



It's a Lie!

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

The phone in my office rang almost the very minute I got to work; it was Bogey Calhoun.

"Well, one week has gone by since the deadline for the contest. I think we should meet and decide on a winner," he said excitedly.

I wasn't hitting on all cylinders yet and hadn't had any coffee, so I didn't quite get what he was talking about. "Contest?" I asked.

"You bonehead," he replied with some obvious irritation. "The contest we came up with at Mom's Cafe over coffee last December. Don't tell me you do not remember."

Of course, by now I did recall. "Go ahead and convene a meeting of the "judges", Calhoun. As long as it is first thing in the morning and most of the guys can make it, I'll be there. Let me know."

"Okay," he said. "I will."

I should probably explain. We were in our somewhat

irregular winter routine of coffee and a treat at Mom's Cafe on Main Street near mid-morning. It was early winter. Most days of the week would find at least a couple of the area golf course superintendents in a booth in the early morning. If there were more than four, we occupied the big round table near the back of the restaurant.

Most of us had a big mug of Nordic coffee - black, of course - and those of true Wisconsin heart and soul also had a big piece of apple pie. It was good pie; Mom (we all called her Mom) baked them fresh every morning with pure lard and from scratch and with apples she had picked and frozen herself. None of the frozen pie crust or canned filling for her; these pies had the edge of the flaky crust finger pinched and the careful lattice work of baked dough across the top. There was apple pie and then there was Mom's apple pie. Hers was the perfect complement to strong black coffee.

The conversation was always predictable: politics,

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news of the day, family and golf courses. Back in November Bogey Calhoun mentioned that the deadline for submitting a tall tale to the Burlington Liars Club was approaching. "I'm thinking of sending in a tall tale, a big fat lie."

Tom Morris harrumphed. "Calhoun," he said, "it's the Burlington Liars Club, not the Burlington BS Club. You're not smart enough to create a tall tale."

Bogey enjoyed the moment. One of his joys in life was getting under Tom's skin. This morning was notable because it was so easy.

Calhoun took a sip of hot coffee, sat back in his chair and said, "You are all Wisconsin boys and yet I can tell you don't know anything about the Liars Club. It's history, men. Let me give you a lesson."

Steady Eddie Middleton rolled his eyes. Tom put his face in his hands, indicating what he thought. Scottie Fennimore merely smiled.

"The Burlington Liars Club started way back in 1929," Calhoun began, "and every year since they have had an annual contest to pick the best lie of the year. The reason they exist is to preserve the lie as an enjoyable expression of exaggeration. Really, if we don't

have any lying in America, think of the fun we'd miss out on." Bogey smiled and continued.

"I mean, if you think about it, Slick Willie Clinton would be a natural as president of the Liars Club. He's better suited for that presidency than the one he now holds. And the man is shameless in his lying!"

Tom Morris perked up. He couldn't stand Clinton. "The only problem with Clinton taking part in this Liars Club is that it would be matching a professional against rank amateurs!"

The guys laughed. None of us liked the pathetic pathological liar who occupied the White House.

Bogey went on. "Over the years the Liars Club has honored some whoppers. A few of the winners are engraved on bronze plaques that are mounted on building fronts in downtown Burlington. I like the one about the time it rained so hard that the water was backed up against the barbed wire fence!

"And the one that told of the Texas summer that was so hot they had to spray the catfish for ticks and the trees were leaning toward the dogs!"

Bogey had his audience's attention now. He motioned Mom for refills of coffee. He was on a roll and not about to give up center stage; he kept on talking.

"Another good one is the one told by the winner in 1937 who claimed his wife was so lazy that she fed the chickens popcorn so that the eggs flipped themselves over when she fried them.

"And then there was the tale that the cows were so skinny in drought stricken North Dakota that two of them could be branded at the same time using carbon paper!"

We were enjoying Calhoun's entertainment. Even Tom was laughing.

It was Steady Eddie who wondered aloud "if any of the winners involved golf courses?"

Calhoun paused, his face turned serious, and then he broke out in a broad smile.

"Eddie, you've given me an idea. We should start the Golf Turf Division of the Burlington Liars Club. Only Wisconsin golf course superintendents would be eligible to enter and we could serve as contest judges!"

"You are dumber than I thought, Calhoun," Tom said. "Nobody will bite on that proposition, especially if they think a major gasbag like yourself might enter the contest."

But the other guys like the idea. Scott wondered if there was time to get notice of the contest in The Grass Roots. I said there was.

So, on that cold December morning our own Liars Club was formed. Calhoun was elected president and we declared that anyone who showed up for coffee on the morning of the judging was an official judge. Since we had no dues we didn't need a treasurer. Tom Morris suggested The Grass Roots editor serve as secretary

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with the responsibility of printing the winner's tall tale, regardless of how lousy it might be. We were set.

With spring now around the corner and the deadline past, we convened to review the lies that had been submitted and to declare a winner from among them. There were actually more than I had anticipated.

Calhoun called the meeting to order. "The secretary will call the roll."

All I did was look around and repeat the names of the superintendents sitting around the table.

"All present and accounted for," Calhoun boomed.

He then took the sheaf of letters and began reading them to us. Here they are, lies from the first contest:

- *Our greens are so slick that the players are unable to walk on them for fear of falling. They crawl to their ball, carefully stand to putt, and crawl off.*

"Not bad!" The guys were laughing.

"Next one," Calhoun said.

- *I was so successful in managing our golf course through the ravages of heat, humidity and disease last summer with my superb ability in turfgrass triage that I was awarded the 1999 Nobel Peace Prize for Medicine.*

And,

- *The average age of the members at our club is so old that they are deceased!*

"I can relate to that," Tom Morris said. "Keep going."

- *There were so many earthworms on our course last summer that they moved the 5th fairway to the east by about 75 yards.*

"More on greens," Calhoun said as he went on.

- *Our greens are so fast we have to issue players a special golf ball with a cover that can withstand the heat build-up resulting from the high speed of the ball.*

- *The greens on my course are so slick that our mowers are fitted with ice skate blades.*

- *Our greens are so slick that the Kohl Center is considering grassing their rink with the same turf for UW-Madison hockey games. Instead of a Zamboni they'd use mowers and rollers!*

All of us were really enjoying the applications for the tallest golf course tale. It was all made better by Calhoun's theatrics. "We aren't done yet," he said.

- *The turf on our golf course is so specific to Wisconsin that we fertilize with cheese curds and brats, and we water with beer. It works well because the crew snacks on the leftovers.*

- *Our golf club is so exclusive that our used range balls are sold in all the other private golf course pro shops in Wisconsin as their top line golf ball.*

- *The turf on our golf course is so well rooted*

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(due, of course, to my excellent management) that we get phone calls from China complaining that our roots are competing with theirs for nutrients and water.

- *Our greens are so slick that after each mowing we have to spread sand for traction.*

- *The hills on our golf course are so severe that we issue mountain climbing equipment to players. Banks are cut with goats.*

- *Our club is so exclusive that we open on July 4th and close on Labor Day.*

- *The soil on our golf course is so fertile that when I aerify I harvest the cores and sell them at a premium price to other golf courses in Wisconsin for fertilizer.*

"Finally," Bogey said, "the last one!"

- *I am so respected world wide for my intellect and experience as a golf course superintendent that the UW-Madison awarded me an honorary Ph.D. You may now call me DR. Bogey Calhoun!*

Boos and catcalls rained down on Calhoun's head. "PhD for you really does mean 'piled higher and deeper'," Tom Morris cried.

"You are ineligible!" Steady Eddie insisted.

The rest of us laughed and then got to the business of declaring a winner of the golf course lie of the year award. More coffee and pie made the job easier, and in the end the greens that wouldn't let players walk on them won out over the rest.

"So, Bogey," Tom asked, "who submitted the winning entry?"

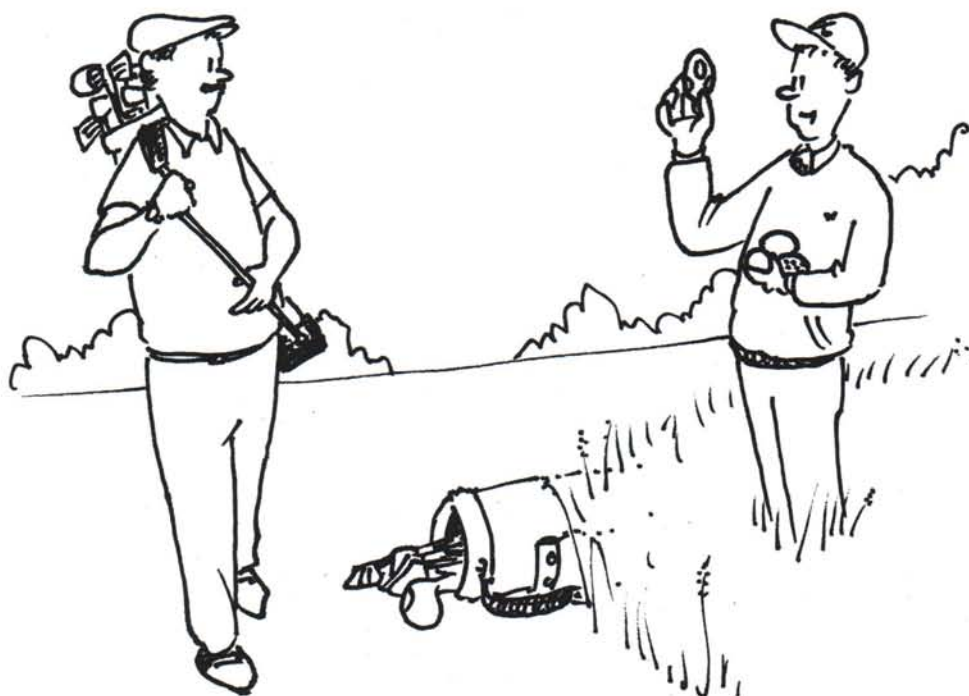
Bogey smiled sheepishly. "I did. In fact, I submitted all the entries, guys. I hadn't received any lies, so this past week I wrote up all of them. I guess that makes me the winner!"

Hoots and hollers, lots of compliments, and praise for superb lying made the day for Bogey. "Next year, we will start earlier, I'll try to generate some interest and maybe we will get at least a few applicants."

"Well," Tom started, "we can try. But the rest of the guys in Wisconsin will know there is little hope of surpassing you when it comes to lies and bull feathers. But not many are better sports, either. I'll give you credit for that, Calhoun."

And then we all decided that maybe we should leave the exaggerations and puffery to the players and the golf pros and stick to growing better grass.

After all, that's what we are best at! ♣



Steven Sawicki '85

I HAVEN'T FOUND MY TITELIST YET, BUT I DID FIND A GREEN ONE, A PURPLE ONE, A BLUE ONE AND THIS NICE YELLOW ONE WITH RED DOTS.