

# Old Chalkboards Provide Snapshot of History

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



We've added to our maintenance facility twice in the 28 years I have been at Blackhawk. I started in 1973; in 1974 we put an addition onto the existing shop. In 1984/85 we built a large new building and relegated the other buildings mostly to storage. In each move, the chalkboards were left with the last few days of notes and instructions and assignments. Although tempted many times to clean them up, I have resisted. Resistance has given us a glimpse at how some things were on our course then.

Actually, the oldest board - provided as a freebie, I'd guess, by Mallinkrodt (only very veteran golf course superintendents will even remember that company!) - was in the shop I inherited and I didn't use it. But I left it as I found it and chuckle when I see the phone numbers for Maple Bluff and Nakoma that haven't changed in fifty years. Also fun are the amounts of CaloClor (sublimite of mercury) and water that Harry Hanson applied to each green to control any and all diseases! Harry, if you look at the GCSAA directory, was one of the founders of GCSAA and one of the last founders to pass away. Those oddball notes he left also gave a clue to how few people were on

a golf course crew as recently as the late 50s.

More interesting is the chalkboard we abandoned when we moved into our currently building in the late winter of 1984/1985. Funny thing how we still refer to it as the "new" shop - new 16 years ago! The first thing most notice are the posted heights of cut for the various play areas - greens: 9/64", tees: 7/16", collars: 11/16", and fairways: 3/4". Of course these days we measure heights more accurately, namely to three decimal points. Also, we now cut shorter, a fact that I am not sure can be called progress.

There are messages from still familiar people - Dr. Bob Newman, Joe Wollner (who represented Brayton Chemical at that time), Tom Wentz (still with Scotts, if there still is a Scotts), and Bill Roberts. Among those people, I haven't heard from Willie Roberts in a long time. What is he up to, anyway?

The club president had called and asked for a call back. Neil Richter (who ran Hanley Implement at the time and whom I have not seen in years) also called but left no message.

Names and phone numbers are still on the chalkboard.

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Some of the names of former employees at Blackhawk most of you will recognize. Dave Noltner was still a rookie in 1984/1985; he had only started in 1974! Tom Parent, George Magnin, Dave Doring and Kendall Marquardt are named. All were superintendents after that year - Tom in Minnesota, George at Cherokee (he still is there), Dave at the par three 9-hole course at Augusta National Golf Club and Kendall at Lake Wisconsin CC (he still is there after stints in Denver and in Philadelphia).

Mike Lee and Anthony Grosso are on the old chalkboard; Mike's well known in the WGCSA and Anthony is currently president of the Connecticut GCSA. Wayne Horman could be reached at 251-6581 at that time; today you have to call the Scotts Company or his home in metro Columbus, Ohio to visit with him.

Dave Schaller worked on our staff then - Dave is Tom's son and Scott's first cousin. He was another excellent employee. I received a surprise e-mail from him two years ago. He is now a missionary in Asia. John Findley landed in Denver after marrying a girl from Shorewood Hills who lived close to our club. Chuck Leafblad worked as an undergrad and grad student in Plant Pathology and last I knew was back home in the Chicago area. I wonder what he is up to these days? Brian Sather left BCC and now heads the grounds maintenance department for American Family Insurance here in Madison. He's doing a good job, I am sure.

Some of the guys had sketched a proposed golf hole with the caption "Proposed irrigation, tee, fairway and green reconstruction, submitted to the board by MSM (Respectfully turned down)." If you saw the comical sketch, you'd laugh like I do each time I see it.

I can remember almost everyone who worked at our course during my years as the golf course superintendent. What I have trouble with is pinning down the time they spent on our course. Leaving that old chalkboard hanging with its last words has preserved at least for a few of those great employees when they were part of our family. It also proves that little bits of our own personal history can be lots of fun and very sentimental. ♣



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