

Revved Up and Ready to Go!

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

How many ways are there that foretell Spring's arrival? A short walk in early March on the Wisconsin golf course you like best gives all sorts of signs.

Most obvious is the snow melt, although in many parts of Wisconsin there wasn't much snow this winter. So, that's no absolute guarantee that winter is over, but it is a sign. Ice fishing shanties disappear from the lakes, and so do the ice skaters. Once the snow melts, ice on our lakes starts to change. It starts out bright white, goes to a medium gray, then to black and shortly after that the water appears.

The birds struggle in - robins and red-winged black-birds are early and the rest follow. Geese fly north.

The sap in trees rises and the maple syrup gang is out with pails and taps and tygon tubing. The buds are thickening and fattening on trees and shrubs. When you look up through the trees, you'll see the sun much higher in the sky.

And in years like this one, when it appears the turf over-wintered well, the tint of green on the landscape carpet comes quickly, despite the still chilly nighttime temperatures.

I feel sorry for those who live in the south. They miss the rebirth of so much of nature as each spring season swings by, although I am not as sympathetic in the deep winter.

Spring IS here, and golf soon will be. The bible says that for all things there is a season, and ours is about to commence. Let us hope 2004 is the best year ever for golf and golf courses in Wisconsin.

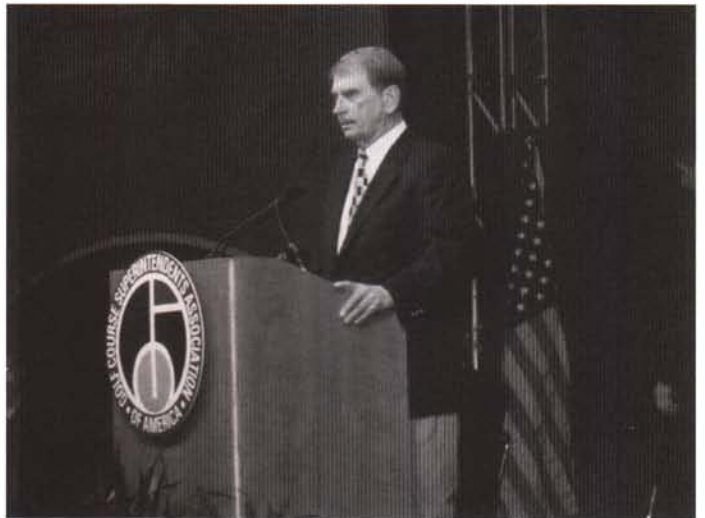
It is an awkward and uncomfortable circumstance I find myself in right now. I have vowed in the past to never allow the editor's mug on the cover or consent to a *Personality Profile* interview. And had it not been for some persuasive arm twisting by a couple of guys I have a lot of respect for - Dave Brandenburg and Marc Davison - I would have held to that vow.

Both Dave and Marc appealed to my job as WGCSA chapter historian and suggested that selection for the USGA Green Section Award was some history for Wisconsin that needed to be recorded in our chapter journal. Danny Quast has appeared in *Personality Profile* and now appears on the cover in recognition of his selection for the GCSAA Distinguished Service Award.

So there you have it. Rest assured, it won't happen again.

Three cheers for Danny Quast! Who from Wisconsin wasn't proud to sit in the audience at the GCSAA conference when he was presented the GCSAA Distinguished Service Award? And that pride was heightened with his excellent and heartfelt acceptance comments, especially those about his mother.

The last person from Wisconsin to receive this award was Dr. James R. Love, and the late O.J. Noer was so honored three times. Dan joins some very select and special company. Congratulations.



The Grass Roots was the winning entry in the GCSAA 2003 chapter Publications contest. WGCSA president Marc Davison picked up the award during the chapter publications seminar in Dan Diego.

We participate in Category 2 of the contest, which is unpaid editors. It's also unpaid business manager — Dave Brandenburg — and unpaid authors. That's what I like about it best. The Grass Roots is published for the right reasons.

But we have bills to pay, and for that we thank our advertisers.

I love Jen Samerdyke's covers; they are, literally, artwork and invite readers to see what is inside. Steve Scoville adds appeal with his offbeat cartoons. Bev Bergemann of Kramer Printing puts her heart in each issue. And Lori Bocher gets right to the heart of the personalities in our business in her column.

Our golf course authors give so many different perspectives that the result is a journal that reflects the breadth of golf course management. Faculty — Kussow, Stier, Williamson, and Jung — and superintendents, students and owners all bring different view. Our back page records family and career changes, an important part of our history.

We are all part of The Grass Roots, so enjoy the award. You earned it!

Gypsy moth spraying is going to increase again this year in Wisconsin. The DNR plans to spray more than seven times the area sprayed with Btk last year. Southeast Wisconsin produced a record number of complaints last year due to the widespread infestation, and this prompted the increase in treatments for this year.

Complaints weren't the only catalyst for the increased Btk treatments; counts of egg masses on trees and buildings also skyrocketed and helped the DNR target the applications.

There are some urban foresters who think the gypsy moths have reached their peak in SE Wisconsin and expect the outbreak to last a year or two. After that, the lack of preferred food and the presence of diseases (caused by Btk, e.g.) will reduce the population, or so the thinking goes. This is the insect's natural cycle.

After moth larvae hatch in April and May, low flying crop spraying aircraft spray the Btk bacterium. It settles onto tree leaves and the hungry larvae ingest the Btk. The population is knocked down.

As the name indicates, the European gypsy moths were brought into the US in 1869 from Europe. Since then they have become the most destructive leaf-eating insect in our eastern states. Each year for the past decade or so, thousands of more acres of Wisconsin are infested.

Count me among those who like the Old Farmer's Almanac. It was reassuring, for one who needs reassurance, that our region's serious need for moisture may be coming in March and April. The old farmer says March rainfall should be above normal and April should see "heavy rains." I hope so.

We will need a wet spring in some places in Wisconsin. The US Small Business Administration has announced that federal disaster loans will be available for non-farm agriculture-dependent businesses that suffered in last summer's drought.

Small business owners in Florence, Forest, Iron, Marinette and Vilas counties could qualify for loans up to \$1.5 million at an interest rate of 2.95%.

The drought started last July and continued through

the rest of the year in some places in the state. Our town ended up at about "normal" but there were months during the season when it was really dry. The five and more inches of precipitation we were behind was made up late in the year. It is an old story - the distribution over the year is what matters a lot to us.

It was a sad winter for Tom Schwab and his family and for friends of his wife Dianne. Dianne passed away from cancer in February.

She was a bright lady who had a PhD in Education. Her big smile was exceeded only by her big heart. She loved the outdoors, enjoying everything from sports and hiking to gardening. And she surely appreciated Tom's career at Wisconsin's turfgrass research farm.

Sympathy to Tom and his girls from all of us.

So another years begins. We've spent the winter getting ready for this. Let's go! 🌱



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