



# The Murgy Open: Ten Years Later.

By **Mark Kienert**, Certified Golf Course Superintendent, Bulls Eye Country Club

It is difficult to imagine that it has been ten years since Wisconsin Golf Course Superintendents lost one of her early leaders. Dave Murgatroyd, age 56 was killed in an automobile accident on April 22nd, 1999 when another driver pulled out in front of his truck. Dave, sadly to say wasn't wearing his seat belt at the time.

Jim Wunrow, former golf course superintendent at The Ridges and chairman of the Murgy Open, a golf outing played in Wisconsin Rapids on the course that Dave helped build along side his father, raises scholarship monies for local high school and Turfgrass students at the University of Wisconsin-Madison asked me to reprise the Memorial tribute I wrote when honoring Dave's Memory.

Most of you reading this are too young to have known Dave and those of you that did are now close to retiring or retired. For those of you that didn't know Dave you missed meeting a man that cut his own path in life choosing to learn via trial and error. Dave probably invented the cloth that most golf course superintendents were cut from. He patented the "lets roll up our sleeves and get it done mentality" long before "Get R Done" was coined. I swear his credo in life was to work hard and party harder. One liners and snippets, usually putting him down in self deprecating humor made him a popular person to be around when you needed a good laugh.

He was the consummate scrounge; he would beam proudly when he unearthed some part in the old bone yard that he could use to keep one of his "challenged" pieces of turf equipment alive for



**Dave and Gloria receiving a short drive award from Mark Grundman!**



**Dave Murgatroyd**

just one more week. If he were alive today, he would just laugh at the thought that these are lean and mean times. I can just hear him say that he "perfected" zero nitrogen, phosphorus and potassium based fertility programs and that the only way he could increase the dollars in his budget would be to stretch his green spray program one more week and just sit back and wait for the \$ (spots) to show up.

Dave mentored many golf course

superintendents like Bottensek, Kershasky, Worzella, Ruesch, Grunewald and Wunrow to name a few. While I never worked for Dave, I learned a lot from him. Dave was the first person I informed that Bull's Eye was closing the doors for renovation and recovery after the infamous drought of 1988. I still recall the invention he brought to my course that would help level my tees after the dead turf had been stripped. It always brought a smile

to my face to see Dave's truck pull into my shop yard. It was certain trouble when he brought Jeff Bottensek with him.

Dave helped his Dad build the Ridges into one of Wisconsin's first destination golf courses back in the early to mid sixties. Golfers from around the Midwest would travel the back roads to play this little gem of a course cut from the wilds "way up North." Today "way up north" is north of Minocqua! Dave would always apologize for his lack of turf education, but I'm here to tell you he possessed a PhD from the school of hard knocks and practical experience. He wouldn't take a backseat to anyone. He was one of the most analytical and inventive persons I've ever known. It would have been a real treat to hear what Dave would have to say about our country's current economic mess.

Dave was happiest when he was on his boat with his family. Dave was a mainstay at all of the couples Dinner Dances. To demonstrate that some things in life were meant to be, Gloria his longtime companion and best friend passed away from her long battle with ALS (Lou Gehrig's disease) on the anniversary date of Dave's passing six years later. I know Dave was waiting at the gates with St. Peter for her arrival. All his daughters are now grown married women and raising

families of their own. Dave would have been so proud and those kids would have been so spoiled.

**"The Murgie Open"**. After Dave's passing, a golf tournament was established to honor his work and dedication to the game and the golf course he so loved. Knowing Dave, he would have been proud, humbled and probably just a little embarrassed by all the attention. He would have been proud to know that over \$19,000 dollars has been awarded to 38 scholarships recipients in his name since the first Murgie Open ten years ago. Scholarships have been awarded to young college bound men and women from both high schools locally and to one turf student annually at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. (Knowing Dave, he would probably tell you that he was paying off some young bright mind to take his finals for him!) An endowment fund has been established in his name to ensure his legacy endures for future generations.

The 10th annual Murgie Open is scheduled for Saturday June 6th, 2009 at the Ridges Golf Course. The four person golf scramble will tee it up at 1 PM and is open to men and women of all ages. The Awards Dinner follows at 6 PM and is included your outing fee. If you would like more information, you can contact: Mary Wilkens at 715-424-2615 or Jim Wunrow at 715-421-2987. 🌱



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