



Continuing Education

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

"If anyone is looking for me, I'm at the Center for Continuing Education," I said to Dave as I headed out the shop door. "Professor Calhoun is lecturing today."

With a wink and a nod, Dave smiled and gave a wave with the wrench he had in his hand.

He knew that the Center for Continuing Education was an euphemism for Stinky's Bar and Grill, and Professor Calhoun was none other than the infamous golf course superintendent Bogey Calhoun. Not everyone would cast a favorable eye on lunch at a tavern, so we skirted the issue this way. Dave also understood that when I went to the Turfgrass Institute of Technology, I was going for lunch at the Long Drive Bar with my colleagues from the area.

Some more curious members have asked Dave occasionally over the years just exactly where these institutions were. Usually an answer like "around here

somewhere" was sufficient and I have never been pressed by anyone to give details.

We have always liked Stinky's because of the friendly staff. Although Stinky himself can be a little grumpy at times, he is usually at the grill cooking burgers and brats. His wife Phoebe is a sweetheart and puts him in his place when he starts grouching and complaining. We all love their resident big orange cat, too. He is part of the ambience, purring like a well-tuned diesel engine when given even a brief scratch on his head. Everyone likes his self-confidence - despite being neutered he acts like he owns the joint and could kick the puddin' out of anyone he wants to. You have to love the beast.

Stinky's is literally the only place in town where the jukebox is loaded only with music played by Wisconsin groups and musicians — the Goose Island Ramblers, Paul Cebar and the Milwaukeeans, Lou and Peter

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Berryman, the Norskedalen Trio, and all the rest. Even the famous UW - Madison's Marching Band was represented on the play list. On this day we walked into Stinky's to the strain of "Ole Olson the Hobo from Norway," one of Calhoun's favorites.

"Bring us a pitcher of Spotted Cow beer, Phoebe," Bogey hollered to her even though she was clear across the restaurant.

She waved and replied, "wait your turn." The tavern business was good this day, as it was most days. We always arrived a little before the noon crowd so we could sit together at a table or in a booth. We ordered - mostly red bratwursts except for Steady Eddie Middleton who loved Stinky's bluegill platter and could be counted on to order it every chance he had.

The topic of the day at the Center for Continuing Education was the tough winter we had and the resulting winter injury. We all agreed the turf was mending, but only after some yeoman efforts.

"Chris Wendorf says they are shipping creeping bentgrass seed into Wisconsin by the semi-truck load," Scottie Fennimore offered as he took a long draught of the cold Spotted Cow. "I know I have bought and sliced in my fair share of it."

"For most of us, getting the course set up for recovery when the warm weather finally arrives has been an "unbudgeted" item," Calhoun said. "In our case we will simply have to do without something else - there aren't going to be any budget add ons. And the bentgrass seed isn't cheap these days."

"Dr. Don White used to say whenever I would hear him speak on the winter turf conference and education tour, 'when given lemons, make lemonade.' That is kind of where I have my mind - the annual bluegrass is thinned or gone, so it presents a great opportunity to get some bentgrass growing. It could only help in future winters that turn out like this one past one. And rest assured, there will be more winters as bad as or worse than the one just finished," Tom Morris said.

Oscar Bahl hadn't said much. Just as he started to talk, Phoebe brought our chow, steaming and fresh from the grill and deep-fryer. We had to relax a little and enjoy our food. About the time Phoebe returned with another pitcher of Spotted Cow, OB picked up where he had left off.

"Boys, the golf season has barely begun and I am tired already. We have jammed a mess of work into our schedule already, working late and on weekends; how is a guy going to feel when August rolls around?"

Everyone nodded in agreement. OB went on. "Here's how bad it is. My wife and I bought a camper last year. We used it a little in the fall, but never ventured very far. I promised her we would take some weekend time this year and relax in some parks around the state.

"With the start to this year, my promises seemed

hollow to Dottie. We were so anxious to get the camper out that last weekend we camped - you are not going to believe this - in my shop yard at Old World CC! I backed the camper into the far corner with the backside facing the shop and the left side of the camper facing the golf course. We grilled out, played cards and cribbage, watched birds and the other things we do when we camp at Lake Wisconsin, Prairie du Chien or over by Lake Michigan!

"It was fun, but still a sad commentary on how busy we can get. Or, maybe it is just a sign of reluctance to be reasonable and sensible and willing to let some work wait until tomorrow."

Bogey leaned back, belched and told OB that camping out in his shop yard was probably an example of why he had been successful for so long.

"That doesn't mean I don't think you've got a loose screw somewhere in your head," Bogey said.

We sat around a few more minutes, finished our Spotted Cow and concluded we deserved to feel sorry for ourselves a little bit, anyway. And then we went back to work to try to nudge Mother Nature back to where we needed her to be. And we knew it wasn't going to be easy. ♣

163 Yard Par 3 eighth hole at the Refuge Golf Club in Oak Grove, Minnesota.



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Golf Course Architects

6452 City West Parkway, Eden Prairie, MN 55344
Phone: 952.942.0266 Fax: 952.942.0197
e-mail: golfnorby@eschelon.com
web: herfortnorbygolfarchitecture.com