



A Series of Events

By **Pat Norton**, Golf Course Superintendent, Nettle Creek Country Club

Life is a series of events surrounded by the routine of daily existence. Some of us have more events than routine...others have too much routine...while most of us have a healthy combination of both drama and the mundane. We all take for granted the daily routine...not realizing how blessed we are to have that normalcy...until an event, or series of events...are encountered that test us a little bit.

During the late summer of 2006, I began negotiating a personal series of events that tested me somewhat...and made me realize more fully that I've been really quite fortunate so far in this life. I suppose that everybody does realize that good health and good family combine to create a good life...but a small testing once in awhile helps to remind us humans that life is not to be taken for granted.

My little journey began during my weekly hot shower in late August of last year. During that shower and in the weeks to follow...repeated washing of the lower groin area revealed that my left testicle felt rather strange...sort of like a hard walnut...definitely not the same texture as the other side. But...since I was enjoying the washing process so much...I rationalized that "it's nothing...and soon will disappear!" So I did the intelligent thing and waited...and washed...and washed some more...over the next sixty days before I finally contacted a urologist for an appointment! It took my doctor about one minute to hear my story...examine me...and declare that immediate surgery would be necessary.

So, on November 9th of last year...I became what my younger son and his friends refer to as a

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'Uniball'...and no, it really doesn't affect my balance at all. The ultrasound, the CATSCAN, and the biopsy all revealed that I had testicular cancer. A 1991 vasectomy did reveal that the removed testicle never was functional. So, at the very least I did sire three children on a single testicle and never

charged a stud fee for any of them!

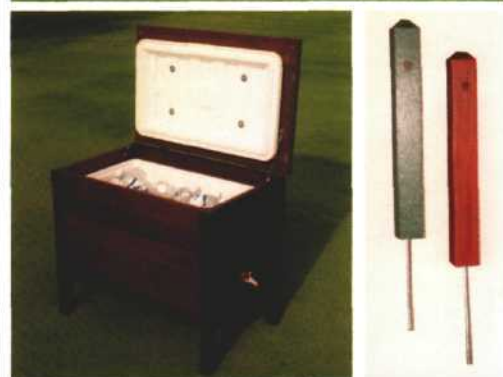
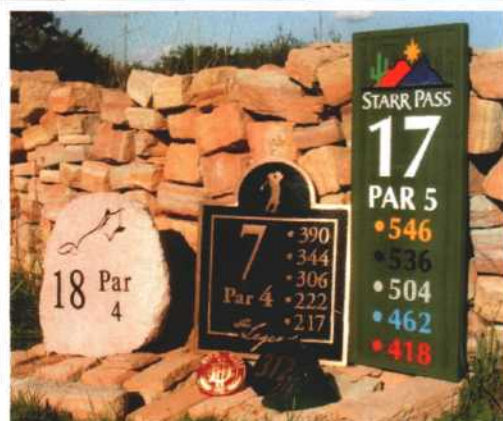
The tissue biopsy resulted in my first bit of good luck. There are basically two groups of testicular cancer. 'Non-semanova' refers to a group of cancers of the testicle that are more aggressive...requiring much more aggressive post-surgery treatment

programs...i.e. **chemotherapy**. 'Semanova' refers to a type of testicular cancer that is much more passive, slow moving, and easy to control. I was diagnosed with Stage 1 semanova...so it was all early, early...and easy, easy, easy!

Actually, it was a very fortunate series of events that could have been much worse. So, of all possible cancers, I turn up with one of the very best ones for men to contract. Simple outpatient surgery with less complications than my two hernia surgeries of winters past. I did have to undergo 21 radiation treatments in January '07, which was no big deal. I was especially grateful to have daily visits with the radiation oncology nurses as opposed to visiting the chemotherapy oncology unit. There were too many elderly patients courageously battling cancer through chemotherapy over in that unit. It always made me wonder about the courage level I would be able to muster were I needing that same therapy regimen.

Life began to get back to normal in February as the doctors closed the book on the therapy...with the final visits to the urologist and the radiation oncologist happening in March. I was cleared to begin physical activity soon thereafter...which meant that I could start punishing myself severely on the Life Cycle and the weights over at the Rec Center. I had gained almost fifteen pounds during the winter inactivity/radiation treatment phase. I clearly remember being extremely nauseated and almost fainting the first few times working out. I also clearly remember the doctor then telling me to take it easy...and not be in such a hurry to get back into shape.

As the weeks passed...I got to the point with physical recovery that strenuous workouts four or five times weekly were my



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norm...with the sweat/water weight just pouring out of me. I became quite the laundry expert...as wife Susan was really reluctant to handle my extremely wet and sweaty workout garb!

By April 15...I was feeling really good...the golf course was open...and life for our little family was really blossoming. Youngest son Tommy made the high school high honor roll...daughter Megan was finishing her first year at UW-Madison...and oldest son Ryan was soon to be graduating from UW-Madison and finishing his four-year Army ROTC scholarship program at UW.

On Sunday, May 20, 22 year old Ryan graduated from UW-Madison and received his commission as a second lieutenant in the U.S. Army in recognition of his completion of the Army ROTC Program. Any parent reading this can identify with the feeling of incredible pride...of all the years of child rearing now seeming to bear fruit...of the changes as a child transforms into an adult before your very eyes...with the inevitable feeling of it all being completed...and somewhat at an end.

I cannot describe to you the intense feeling of parental pride that rose up during the graduation ceremony and then during Ryan's military commissioning ceremony in which he and 23 other fresh UW grads were all commissioned together as officers into the various branches of the U.S. military. Part of the ceremony involved these fresh faced officer candidates receiving their 'first salute' from an enlisted soldier or veteran...in recognition of the help received along their way during military training and life in general. I think that Mr. Monroe Miller, Ryan's godfather, was pretty tickled to be involved in that part of the ceremony as he gave my son a very snappy 'first salute' and received an equally snappy first salute and ceremonial coin as a nice keepsake in return.

It washes over the mind even now as I think back on that day on May 20...and all of the months and years previous going back to his childhood. We have side by side pictures of a baby boy being held by Bucky Badger...and a young man in his red cap & gown on graduation day. Quite a nice pair of pictures. Simply understanding the series of events that led from one



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to the other is a quite satisfying. Those two contrasting pictures pretty much summarize why parents everywhere...including all of the readers of this publication...work so hard for so many years.

We all work hard...as did our predecessors...because our families need us...because we all accept that responsibility...and because at the end...a child, now adult...stands there in a graduation gown and then his military uniform saying in essence that he is now ready to start accepting his own responsibilities in life.

It is a bit emotional to realize that not only is the eldest child finished with college...he is now really leaving the nest. A kid in college is still pretty much part of the household. A kid off four to five years of military duty really is leaving and embarking on his own life. As a parent, there is nothing more to be done to shield him...to protect him from possible harm. We must trust that his years of training...the leadership of his superiors...and the will of God...will protect him.

A parent eventually wins the right to reflect back on the developments, achievements, sacrifices, and failures made as offspring and parents repeat the process of successful U.S. citizens through the generations. Good parents usually make for good children. While not perfect...Susan and I have both always felt that our children were our highest priority. A good parent...a good father... does not place personal happiness above that of his wife and family. I have learned that their happiness is my happiness...and vice versa.

It all makes a guy suddenly feel very philosophical about life. I've had this strong feeling since my cancer episode that everybody is expendable, none of us is immortal, and should something serious have happened to me...life


for my family would go on.

Hey, I turned 50 a couple of weeks ago...meaning that my life is 5/8ths complete...and my purpose is 5/8ths complete also, right? My wife is strong...and my children are strong. They have been trained well...by us, by their teachers, by their coaches, by their college professors, and by other positive adult role models.

Just as we all train our children over their formative years...other

positive influences such as the military, employers, schools, churches, and future spouses come into the picture and take over where we as parents leave off.

Suddenly, one day we find that our children have responded well to the series of events that make up their lives and are ready for adulthood.

It all gives Mother's Day...and soon...Father's Day...a bit of new meaning and significance. 

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