



Wee One Foundation: History and Update

By **Rodney Johnson**, Certified Golf Course Superintendent, Pine Hills Country Club

On behalf of The Wee One Foundation Board of Directors thanks to *The Grass Roots* for the opportunity to update the members of the Wee One Foundation and also in some cases introduce the Wee One Foundation.

Wayne Otto, CGCS will be remembered as the long time and highly respected golf course superintendent at Ozaukee Country Club. He was a good friend to all in the golf industry and a very close friend to many. After more than 4

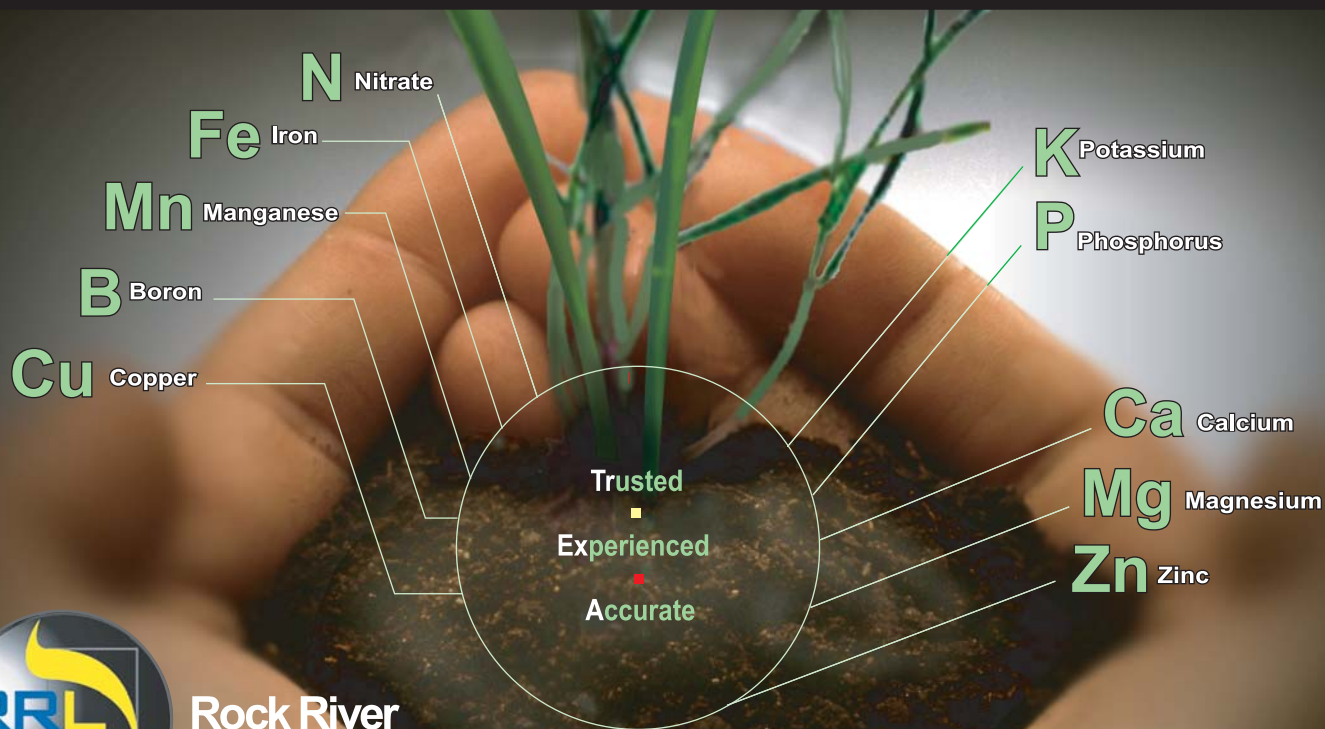


The Wee One, Wayne Otto, CGCS 1939-2004

years since his passing my fingers struggle to tap out words to describe the admiration felt by so many. The Wee One Foundation is a tribute to Wayne and his seemingly never ending willingness to befriend and help anyone.

Wayne was diagnosed with pancreatic cancer in June of 2004. We were shocked and dismayed by the grim news for such an apparently healthy person just beginning to enjoy retirement and starting a second career as a turf consultant.

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Joe Sell putts out on Pine Hills 4th Green with Todd Marten, Todd Fregien and Brad Marks watching. Hole 5 is in the background.



Rick Weiterman studies the next hole while Kristopher Pinkerton and Steve Schmidt talk strategy.



Pine Hills Country Club's 8th Hole with the clubhouse above.



Andy Devinger, Ed Devinger Jr, John Feiner, Bruce Hanson, Ed Devinger Sr and Mark Hjortness on Pine Hills 4th green.

Pancreatic cancer has an incredibly small survival rate. It is referred to as a silent killer that goes undetected until usually at a stage when treatment options are limited and have a low success rate.

The Wee One Foundation had humble beginnings with 6-8 guys gathered for lunch at Conejitas. Conejitas is a not so stylish but very authentic Mexican restaurant at 6th and Virginia in Milwaukee. It was Wayne's favorite and a favorite of many golf course superintendents who even know the place exists and venture there. Conejitas serves the best enchiladas in the world on paper plates. Ask for sour cream and you are likely to be called a gringo. The initial focus of the Wee One Foundation, before it was a foundation was Wayne and his needs.

A golf outing to raise funds to help Wayne in his fight against pancreatic cancer was organized. Knowing the low success rates of any available treatments in the United States, Wayne had sought alternative experimental treatments in Germany. Obviously those treatments were not covered by insurance.

We learned that as a group with a very popular cause we can be very good at raising funds but unfortunately the harsh reality is we are not capable of beating disease.

A good friend of the group and GCSAA past-president, Bill Roberts said to me "you know these things are going to keep happening". The fact that these things are going to keep happening and have happened is exactly why the Wee One Foundation was officially formed - has continued - and grows.

The name of the foundation was chosen from one of those great Wayne Otto stories that just happens to coincide with a Scottish caddy story. Wayne, Danny Quast, Stan Zontec, and Patrick O'Brien were on a golf trip to Scotland. While negotiating bets before teeing off the caddies were consulted on their opinions on the possibilities. One of the caddies whom I am sure Wayne was already on a friendly first name basis stated bluntly "My monies on the Wee One"

The Wee One Foundation is inspired by the many fond memories of Wayne. The Wee One Foundation has been favorably blessed by the IRS with 501C3 tax status allowing dues and donations to be deductible.

The Wee One Foundation now exists to lend support to others in the golf industry that are faced with financial burdens brought on by catastrophic illness or injury to themselves or their dependents. Through the generous support of many all tolled from that first

meeting at Conejitas we have gifted more than \$230,000. This is real money to real people at a time when they really need it. This is quite an accomplishment for a group formed less than 5 years ago.

Wee One Foundation has gifted cash with no strings attached to individuals in Wisconsin, Michigan, Iowa, Illinois, Kansas, North Carolina, Virginia, and Arizona. Our business is full of individuals with tremendous self pride who feel they can work things out on their own. We operate under the radar so to speak and have a policy of not publicly using the names and problems of the individuals helped. We have gifted cash to superintendents, assistant superintendents, dependents of superintendents, and industry reps as well.

Far too many in this business are uninsured or underinsured. Even with adequate insurance the financial burden of a major illness or injury is overwhelming. The Wee One is a friend in the business. Our gifting of cash has helped get people through some tough times. We are not the able to solve all problems or cure disease but the Wee One has been a friend to lessen the load so to speak.

Our sources of income continue to be Industry donations - annual individual memberships - and net funds

from the annual golf outing. The 6th annual fundraiser is scheduled for Monday, September 21, 2009 at Pine Hills in Sheboygan and hopefully we will have a great turnout and great weather again. I will continue to host the golf outing as long as allowed and as long as it continues to be viable popular site. Last years golf outing drew 180 players, a large but still manageable group. The field will be "maxed-out" at that number so plan on entering in a timely manner.

If you haven't, consider playing in the golf outing. We have had a great run with growing participation each year. 180 players seem like a lot and it is but we use a selective drive/alternate shot format that keeps play moving along. It is a casual laid back day with an 11 AM shotgun to allow for travel. Lunch is served on the golf course at a Brat Stand and a Taco Stand. I've been told some play in the event just for the Tacos.

Industry support of the Wee One Foundation has been incredible. Industry support in the form of tee sign donations at the 2008 golf outing alone was more than \$16,000. Thank-you for your generosity and we'll be in touch for this year.

Those of you who have attended the golf outing know that we have some real nice golf and raffle prizes.

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Most of the prizes are acquired through the use of donated Syngenta Green Partner Points. You can easily donate your points to the Wee One Foundation by visiting the Greenpartners website and we sincerely thank those who have.

Another shameless plug is in order for Memorial Bentgrass seed. Five bucks for every 25lb sold is donated to the Wee One. Over \$6,000 has been donated over the past two years.

Industry support and golf outings are great but we really need sustaining annual individual memberships to be our #1 source of income.

The Wee One Foundation has 370 members but frankly membership growth has been somewhat stagnant. Annual dues are \$75. For your donation you get our thanks and the knowledge you a part of something very special.

I would like to thank everyone who is a member of The Wee One. Tangible membership benefits are few. The Wee One pin is only a token of the good that the group does.


The Board of Directors of the Wee One Foundation is made up of Danny Quast, President - Rod Johnson as VP - Chad Ball, Conway Farms in Lake Forest, IL as secretary- and Pat Sisk, Milwaukee CC as Treasurer. Directors are Mike Handrich and Bruce Worzella, in Wisconsin and Paul Bastron, Mark Petitque, and Dave Radaj of in Illinois. Be assured that we appreciate and do not take for granted the trust that has been placed "to do the right things".

The fast track of the Wee One Foundation has not been without the normal growing pains of a group of volunteers who have jobs with heavy work loads. To that matter we are pleased that we have enlisted the services of Luke Cella to help us with the administration of the foundation. Luke is the Executive Director of the Midwest Golf Course Superintendents Association and the Illinois Turf Foundation. Luke is a great fit for us bringing exceptional organizational and administrative skills.

The Wee One Board struggles as to why the membership roster is stagnant.

If we have communicated poorly I apologize. I am confident we are going to step-up communication with the addition of Luke. Opportunities like The Grass Roots can only help.

If you have received information and not joined or sustained membership because of neglect or simple procrastination there is no need to apologize, just join or rejoin. If you chose not to be a member for what ever reason we respect that choice.

If you need more information visit Weeone.org. A membership application is available at the website. 

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