

A Somber 75th Anniversary

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

What a claim to notoriety – I may have been the only golf course superintendent who made the trip to Lawrence, Kansas to attend the GCSAA 75th Anniversary celebration, after it was cancelled. It was disappointing, but that emotion was insignificant compared to the distress cause on September 11 by Arab terrorists. Let me tell you how it happened.

I prefer to drive to meetings like these. That preference has nothing to do with a fear of flying; rather, I dislike the hassles of flying and love the chance to see the country from ground level. Often times these trips can be made as quickly by car as by plane, and once you arrive you

already have a car at your disposal.

During the year, my world mostly takes place in and around Madison. The sights and sounds are familiar and routine. Breaking loose and passing through unfamiliar landscape is pure pleasure.

I left for Kansas City very early and headed down Highway 151 from Madison to Iowa City. I stopped in Mt. Vernon, Iowa to see Cornell College where my great uncle was a professor of music for a few years a long time ago. Cornell's campus is quaint and beautiful and reminiscent of any number of small New England colleges. I listened to NPR all the way there and when I left I switched to the first of six CDs

I had loaded before leaving home.

It was a wonderful drive – no phone calls, good weather (the morning sun was behind me as I headed west) and great music. The harvest of corn and even some soybeans was underway, a reminder of how much ahead of us in the growing season those areas only a little south of us are. The corn around home was all very green and by the time I reached Des Moines it was nearly fully ripened and completely dry and tan. The big combines and grain wagons filled the fields.

As I crossed the border between Iowa and Missouri it was well after lunch and I started looking for a place to get fuel and something to

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eat. I finally stopped about 40 miles from the KCI airport and the Marriott where many of the activities were to take place.

I walked into a fast food joint and paused after two steps in. My first thought was, "this place is being held up." Everyone was looking to one corner; there was no conversation and each face was very somber. Then I noticed they were watching a TV in that corner. I cautiously approached the counter and asked the senior citizen clerk, "what's going on?"

His reply was brief. "Where in the hell have you been?"

Of course, events unfolded quickly and I watched the TV everyone else was watching until I understood what the situation was.

At that point I figured I might as well drive to the KCI Marriott and be absolutely certain the GCSAA 75th Anniversary event was cancelled. The closer I got to the airport, the

fewer cars there were on the road. Motorcycle cops guarded roads into and out of the airport.

No planes were flying and I headed to the Marriott to get a status report on the well-planned festivities, although I was pretty sure there would be none. The hotel was packed and included reporters and film crews from local television stations. Stranded travelers were in a panic to get a room or a rental car; I was pretty pleased I had driven. A check with registration personnel gave only a vague, "I think so," when I asked if GCSAA activities were cancelled. It seemed reasonable to drive the 40 or so miles to Lawrence to find out for myself.

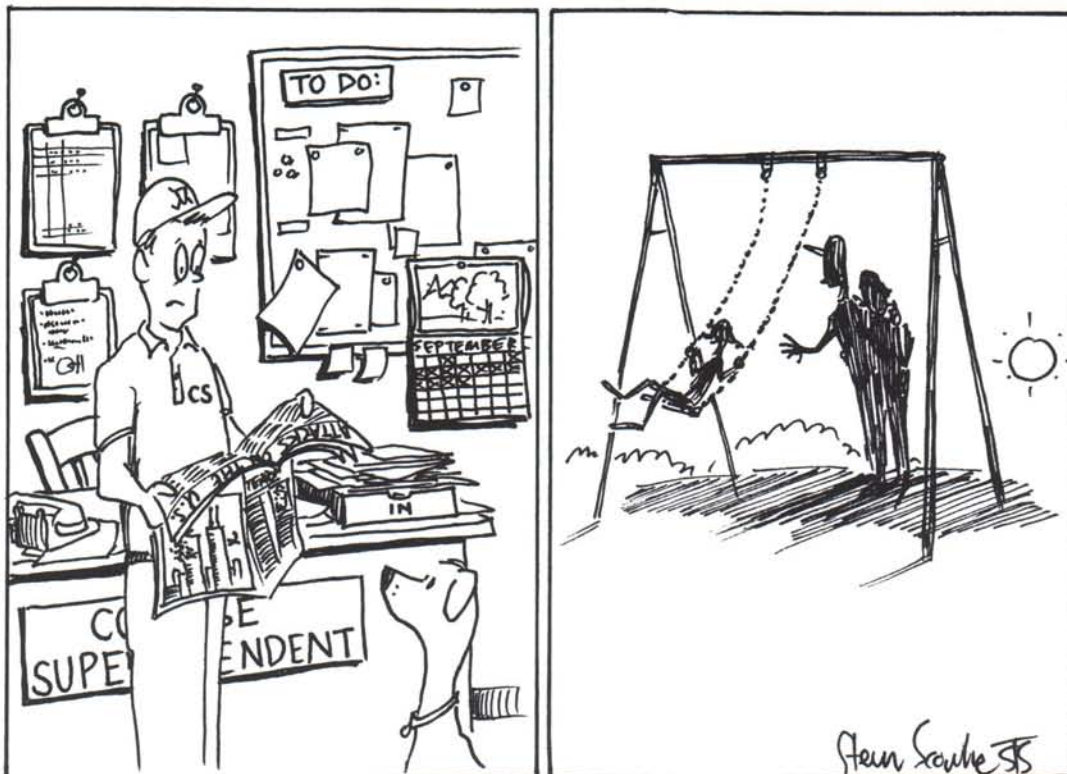
I drove I-435 to I-70 and made the short trip to Lawrence. It is a relatively small city that I have visited any number of times, so in no time I was parked right in front of the GCSAA headquarters building. I was going to run in, get a reading on the

situation, and head back to Wisconsin.

Well, there are some really nice people on the GCSAA staff and Suzanne Clement is one of them. She is the lead on the 75th Anniversary Resource Committee and is the association librarian and curator. She would have no part of a quick departure.

Suzanne had tried to track down committee members to tell each of us that our committee meeting at the Marriott on Wednesday, September 12, was cancelled, along with the program planned so carefully for the members. As my luck goes, I was the one without a cell phone, the one who drove, and the one who was listening to a Quarteto Gelato CD instead of the radio. Out of our thousands and thousands of GCSAA members, I was the only one of us in the building!

It is a fairly long drive from Madison to Lawrence, and Suzanne



"PUTTER, I JUST REALIZED THAT I'VE GOT A REALLY IMPORTANT JOB TO DO."

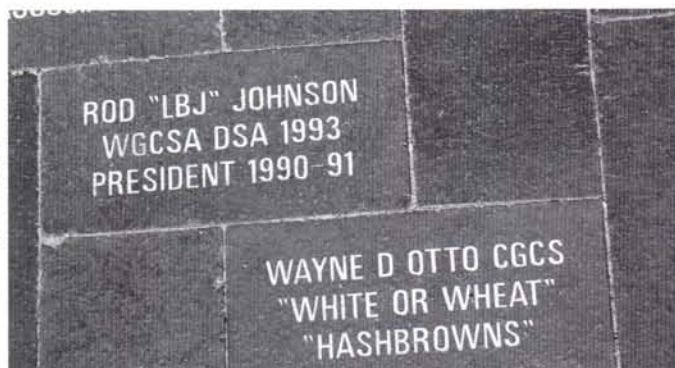


A bronze statue of Old Tom Morris welcomes visitors to GCSAA headquarters. The sculpture was to have been dedicated during the 75th Anniversary celebration.



The logo and acronym at the entrance to headquarters.

Rodney Johnson and Wayne Otto brick pavers at the GCSAA building entrance.



The likeness of Old Tom is about 8' tall and has amazing detail.

golf course superintendent! I found the brick I had bought for the patio that hosts Old Tom's statue, along with ones from Rod Johnson, Wayne Otto and Mark Kienert. There were probably others from Wisconsin that I didn't see.

She and I went up to the boardroom to visit with Steve Mona. The three of us talked about the tragedy in New York and the disappointment of seeing all the careful plans and hard work of GCSAA staff members go for naught. I also learned whom Steve has selected to fill Joe O'Brien's position; I will let Steve tell you who it is, however.

We went out to the back of the building and looked at the beautiful landscaping that has been put in place in recent months. The work is superb. I talked briefly with Dr. Clark Throssel; it was the first time I'd seen him without a coat and tie!

This was like every other visit I have made to the headquarters facility – extremely pleasant. That is because of the people who work there on our behalf.

It seemed reasonable to head back to Kansas City, but I gave myself a brief tour of KU before I left town. By then it was late afternoon and already the long lines were forming at the gas pumps. I dismissed it as some local phenomenon; little did I know.

I had made a mad dash, nearly non-stop trip out. It took me longer to get home. I even drove to Bellerive CC in St. Louis, but the PGA event was cancelled as every other sporting event had been.

Even though it was a futile trip as far as the 75th Anniversary was concerned, it was positive and even relaxing. The headquarters building has never looked better, and I had a chance to see it. I had the chance to see some people who have become friends; that is always a good thing. Any trip during harvest time in the Midwest is interesting. And there were no telephones, golf players or staff putting demands on me. When I did get home, I was ready to tackle fairway aerifying with some real enthusiasm. ♣

made sure I got the most out of it. She showed me an absolutely enormous banner made from tournament flags from members' courses. I stood in awe at the new bronze sculpture of Old Tom Morris that now greets us at the entrance to the headquarters building; the statue is the work of a