

One answer might be the extreme host specificity that *Xanthomonas* species have demonstrated on other crops over the last 75 years. During that time a great many related diseases have been found on a lot of crops. All have been quite host specific, to my knowledge.

Another question could be: "Poa annua is important to me—I want to keep it!! I don't want the bacterium on my course!" Of course, the bacterium would only be deployed on those courses or areas where Poa is unwanted, such as on the new University Ridge golf course, for instance.

"Yes, but how do I know it won't be tracked onto my Poa greens by a visiting golfer?" Well, the bacterium already exists in nature. That's where it was found; it wasn't created in the laboratory via a transgenic process. And there's

presumably little evidence of its having spread naturally. There probably is considerable research ongoing to determine pathogen survivability in the soil, on shoes, in plants, debris, etc. And ideally, from a commercial perspective, the bacterium would have to be applied annually, or periodically, e.g., would have relatively short survivability, in order for a pharmaceutical house to become interested in its production.

Time was when this approach would have been brushed off with little appeal. But given the anti-pesticide posture of many, coupled with the continuing difficulty of controlling Poa where it is not wanted, I suspect there will be lots of interest if the bacterium is made commercially available.

But it serves to prove again the old adage: "No pain, no gain!"

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# AN UNEASY FEELING

By Dr. Wayne Kussow  
Department of Soil Science  
University of Wisconsin-Madison

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I recently had the pleasure of listening to an outstanding presentation on the management of USGA greens. We were led through step-by-step what it takes to properly manage these greens, starting with the year of establishment. But as I listened to the recommendations and reflected back on related experiences in 1991, I began to develop an uneasy feeling—a feeling that prompted some questions in my mind. How many superintendents are aware of these recommendations and how many have the experience and resources to implement them? Do different USGA recommendations work at cross purposes with one another? How aware are we of the chemical, pedological, and microbial changes that take place in USGA greens and the consequences? Allow me to share with you what prompted these questions.

One of the first recommendations made was to pump on the nitrogen with weekly or bi-weekly applications that total 12 lb N/M or more the first year. The rates of N should be tapered off the second year and in the third year should be down to the 3 to 5 lb N/M normally applied. The rationale given for this recommendation is that this much N is required to get the bentgrass well established. The practice begs some questions. What type of root growth results? My experience is that root development will be severely reduced. If this much N is required the first year or two, why? Could it be because of another firmly-stated USGA recommendation that new greens be fumigated prior to seeding? Fumigation undoubtedly destroys the microbial population of the rootzone. Is all this N needed because time is needed to rebuild the microbial population and get biocycling of N reestablished? Is this heavy use of N at variance with environmental concerns? How much "leakage" of N takes place those first couple of years? Does someone have answers to these questions? I don't.

Another recommendation that caught my attention arises from the admission that new USGA greens are hard. Resiliency has to be created and until this is done, golfers will legitimately gripe that the greens aren't holding lofted shots. So how do you create resiliency? The answer seemed to be by prompting thatch development and covering the thatch with topdressing sand. In fact, the recommendation is to begin with bi-weekly light topdressings as soon as the greens have been mowed a couple of times. How many of you have the resources to live with bi-weekly topdressing programs and are willing to live with the inevitable wear on mowers? Is there not some other means for achieving resiliency in USGA greens?

A third recommendation that I found interesting is that USGA greens should be flushed periodically to lower soluble salt concentrations. Admittedly, this may be essential in drier regions of the U.S. where low-salt irrigation water is hard to come by. But is it necessary elsewhere and what are the environmental implications? What does flushing do in terms of N and K and pesticide losses? Does the practice have to be followed up with more N application? My guess is that it does if you don't want yellow turf a day or two after the flushing operation.

To shift gears here a bit, let me relate to you a couple of experiences from this past year with USGA greens. One has to do with soil test P levels in greens. One of my students conducted a greenhouse study that showed that if P is mixed throughout the rootzone, there is no bentgrass growth response to more than 30 ppm soil test P. In a study reported at the American Society of Agronomy Annual Meetings last fall, turfgrass growth responses to surface applications of phosphate continued up to soil test P levels of 130 ppm. Is there any wonder then why I recommend mixing in phosphate when blending rootzone mixes? Perhaps the USGA should do likewise. We all know that P

promotes turfgrass root growth and split-root studies have shown that there is virtually no transfer of P from roots well supplied with P to those that are growing in a P-deficient environment. Is it possible that much of the poor root growth seen in USGA greens is attributable to low P supplies below the top inch or so of USGA greens that only receive topdressings of phosphate?

Another issue I dealt with in 1991 was signs of failure in the second year of a USGA green. The green is not draining properly and surface characteristics are those of black layer; thinning of the bentgrass and development of black algae mats. The problem seems to originate at about a 6-inch depth where pores have become blocked with fine material not originally present in the sand. This fine material is partially inorganic and partially organic in origin. Apparently this layer is restricting water and air movement such that drainage into the underlying pea gravel is severely impeded, and the bottom 6 inches of the rootzone mix have become strongly anaerobic. Exactly what chemical processes took place so rapidly to create this problem, I don't know. All I can say is that sphagnum peat moss and calcareous sand appear to have been an unfortunate choice for the rootzone mix. Yet, there are no indications from the USGA that these materials should be avoided.

My purpose here is not to take issue with the USGA Green Section, but to air some concerns that I have regarding USGA greens. Their managerial demands are high and perhaps too high for the lower budget golf courses or for less experienced superintendents. There is much to be learned yet about what chemical, physical, and microbial processes go on in USGA greens constructed from different types of sands and amendments. Until we fill in these knowledge gaps, there are going to be some very unfortunate experiences with these greens.





# Working For Private Owners

By Pat Norton

Working as a superintendent at a privately owned public golf course is different. It's different than working in either a municipal or private member owned operation. It is certainly different than any other employment situation I've ever encountered.

How is it different? Is it any better or worse than other management opportunities? Comparing and contrasting the differences in these different golf course management situations could be very interesting. It should also be very thought provoking as we all approach the 1992 golf season.

Over the past ten years, Wisconsin superintendents have seen an enormous amount of change. Changes in our public image, in our sense of professionalism, and in the technology available to manage today's golf courses, have been rapid and constant.

The emergence of the "upscale" public golf course has certainly helped bring about these positive changes. These new public golf courses have really become showcases for the talents of some WGCSA members. Ten years ago we didn't have Blackwolf Run, Geneva National, University Ridge, Trapper's Turn, or Cedar Creek. The development of these golf complexes has really brought golf course superintendents into the full field of vision of the Wisconsin golfing populace.

Awareness of these "upscale" public courses first came with the construction of SentryWorld and Lake Arrowhead in the early '80's. The professional demands on Bill Roberts and Jeff Parks must have differed profoundly when compared to other traditional superintendent positions. These courses were developed essentially by private groups, tied up millions of dollars, and took years before they generated any significant revenues. The superintendent, to his credit, was and is the person chosen to oversee the transition from construction site to grassy sward to bona fide, revenue producing, profit-making golf club.

Those of us who have followed Roberts and Parks soon discovered a

new and different set of rules. They are as follows:

- 1) build the course quickly, but economically;
- 2) build the course correctly, but economically; and
- 3) build the course without spending a dime. If a dime is spent, it had better be spent economically!

As the new course evolves, so does the management philosophy of the superintendent. Huge amounts of capital are being spent and enormous expenses are being incurred. Justification to the owners for just about everything becomes the pattern. Accountability to a non-golfing businessman or banker is the game, not to some easily molded committee. Mistakes that cost money are not forgotten, and not often forgiven.

The management philosophy changes during this whole process. My philosophy now is that quality has a price that is sometimes far too expensive to justify. And besides, both the owner and the public golfer have a tough time seeing the subtle differences in quality that often times dramatically drive up costs.

A big factor in managing a golf course under these circumstances is the enormous amount of scrutiny that is placed on the superintendent and other staff by the investor/owners. This scrutiny ranges from operational and capital expenses incurred to a scrutinization of one's management style and job performance.

This scrutiny is used as a tool by owners and management alike. Owners examine the actions of management, which prompts management to closely self-examine (and often time second guess) management decisions. This constant review process is usually positive, sometimes too negative, but always geared toward the common goal—operating a golf club for profit.

Operating a golf course for profit means that the superintendent has to think like the owners. Golf becomes a business, not a sport or a game. What

is desirable or important to the management staff is usually not affordable. What is *absolutely necessary* will be considered for acquisition, and nothing more.

The question then becomes, "What is necessary?" Necessary items in my mind are many times viewed as luxuries by the investors. I usually try to opt for higher quality on the golf course, which drives up costs, and puts me in conflict with the cost conscious owner.

(Continued on page 15)

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(Continued from page 13)

My rationale is always that a higher quality golf course brings in more revenue, which is a well-proven fact. It's also a proven fact that if I don't constantly check prices and grind down on expenses, my feet will be held to the fire. It's sometimes tough to remember that it's not my money invested in this golf course. I am not the one having to pay all those bills.

The superintendent in this situation soon begins to think like a businessman. He must balance wants and needs endlessly, always with an eye toward doing without. A temporary lapse in this tough attitude has resulted in a few interesting chats between my owner/investor/boss and myself. These chats usually come as we mutually review all previous month's expenses over a suddenly inedible breakfast.

This businesslike attitude has become a very strong part of my operating philosophy. Will my desired programs and recommendations really be visible on the golf course? Do these programs somehow translate into more golfers

on the course and more revenue for the club? Many of the new products in the green industry are hard for me to justify for our operation. The costs are too high, and the apparent benefit is much too low.

Quality playing conditions aren't always the most important consideration. I sometimes cynically chuckle when I think of the stated mission of the golf course superintendent at many private clubs. Their basic mission is to provide quality playing conditions for the club members and their guests, within the confines of well established and defined budgets.

Privately owned public courses operate with a different set of goals, resulting in a different mission for the superintendent. Quality to a degree is the goal. Profitability is the ultimate goal—we do not exist to simply break even. Consequently, budgets that are defined on paper may be ignored in the quest for profitability. Management staff must constantly strive to save money or face the consequences.

This businesslike attitude, which I do believe is necessary and has been beneficial for myself, leads me to think about the logical next step. That would be to own a golf course of my own. Many superintendents think about this idea, but not too many actually pursue this dream.

What would it take to own a golf course? What are the risks and benefits? Many superintendents would certainly need to change some attitudes and practices in order to survive as business people. Exposure to privately owned operations easily leads one to consider the possibilities.

Some superintendents, through exposure to public golf, have taken the plunge into course ownership. Most have turned it into a successful venture.

The subtle encouragement of this idea by one's owners/employers is a very real benefit of working in public golf. Exposure to their business experience rubs off, gets under the skin, and starts the itching.

More superintendents should consider scratching that itch.

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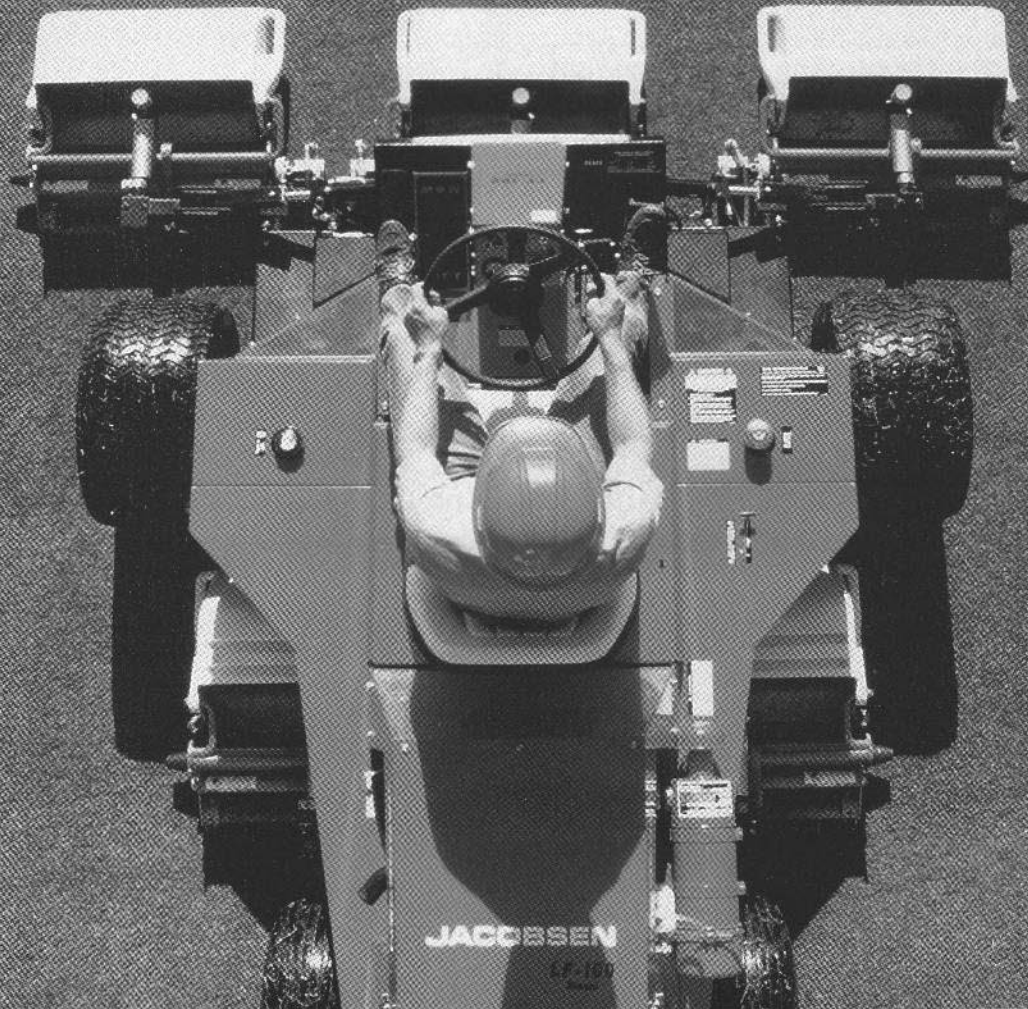
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## New GCSAA president hasn't forgotten his Wisconsin ties

By Lori Ward Bocher

His current address may be the Lockmoor Club of Grosse Pointe Woods, Mich. But Bill Roberts, the new GCSAA president, has a very soft spot in his heart for Wisconsin.

"I have a great deal of affinity and respect for the superintendents in Wisconsin," he says. "They helped me grow up professionally. They committed to helping me get on the national board, and they didn't let up until it happened.

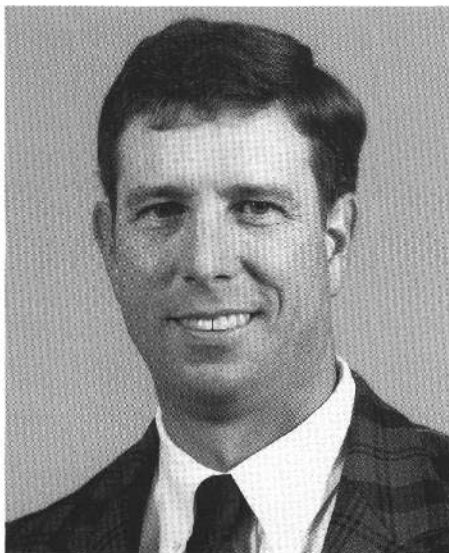
"The guys here in Michigan have been tremendously supportive and I've enjoyed getting to know them," Bill adds. "But the guys in Wisconsin are the ones who got me going professionally. I'll never forget that."

Bill recalls a strange feeling that came over him when he returned to Milwaukee for a meeting last spring. "I flew into Milwaukee and rented a car," he explains. "Then the weirdest thing happened. As I drove out of the parking structure, I felt this real sense of relief being back in Wisconsin. I don't know why. But I actually felt that."

Roberts, who just turned 40, grew up in Chicago's northern suburbs. He attended Northern Illinois University as an English Literature major for a few years before he realized that wasn't the path for him.

"I had worked summers on a golf course (Knollwood Club, Lake Forest, Ill.) for a guy named Jim Bertoni," Bill recalls. "Jim was a young, enthusiastic guy. He got me interested in golf courses and helped me get into Penn State. When he moved to the west coast, I followed and did my internship with him."

In 1975, Bill received a 2-year degree in turf management from Penn State. His first job was with Bob Williams at Bob-O-Link, a Chicago-area course where he spent a year. Then came his first move to Wisconsin—three years at Stevens Point Country Club. In 1979 he moved back to Illinois as superintendent at Knollwood for two years. Then he came back to Wisconsin during the construction phase of SentryWorld at



Bill Roberts, GCSAA President

Stevens Point. He remained at SentryWorld from 1981 to 1988.

Bill was quick to get involved with the WGCSA. "The first time I was in Wisconsin I was newsletter editor for a while," he recalls. "It was nothing like Monroe has accomplished. The newsletter at that time was basically a way to announce meetings. During my second time in Wisconsin I was on the board and went through all the chairs and was president in 1986 and 1987."

What was Bill's impact on WGCSA? "To be honest with you, the impact that the organization had on me was probably much greater than any impact I had on it," he answers. "I was brought up in the business that you need to be involved. My time on the Wisconsin board helped me galvanize that desire. It taught me a lot about working with people. It taught me a lot about what a committed group can accomplish."

Without taking credit for himself, Bill believes that WGCSA saw good membership growth and gains in terms of recognition during his years in Wisconsin. "The association just got stronger. I really enjoyed working with that group of people," he adds.

While still in Wisconsin, Bill decided to become involved with the national

group. He ran unsuccessfully for the GCSAA board in 1985, but was elected the next year at the San Francisco meeting.

He credits others with his desire to become involved at the national level. "The guys I worked with early in my career—Jim Bertoni, Bob Williams, Joe Duich at Penn State—taught me that one of the great things about this business is the opportunity to become involved," he says. "They showed me how networking could be a positive thing and that the responsible thing for me to do professionally was to get involved. It was in my upbringing that one owed it to one's profession to give something back."

Bill was a GCSAA director for four years, secretary-treasurer for a year, and vice president for a year before being elected president this spring. While he was a director, in 1988, he moved from SentryWorld to Lockmoor Club in Grosse Pointe Woods, Mich. Lockmoor is a 250-member, family oriented, private club with an 18-hole course (35,000 rounds per year) plus good tennis and swimming programs, according to Bill.

"When I interviewed at Lockmoor I told them that I had an opportunity to see my GCSAA commitment through to the end," he recalls. "If that fit in with their plans, great. But if it didn't, I'd go back to Wisconsin. They agreed to it and they've been very supportive ever since."

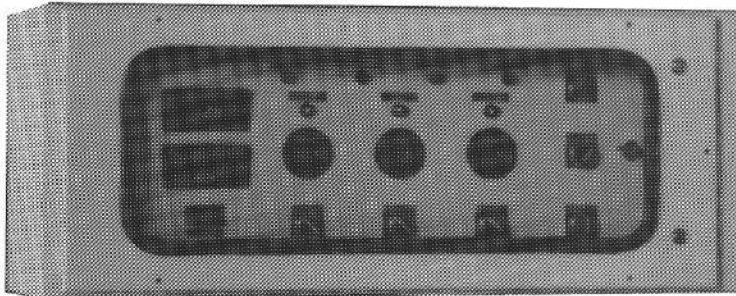
GCSAA business has kept Bill on the road much of the time—75 days in 1991 and even more days planned for 1992. "You can't be gone that much without a terrific staff," he emphasizes. "I have a terrific assistant, equipment manager, irrigation foreman and pesticide manager. I've also got a terrific seasonal staff."

Some of his time on the road has been spent in Washington testifying before a Senate subcommittee on pesticide issues. "We tried to supply them with golf's perspective," Bill recalls.

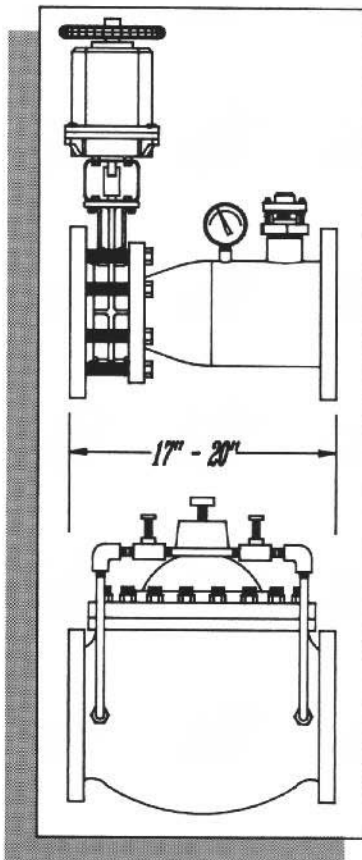
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(Continued on page 19)



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(Continued from page 17)

administration, pesticides can be used effectively without adversely impacting the environment, we wanted to continue to use them. But if, through golf support of research, we document problems, we're committed to changing our management.

"And I think they were relieved to hear that we're not out there indiscriminately ignoring our environmental responsibility," he continues. "We've known that for a long time. But I don't know if anybody ever sat down and told this group, or others, that that's the way we approach pesticide use."

Educating people about the role of golf course superintendents in what GCSAA is all about, Bill believes. "We want to continue to gain recognition for the superintendent. You can never do enough of that. We've already made phenomenal progress.

"I just picked up an issue of *Golf Digest* that said John Schilling, our executive director, is among the top 35 most powerful people in the game," Bill continues. "And, in the same article, superintendents are described as the key on-course employee. That's terrific recognition. And it's about time."

GCSAA must also tell the superintendent's story when it comes to environmental issues and regulatory considerations. "Our ability to maintain a very high degree of credibility with legislators and regulators can't be understated," Bill emphasizes. "We can go to Washington and sit down with these people. They ask us our perspective and they trust us. We've worked very, very hard in order to establish and maintain that credibility."

It's also important to communicate with those who hire and work directly with golf course superintendents, Bill believes. "Increasingly, GCSAA is going to communicate not only with superintendents, but with managers, owners, officials, green committee chairmen, golf pros and others.

"We're putting on a greens chairman session at the conference in New Orleans this year," he points out. "We've started a new publication, called the Leader Board, that will be available directly to club officials, owners, those types. It's not going to talk about turf management, but rather some broader management issues that they need to be aware of and that they may want to discuss with the superintendent."

There's also a need to communicate about hiring decisions. "We want to educate them about what they need to look for in a superintendent, about the ad-



Bill Roberts with some of his people at the irrigation computer.

vantages of hiring a qualified superintendent," Bill explains. "Hiring an unqualified person just to save \$4,000 in salary is short sighted and ultimately hurts the whole industry."

In addition to these communication challenges, Bill believes GCSAA faces some organizational challenges in the near future. Most are due to the association's tremendous growth. "Our membership has doubled in the past five years," he points out. "We're now an \$8.5 million organization with 11,000 members in 45 countries. It has really become an international organization."

How did it become international in scope? "Because golf course superintendents in this country—in particular, those who have taken advantage of GCSAA education and communication opportunities—have set the standards for golf playing conditions around the world," Bill answers.

"With today's ease of communicating and traveling around the world, foreigners are coming over here and seeing that American golf courses have outstanding playing conditions," he continues. "They're taking ideas back with them and asking, 'Why don't we have the same conditions?' We've got people coming to us from all over the world to find out how to bring their standards up to ours."

"So I think we have some opportunities to provide them with the information and/or those superintendents to help them meet those goals," he adds. "Job opportunities internationally are going through the roof. Guys are going to the Pacific Rim, to Europe—either as superintendents, as consultants or in construction."

As GCSAA grows, it needs to change the way it does business, Bill believes. "GCSAA is a very well-founded, well-

respected business with a committed membership and a very professional staff," he says. "But this year we need to have a very serious and mature discussion about the organizational aspects of the association. We've got to resolve some issues if we're going to continue to enjoy the kind of growth that we have in the past.

"This is a business, and we need to work in a business-like climate," Bill says. "There needs to be some bylaw changes that would empower the board to make decisions more quickly so we can respond efficiently to changing business conditions. Things like the ability to set dues, to determine requirements for membership classifications and to put paid GCSAA representatives out in the field. Those field reps could interact more closely not only with superintendents, but also with other segments of the industry.

"If I had to state an agenda for the coming year, that would be it—to get things positioned organizationally so that we can operate in a business-like sense in the next decade," he stresses.

On a personal level, Bill faces this decade with more energy because he made some life-style changes in the '80's "I started taking better care of myself," he explains. "Six years ago I quit smoking and started running. I've run in eight marathons now, and I like to run 10K's and half marathons, too.

"I still run five to six days a week, and I eat right," he continues. "It's not something that I have to find time for any more—it's just a part of my day. As a result, I've accrued all the benefits that go with it. I feel better, I work better, I look better."

Bill's wife, Patricia, is a hospital nursing supervisor. They have three daughters, aged 13, 11 and 9.

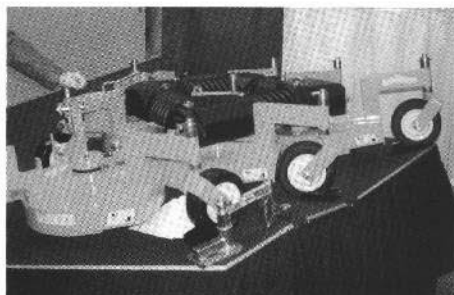
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#### BEST CONFERENCE FEATURE

The Environmental Session. Thousands attended and left with a reaffirmation of golf course value to the environment. It was also made clear how extremists work and how they can be had with facts. John Stossel was both tremendous and impartial.

#### BEST NEW PIECE OF EQUIPMENT

The new sectional rotary deck introduced by LasTec, Inc. It might allow older courses like mine and courses with severe or uneven ground to make more use of outfront rotaries. That is the current rage, isn't it?



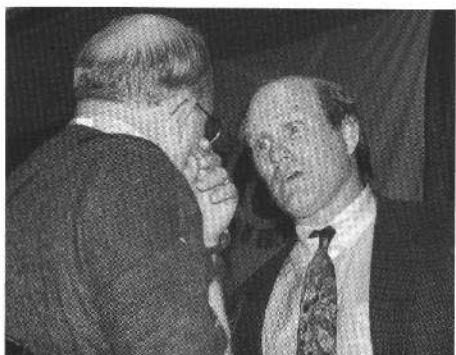
A good looking new product—Lastec's rotary deck that eliminates a lot of scalped areas.

#### NUMBER ONE ANNOYANCE

Of course the name badges serve a purpose although they lack even a shred of dignity. But it's high time the goofy ribbons disappear. Really, who cares if a person is a committee person, a speaker, a candidate or a past president (or a wienie, for that matter). Some of the guys strut around with three or four ribbons flying in the wind. They look like some Russian general who spilled a salad on his chest. *Lose the Ribbons!*

#### NUMBER ONE IRRITATION

The GCSAA store, unfortunately, was located on the show floor. GCSAA members aren't allowed on the floor the first day. Result? Selection for members is diminished by those who aren't golf



Terry Bradshaw did an excellent job as keynote speaker. His story about Mike Webster's liver pills was hilarious!

course superintendents. Solution? Get the GCSAA booth back outside the show floor where it belongs and give GCSAA members an equal chance at logo merchandise.



Jennifer and Erin Roberts "admired" dad's bow tie!

#### NUMBER ONE AGGRAVATION

For years, a group of WGCSA members get together to fill a table at the banquet. One person takes the ten vouchers, gets in line hours before the banquet booth opens and waits to select a table with a good location. Scores of others do the same.

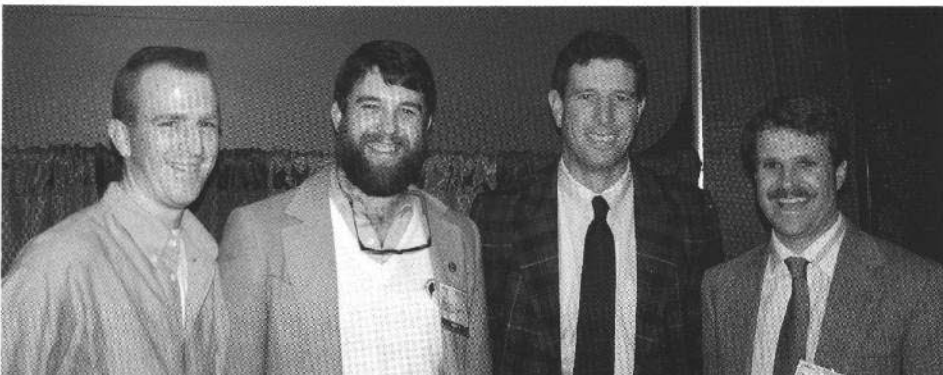
Imagination the aggravation, having done that, when the slob who invested no time in line for location, are actually invited to "come on up" and park right in front of those who did invest their time for a good stage view.

It was rude, regardless of what the entertainer wanted. Hopefully, it will not happen again.

#### BIGGEST DISAPPOINTMENT

As with many others I visited with about the educational sessions, I am disappointed again this year that it was:

1. limited to one day,
2. offered lectures of common interest at the same time, and
3. limited lectures to a meager twenty minutes.



Chad Eberhardt, Tom Parent and Tom Schwab wish Bill Roberts lots of luck at the helm of the GCSAA.

#### BETTER THAN LAST YEAR

The president's reception—absolutely fantastic this year. Great food, too!

#### DIFFERENT FROM LAST YEAR

Bow ties and cummerbunds worn by O & D at the banquet. Wild colors, but not what I would choose. But I'm no fashion guru, either.

#### NOTICEABLE BY THEIR ABSENCE

I'd hoped to visit with some of the USGA Green Section staff members at the prez's reception. But not one was there. Any reason? Or shouldn't I ask?

#### BEST DISPLAY ON THE SHOW FLOOR

McCord Terra Tire Sales. They won this award by including as a part of their booth display a perfectly restored 8N Ford tractor with absolutely the best paint job I've ever seen on any vehicle, bar none. Super.



The best looking piece of equipment on the show floor—a restored 8N Ford tractor!

#### BIGGEST DRAW ON THE SHOW FLOOR

Blue Gold Reel Sharpening Compound. They won this prestigious award for having Spanky McFarland greet people who came to their display. Yes, I have my autographed copy of Spanky framed and hanging on my office wall. For the younger generation, Spanky McFarland was the star of the very old movies, *Spanky and Our Gang*.