.

## **A long and very close friendship from Jeff Bottensek:**

David Murgatroyd was my friend for over 30 years. I



met David when I started working at the Ridges during the summer while I was going to high school. David and I spent a lot of time together at stockcar races, working on cars, playing golf and boating. Over the many years, we spent a lot of time just talking about grass and going to various meetings together. David was a very good and special friend and I will miss him very much.

#### **My buddy and mentor from Jim "Uno" Wunrow:**

Meeting Dave Murgatroyd has been nothing short of a memorable experience in my life. Dave has always taught me from a kid to a man, to be the best you can be.

I was Dave's assistant for many years before flocking my wings as a superintendent. Dave also gave me the nickname "Uno" that I proudly hold today. Dave and I always has time for one another because our relationship went far beyond the golf course industry; we were just GREAT BUDDIES.

Dave was always there to listen to anything that was bothering you and always had a position on the subject, maybe not the answer you wanted, but he was always truthful in his responses. Like so many people, I also have very fond memories of the years with Dave. One in particular comes to mind; Dave and I stopped at a local A & W on the way to Stevens Point. They were running a special two root beer floats for \$1.50. I told Dave I would buy, so we stopped. When we got our floats, I gave Dave a \$10 bill and he told the carhop to keep the change and received a big "Thank you sir". And I received a big laugh from Dave. We always laughed together when we passed by an A & W and he would say, "let's stop and I would say no because it is too expensive." Dave was a kid at heart a lot of time.

There were times that kidding was not in Dave's vocabulary. Everybody who has ever worked for Dave can relate to this, but I feel those times were Dave's way of really trying to get his point across. I am a better person going through the good and not so good times with Dave.

Dave and I always talked openly to one another about Dave's retirement and my future. He always said when he retired as superintendent it would be good if I took his job, then he could work for me on the crew. Well Dave, I am here and you might not be here physically, but your presence will always be here and in my heart. I am very honored to sit behind your desk.

#### **Neighbor, family friend, fellow professional, caring person; Bruce Worzella:**

At the young age of thirteen, I started my first real job at Ridges working for David's father. While getting to work, I had to travel past Dave and Gloria's house because they were our neighbors. Because we were neighbors, I got to know Dave in his many different adventures. We snowmobiled together when old Wisconsin winters produced real snow cover. We worked

on automobiles, trucks and even spent many hours trying to keep a friend's stock car together. Even though I really did not work directly for David, I always knew there was a friend just next door.

David's pride and joy back in the 60's was his Pontiac GTO. I remember he had a couple of them and he made sure they ran to peak performance. But what a friend, when you are just 16, and your neighbor says would you like to borrow my car tonight. At that point in my life, I acquired lot of respect and trust for a person that would treat me with the same feelings.

Even after when I left the Ridges and moved into adulthood, got married, had a family, moved away, David and Gloria were always true friends. They always made a point to say, "when you are in town, make sure you call or let's get together."

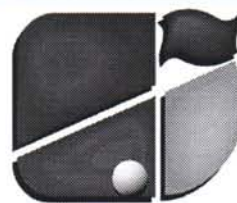
Boating on the Mississippi was another love of David's, and there was not a time that when I saw or talked to him that he wanted to get together and go boating. He always made a point to tell me "Bruce, you got to start taking some time off and enjoy life a little more."

Finally, what probably will be in my heart and thoughts of Dave is when I held my first WGCSA monthly meeting in April 1980 here at West Bend Country Club. Dave came to me after the meeting and said, "I watched you grow up, and am very proud of all you have accomplished."

Dave had an important part of my accomplishments and growing up.

Here was just a grain of sand in a golf course bunker of great memories from people David Murgatroyd touched in his wonderful living life. He lived life to the fullest, loved his family dearly, and always was a friend. A memorial golf tournament was just held in his honor this past June 12, and a tribute to him was constructed at the Ridges. He might be gone from this earth, but he will never be forgotten.

Gloria, Ann, Crystal, and Mary, may your sorrows be shallow and your great memories endless. ♣



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