

Transition Time

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

Autumn is my favorite time of the year. Although the fall coloring of the landscape starts in September, it doesn't reach its zenith until mid-October where I live. The leaves intensify the light of the sunshine, many days are hazy, and sometimes it is warm enough during those October days to work on the golf course only in shirt sleeves. Almost always we have Indian summer after a frost or two and some cold weather, an added bonus to an already wonderful month.

Autumn is traditionally harvest time in the country, although in Wisconsin most of the hay is in the mow and the oats were combined in mid-summer. Corn is quickly picked with big equipment and usually shelled right in the field by the same machine that picks it, leading some to ask about the corn shocks that are associated with the autumn scene in rural Wisconsin and elsewhere. Shocking the corn crop left the farm scene 50 or

more years ago. If you see one nowadays, it is purely a decoration trying to capture the past and the season. Sort of like pumpkins. The show pumpkins give us in autumn is way out of proportion to their value. Today they are used as jack-o-lanterns as we buy pumpkin pie filling at the store. You have to go back to the time of my grandparents when pumpkins were used as a food source.

Cheryl and I spent the best days of fall on our annual leaf peekers trip to the northeast. Five inches of rain in mid-September set us up for the best fairway aeration I've ever experienced. When we left for New England, the course was already healing up quickly and growth was falling off.

We were gone for two weeks. It was a rest that I needed after months on end of working every day of the week. We cut our trip short a few days so that we could return in time for a retirement

party. The golf pro at our club is retiring after 32 years at the course and we wanted to be in town for that. Fortunately we returned to glorious weather that continues even as I write this.

So now we are at November. The trees are nearly leafless, the natural areas on golf courses are bleached out, but the short cut grass is still green. The exuberance of October is gone; still to arrive is the quiet and serenity of snow when it blankets the golf course. I hope we have plenty of it this winter. November seems the time when we shift from fall to winter, a lot like the way March bridges winter and spring. It is a transition time. The ducks and geese are migrating south and we think about Thanksgiving being just around the corner.

For a golf course superintendent, it is a wonderful time of the year. Often when visiting in the east, I have visited places where John Burroughs, the great naturalist, spent his life in and around the Catskill mountains in New York. John once wrote this, one of his many reminders of how lucky we are to have a world like ours to live in:

"I would gladly chant a paean for the world as I find it. What an interesting place to live in! If I had my life to live over again, and had my choice of celestial abodes, I am sure I should take this planet, and I should choose these men and women for my friends and companions. This great rolling sphere with its sky, its stars, its sunrises and sunsets, and with its outlook into infinity - what could be more desirable? What could be more satisfying?"

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This time of year, especially, we know John got that right.

The Symposium will likely be over by the time this reaches WGCSA mailboxes. By then it will be time to make up your Christmas list. Soon enough that holiday will be here, too.

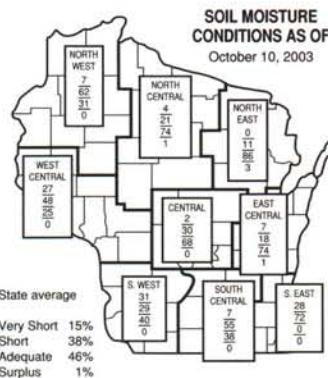
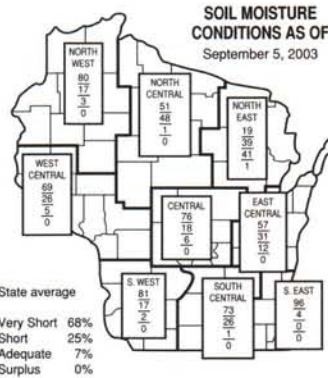
The moisture status around the state is shown here. In our town, in late October, we are still 7 inches below normal. This follows last year when we also finished below normal for the year in moisture.

One of the fun events of late summer past was a surprise birthday party, a 50th birthday party. Jeff Parks was caught totally by surprise by tons of friends who gathered at University Ridge to celebrate with him. It was successful because of careful planning by his wife Linda and daughter Ginny. For me, it was almost depressing. Wasn't it just a couple of years ago Jeff worked for me, starting at the age of 18? As the saying goes, "time flies." He certainly has had a full and successful career as a golf course superintendent in Wisconsin.



Jeff Park turns 50! August 2003.

Like most Americans, I am still worried about our economy. It seems to be improving, but the bad news doesn't seem to stop. And it



hits close to home, in our state and in businesses related to us.

Of course we all know Jacobsen

moved out of Wisconsin. Tecumseh has little manufacturing left here. And now our favorite tool manufacturer, Snap-on, plans to shut down its factory in Kenosha, potentially costing 300 jobs.

Up in Neilsville, FleetGuard Nelson's plant will close by next July, putting 200 people out of work. The factory makes mufflers for equipment like we use on or golf courses, as well as for RVs. It is the largest employer in Clark County and has been doing quality work since the 1950s.

Decisions being made in California could cut thousands of more jobs. The California Air Resources Board voted in late September to limit emissions from lawn mowers and other gas powered equipment. This would require small engines to have catalytic converters, improved carburetors and leak-proof fuel tanks and lines. Briggs and Stratton Corporation of Wauwatosa claims the emissions from small engines contributes to less than one percent of California's air pollution, and the changes will require new

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factories be built to produce redesigned engines. It would be much cheaper to build the factories overseas and could cost up to 22,000 jobs tied to Briggs and Stratton and its vendors.

If California goes through with these bureaucratic changes that could cause serious problems for workers in Wisconsin and elsewhere, we need to return the favor to them, some way.

With jobs disappearing so quickly all over America, one wonders how Americans will have money to buy the things that are now being made overseas, or the money to buy a round of golf. It is a scary and serious and pressing problem.

Reports I have read say that gypsy moth populations have reached destructive levels in SE Wisconsin this year. Traps collected more than 300 males this summer - a clear indication of tree defoliation coming next year - in a

wide arc from Kewaskum and West Bend south to Erin and Merton, east to Richfield, Lisbon, Menomonee Falls, Germantown, Mequon, River Hills and Fox Point, and south to Brookfield, New Berlin and Muskego, according to moth trapping results.

There isn't a whole lot to do about them this time of year other than looking for egg clusters after the first killing frost and spraying them with a soybean oil solution that suffocates the eggs.

Finally I am able to write an addendum to the story about one of Wisconsin's great industrialists that appeared in *The Grass Roots* two years ago.

That story, for me, was incomplete because it didn't report any first hand experiences concerning J.I. Case's youth in New York State.

This fall Cheryl and I drove about 75 miles out of our way while on vacation to visit Williamstown, New York. Jerome Increase Case was born on a farm a short distance outside of Williamstown, in 1819. I had no idea of what to expect. Fortunately for me, Cheryl is a good sport and willing to investigate things like this.

As it turns out, Williamstown is quite proud of J. I. Case. Almost as soon as you arrive in Williamstown from the west, you are greeted by a sign in the village cemetery noting that Jerome Case was born near here. His parents, Caleb and Deborah, are buried a few steps from that sign, along with a number of other Case family members (Jerome was the youngest of four sons).

A couple of friendly residents of Williamstown directed me to Case



This gravestone marks the resting place of J.I. Case's parents, Caleb and Deborah Case. They farmed just outside of Williamstown.



This prominent yet simple sign tells visitors to Williamstown, New York about their most famous son.



This photo shows the relationship between the historical marker and the Case burial spots. J.I. Case is buried in Racine.

Road, presumably named because it passed the Case farmstead. They told of a large celebration in 1991, the centennial anniversary of Case's death.

A small museum is in the center of town, but it was closed the day I was there. My guess is it is a treasure trove of Case's early history. I am probably going to have to go back and find out.

Any correspondence relating to The Grass Roots is appreciated by the editor; double that when it comes from a successful and long time golf administrator (and author) like Gene Haas. Double the pleasure again when that correspondence from Gene comes with original artwork. I am sharing here with you (page 51), that note and artwork, for your enjoyment.

Can you tell who the members of the Pitch Fork Boys are?

Another longtime WGCSA member and friend to all of us sent me the following letter and newspaper clipping that brought a smile to his face, and it most surely did to mine. It is interesting to read

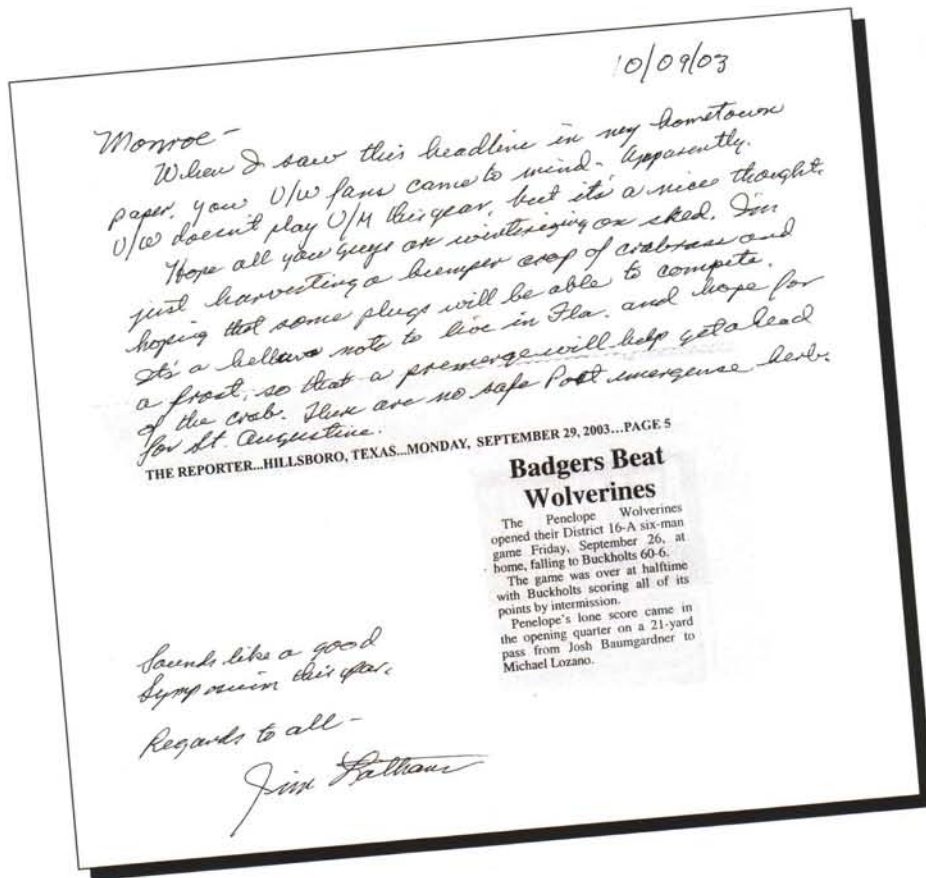
about his crabgrass problem in Florida. I suspect as the cold weather arrives in Wisconsin, Jim Latham will quickly forget about the problems with his least favorite grassy weed.

The September 10, 2003 issue of Sports Illustrated paid a compliment to Wisconsin. In an article by Chris Ballard, Madison was judged the "Best College Sports Town" in

the country, finishing ahead of Athens, GA, Austin, TX, Gainesville, FL and Boulder, CO.

It's a pretty good golf town, too,

So, that's it from this quarter. Have a safe trip over the river and through the woods for Thanksgiving, and take lots of time for your family at Christmas. We'll be looking at the 2004 season in a matter of a few weeks. ♡



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 SEPT. 10, 2003

Monroe Miller
 "The Grass Roots"

Dear Morris:
 Your article "Epitaph from Autumn" in the
 TRAIL FROM THE BACKWOODS section of the
 Sept/Oct issue of the GRASSROOTS, was
 again out standing.

It's about time that Bogey Calhoun
 received his comeuppance from Tom
 Morris. I'm sure it was the
 Morganite that did him in.

Deane brought some huge muskmelons
 home the other day - Bogey, were they
 good. He never told me where he
 got them. Perhaps Jack Trapp finally
 met Bogey and traded some melons
 for some blarney - and Deane was
 the benefactor of Bernie Darwin's
 stolen crop.

I've never met Van Morrison and
 since I play a little guitar
 myself I feel that he's the guy
 to help me improve my "git" ar
 playing. Years ago, I formed a
 small group (one) and performed

at a few Cub Scout Blue & Gold
 Dinner sessions. After that,
 our son never went on to join
 the Boy Scouts. I'm sure he was
 in fear of more award dinners
 and dad being asked to perform.
 The guitar sits quietly in its case,
 awaiting shipment to the Smithsonian.

I've never attended a turkey
 Testicle festival. In fact, I've
 never heard of one. But, I'll bet
 it brings everyone on board
 after all, when the Wisconsin golf
 season ends - you guys are
 ready for just about anything.

Incidentally, I'm enclosing my
 rendition of how I feel about
 Van Morrison's "Pitch Fork Boys"
 must look like. Not sure, but
 there could be some similarities
 in the trio make up. Hope you
 enjoy looking at the group - sans
 not hearing them!

Best,
 Gene Haas
 2025 W. 116th St.
 Wauwatosa, WI 53226 (414) 254-3444
 Go Tuecoti!



THE PITCH FORK BOYS