



WHAT'S NEW?

By Bruce Worzella



This greeting seems to be used often by friends, relatives, and others who are wondering if there have been any changes in your life. Sometimes I find myself searching for a title, but this term came to mind for my president's message. It will explain what is forthcoming on the WGSCA calendar.

As of August 18th, the 10th annual Wisconsin Turfgrass Association Field Day will have been held at the new O.J. Noer Turfgrass Research Facility. We, as an association, should feel proud that we had an important role financing a portion of this magnificent research center. Wis-

consin turfgrass managers can now feel confident that turf related problems can be analyzed and solutions or alternatives can be given based on home state soil and climactic conditions. Our continued support can only improve such a tremendous facility.

What else is new? On October 28 and 29, the 27th Annual Wisconsin Golf Turf Symposium will be held at the Hyatt, rather than the Pfister. A trial of different surroundings has been agreed upon by the committee, to see if past persistent problems can be rectified, and an even better Symposium may result.

Finally, the WGSCA fall business meeting is going to be held at 5:00 p.m. on November 9th, rather than in the morning, as in years past. Education and member participation have always been a concern, and holding our meeting in conjunction with a GCSAA regional seminar should offer a possible solution. Also at 5:00 p.m., individuals not attending the GCSAA seminar should have most of their daily work schedule complete.

Learning by trial and error can only improve future decisions. As the old saying goes, "You'll never know unless you try."

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(L to R) Mike Semler, Bruce Worzella, Rod Johnson, Bill Knight, Pat Norton, Tom Schwab, Mark Kienert, Scott Schaller and Mike Handrich.

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June Frowns Turned into Smiles in July and August!

By Monroe S. Miller

Some members of the Wisconsin Golf Course Superintendents Association were having flashbacks to 1988 this past June, reliving the nightmare drought of that year.

Dry conditions were found well beyond the state borders, and, in fact, included most of the Midwest.

It was common for areas to be six inches below normal in precipitation.

Insult was added to injury on June 17th when a tornado ripped through Wisconsin, starting in Middleton and ending at Lake Michigan. It prevented Bruce Worzella and Gary Zwirlein from attending Gayle Worf's retirement event.

The tornado touched close to home—it removed the roof from Jeff Parks' home. Fortunately, no one in Jeff's family was injured. In fact, in his typical fashion, the repairs to his house were completed about as quickly as anyone else's in Dane County.

Most lucky of all was the lack of serious injuries; no lives were lost, either.

Little rain accompanied the storm, by the way.

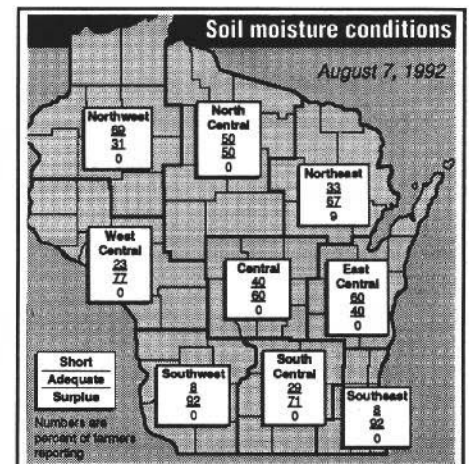
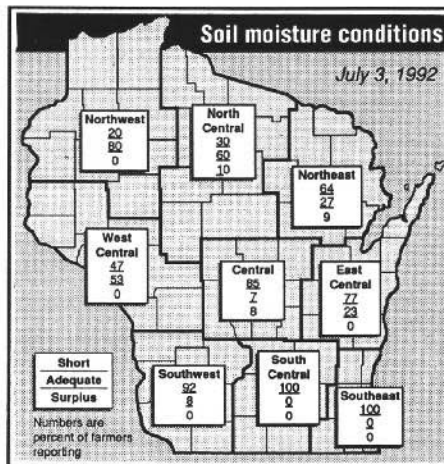
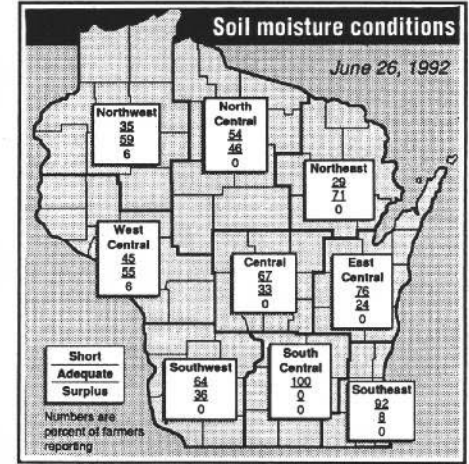
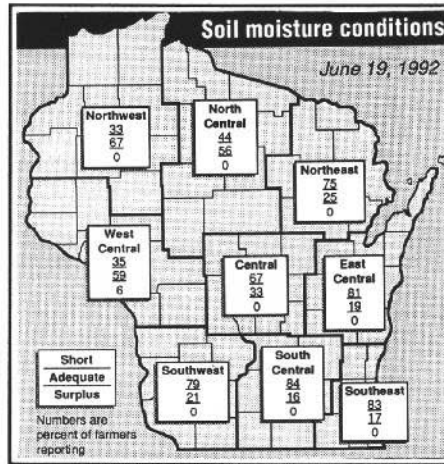
The scorching hot weather ended rather abruptly the day after the first day of summer when record cold hit the Great Lakes region.

An arctic weather system brought two days—the 20th and the 21st—of broken low temperature records.

For us, the sight of frost on drought stressed rough grasses was unusual, as was the white of irrigated greens, tees and fairways.

For Wisconsin farmers, the frost was a killer. Estimates were that between ten and twenty percent of the corn crop suffered damage. In our area, thousands of acres were literally turned brown, causing corn fields to look more like October than June.

Northern Wisconsin actually saw temperatures in the mid-20s! Dan Barrett told me he was wearing gloves and a stocking cap on the Fourth of July.



Frustration pretty much ended in the first and second weeks of July when significant rainfall blessed the state. Prosperity of the grass returned! Fears lessened! Golf course superintendents could rest comfortably again (for a few days, at least).

Although the rains were appreciated, we were still three plus inches below normal rainfall in our town at July's end.

More is needed. Here's hoping...

The EPA is in the news daily, it seems. News of late has a bearing on our business.

The EPA has made the first step toward offering financial incentives and regulatory relief to pesticide

manufacturers that develop safer products.

The agency is now seeking public comment as it tries to promote the use of insecticides that pose a lower public health and environment risk.

"Our goal is to develop policies to create improved economic incentive for the development, registration and use of newer biologicals and other types of low-risk pesticides," said an assistant administrator for pesticides. "This effort to encourage innovative approaches is part of EPA's initiative to prevent pollution."

Their plan for new safer pesticide policy has been in the works for several years. It would be designed to reward pesticides that pose low risks,

and to replace pesticides that post a significant risk to human health or the environment.

The effort could also cut the costs of marketing a new pesticide and speed the time it takes to bring a new pesticide to market. That time can now take as long as seven years because of the studies required.

Other actions under consideration by the agency are:

1. Counseling applicants early in the process to clarify registration requirements.
2. Accelerating the review process.
3. Waiving certain fees.

It seems like these are all moves toward a win-win situation for all involved.

Sometime in June a federal appeals court in San Francisco disallowed any trace of four pesticides in processed foods, ignoring that their ruling imposes a zero tolerance.

The decision seems unrealistic since you cannot find any food that doesn't have natural carcinogens. It allows natural carcinogens at unsafe levels but not man-made products at a safe level.

That decision is of interest to us because two of the products are useful in turfgrass management—benomyl and mancozeb. This action may well hasten their departure from our list of fungicides.

A survey of Wisconsin residents that was released in July gave the UW System very high grades.

Surprising to me was the fact that Wisconsin people value graduate education more than undergraduate education. That adds credibility to the role the NOER facility will play with graduate students.

The Wisconsin Survey Research Laboratory reported that 80 percent of adults surveyed deemed grad education "very important". Seventy-seven percent called the undergrad programs "very important".

UW administrators had to be especially pleased when 85 percent of those surveyed statewide agreed that the UW gives "a good return" on their tax dollars.

Overall, 93 percent said they had a very favorable or somewhat favorable impression of the UW system.

Count me in that 93 percent, please.

Although most citizens are pleased with the UW system, I've not spoken to a single solitary soul who is pleased with Wisconsin's rating as absolutely the worst, dead last place in the country to retire.

Why? TAXES.

MONEY magazine surveyed states on the amount of taxes retirees can expect to pay. We came in 51st. Last.

The editors said the Wisconsin tax load for a "typical retired couple" was a startling annual tax of \$7,449. Maryland was second worst with a \$5,935 obligation, far better than ours. We are last by a country mile of \$1,500.

Alaska, on the other hand, had a typical annual tax of \$133.

The survey of 50 states and the District of Columbia was based on the income tax, sales tax, gas tax and property tax for a hypothetical couple.

People in our state need to wake up before election day and vote out of office the losers who are taxing us out of existence. As much as I love this state, retirement elsewhere is looking more and more sensible.

For a full reading of the bad news, see the July issue of *MONEY* magazine; the story starts on page 146.

Those of us who grew up in rural Wisconsin generally very much like the county fairs we enjoyed in our youth. Even today they are pretty much like they were thirty or forty years ago.

The midway rides, the livestock shows and judging, and the 4-H displays are great fun.

So are the tractor pulls. The ones I especially enjoy today are the antique tractors. One of the guys I work with—Val Breunig—is an ace operator in these events. Val currently owns a refurbished Oliver Row Crop 88 that he hauls around Wisconsin for tractor pulling. He's used other tractors, too. The most notable in my preferences was a John Deere Model 70.

Tractor pulling is reaching down to equipment sized to the scale we use on our golf courses. There was one such tractor pull in Oregon, Wisconsin on August 1st—a lawn tractor contest.

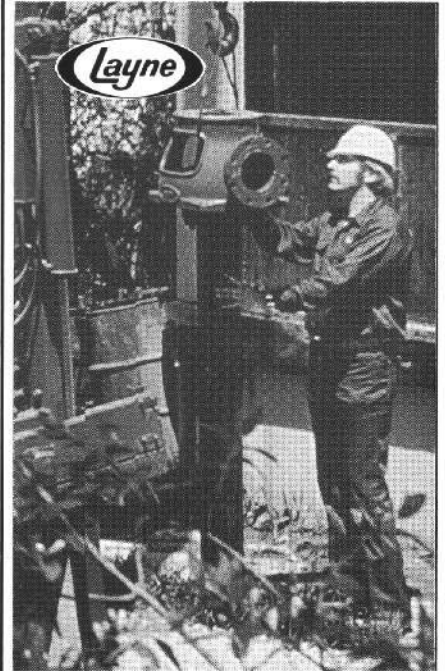
They do everything the big guys do at their tractor pulls. These miniatures hook up to an appropriately sized sled and on command lurch forward to see how far they pull the sled before breaking traction and momentum.

There were 150 people present to watch lawn tractors fitted out with big tires belch smoke and exhaust in an effort to win.

I learned there is even an organization—the U.S. Lawn Mower Racing Association—that caters to this sport. They promote the sport and require safety rules like helmets and cutting blade removal.

The small tractors here have names just like the big ones have.

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Raisin' Hell, Bull Pull, and Slimer were the best. Some machines had super paint jobs. Others had weights hung out front to keep the wheels down.

There was competition in several classes—10 h.p. stock, 18 h.p. stock, mod-stock, pro-stock, superstock and four-cylinder.

Cub Cadets, built by the old IH Company, dominated the competition.

Drivers ranged in age from 7 to 77 and included women operators.

What's next in the logical evolution of pulling contests—triplex greens-mowers? Trap rakes? Cushmans?

Probably better let it stop with garden tractors!

A lot of WGCSA members have started feeling comfortable again, now that right-to-know programs are in place, AG 29 ramifications have been studied and fuel storage rules have been met.

Well, better get uncomfortable because the EPA is coming at us again. Or Joe Homeowner for now, at least.

The EPA calculated that the nation's 83 million lawn mowers produce as much exhaust pollution as 3.5 million new cars.

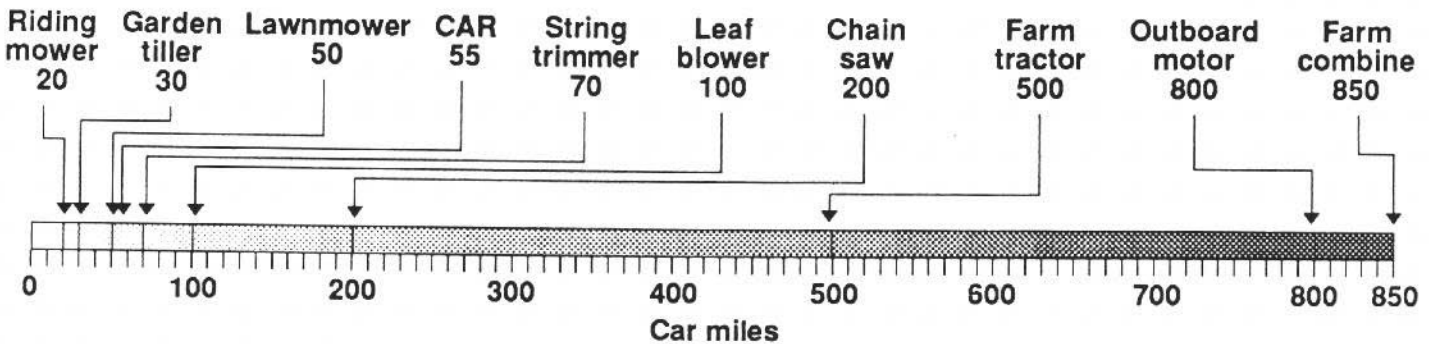
Their estimates are that using a gas-powered mower for one hour will generate as much exhaust as driving your car for almost two days.

What is the EPA proposing? They

are initiating a program to replace gas mowers with electrics. And they are working with engine manufacturers on ways to make engines run cleaner.

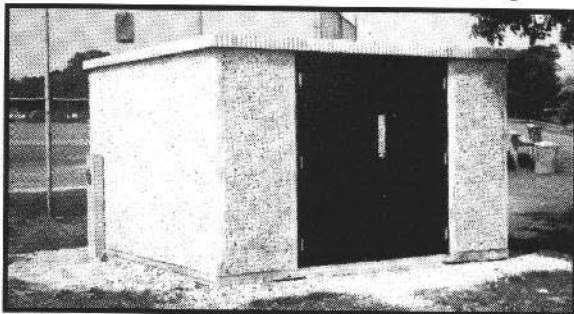
No question that this focus will affect us. We may be cutting greens with an electric greensmower sooner than we think. Parts inventories will all include catalytic converters for our small engines that power everything from utility cars to towing tractors.

Cars are the obvious polluters in our environment and are a benchmark for comparison with the above-mentioned more subtle sources, many found in our shops. The following graphic gives you some details.



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THE JOY OF KICKING TIRES

By Monroe S. Miller

You know that summer is nearly spent when the Wisconsin Turfgrass Association Summer Field Day is over.

The Field Day has held court on the same day in August for so long now that it has become a timepost for most of us working on Wisconsin golf courses.

From very humble beginnings on a very hot and humid August day a decade ago, the Field Day has become an important day on the calendar of a lot of our members. Now that it has found a wonderful home at the NOER facility, the Field Day will grow even larger.

There is something about equipment shows that almost universally appeals to golf course superintendents. And be assured whatever that "something" is, farmers have it too. Honestly, I believe they love equipment shows more than we do.

As I cast about trying to define that appeal, the first thing that comes to mind is the most obvious. Equipment shows are very practical, functional and useful affairs for everybody—exhibitors and superintendents.

An equipment distributor can make one trip and show several, even many, pieces of machinery to hundreds of customers. To expose the same number of buyers to a piece of grass machinery individually could conceivably involve a visit to each and every golf course represented at a field day. If the exhibitor shows five pieces, multiply the number of trips by five.

The economic incentive is powerful for them, indeed.

The same goes for us, too. The arrangements required and the time consumed to see all the equipment at a field day operated on your own golf course, an item at a time, would take all summer. You simply wouldn't get anything else done.

Certainly you cannot diminish the great value of an equipment demonstration at your own course, with its very specific and peculiar conditions. That kind of individual and personal-

ized look is critical to wise buying decisions. I don't even want, nor do I think as an industry we can, give that up.

But a field day helps narrow you to a station where you know what you actually want demonstrated.

Field days provide a singular opportunity to see the various competitors side by side, in operation, mowing grass. Or maybe aerifying. Or spraying. Or any of the myriad of activities equipment does for a course superintendent. Rarely, if ever, can you see such a sight on your own golf course.

More than a few buying decisions have been made as a result of these head-to-head competitions. It's a field day feature I really like.

Frequently, field days also have factory engineers around equipment displays. You can learn a lot about design intent and manufacturing processes from them. They can give explanations about equipment that you'd not likely get otherwise.

I've always been interested in what my colleagues think about a particular piece of equipment I am contemplating the purchase of in the near future. How great it is to hang around a mower at a field day, kicking tires and listening to what a group of other golf course managers are thinking about the same mower. Their collective opinion influences me and my

eventual choice. Studying the pluses and minuses of a machine and researching its value on a golf course is simply a lot of fun with your friends.

Field days, regardless of where they are held, are very colorful affairs. The brightly painted machinery moving across the carpet of grass is a sight to behold.

Here is a fact about every field day I've attended: the food is always good, never fancy and always plentiful. Field days are hard work and a person develops a hearty appetite during the day. One of the key planning elements for the WTA Field Day is securing a caterer which will serve a basic and generous and well cooked meal!

Maybe another reason a field day is such a pleasant experience for so many of us is that the dress of the day is determined by comfort. Seldom do you see a necktie; when you do, you immediately question the wearer's sanity.

There is no sense in denying that field days and equipment shows are social affairs. You are spending the day with people you know and whose company you enjoy. Often, as with the WTA Field Day, you see folks you haven't seen for awhile and it makes you happy to see them again.

I actually see quite a few equipment shows over the course of a year. In a way, the various shows

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mark my calendar, often happening about the same time year in and year out.

It is my good luck to go to many field days and equipment shows with someone who likes them and profits from them as much as I do. In fact, he is one of the best turf equipment people around.

Tom Harrison has a natural talent that enables him to look at a machine and immediately know how it works, understand its shortcomings and fashion just about any repair that it might need. He usually has an opinion on how he'd make it better, too!

Although golf course superintendents who enjoy kicking tires usually prefer golf course equipment shows and the visiting and comparing that goes with them, some of us like other kinds of equipment field days, too. For me, youth on a southwest Wisconsin farm gave me an interest in farm machinery. Fortunately Tom likes farm equipment, too.

We both like going to Wisconsin Farm Progress Days and will try to schedule a trip to this major event when it is held in our part of the state at a time when we can get away for a vacation day. Both of us get a charge out of watching a John Deere 9500 combine with a corn header attachment move across a corn field, consuming acres per hour. It is fun to watch the really big equipment—a 4-wheel drive 200 h.p. Steiger tractor, for example—follow that JD 9500 combine with a huge chisel plow preparing the soil for planting next spring. The scale of everything at Farm Progress Shows absolutely dwarfs turf equipment.

Farm Progress will sometimes precede and other times follow the WTA Field Day. The third event Tom and I enjoy is an equipment display, show and auction that, believe it or not, is dwarfed by turf equipment.

We always take in the National Farm Toy Show. Held either on the last Saturday of October or the first one in November, this equipment show is tremendous. We get lost in the crowd of 15,000 others who are keenly interested in miniature farm equipment. It matters not if you favor 1/12, 1/16, 1/25, 1/43 or 1/64 scale farm equipment toys and toy tractors, it's all in Dyersville, Iowa for the three day show.

Dyersville is the home of the National Farm Toy Museum, the Ertl Company, Scale Models Company and the Spec-Cast Company. They

are the major players in this exciting hobby for equipment lovers. Despite the small size of the equipment, many of the prices are high. And although you cannot kick any tires, one is able to feel all the upbeat emotions and conversations experienced at "real" equipment shows.

It is kind of neat to sit and have lunch (good food here, too!) with several veteran toy collectors and talk about tabletop or desktop farming, custom-built rigs and who has made the best pedal tractor lately.

In our business, the granddaddy of all equipment shows happens when the GCSAA conference and show convenes. The turf equipment show is a dream come true for any golf course superintendent. It is the only place in the world where literally every piece of grass machinery from just about anywhere in the world comes together on acres of indoor floor. This show is the ultimate comparison shopping venue!

I cannot recall ever seeing a superintendent at the GCSAA show in a bad mood. At that time of year, everybody is upbeat and happy, feeling a growing sense of anticipation of the upcoming golf season.

Dreaming is a big part of this show. Everybody can imagine a LF-100 or a 223D on the fairways. Close

your eyes and you can see those new greensmowers cutting your greens for the state amateur.

Some say the only downside to the show is that it is strictly an indoor affair. There's no opportunity to see equipment at work.

To that I say maybe it is best that way for once. A lot can still be accomplished; demo requests are narrowed. The area required for field trials would require the boundaries of Dane County; it would almost be impossible. Not being able to climb aboard a machine and feel it operate necessitates a lot closer inspection than is given when it is outdoors.

The show season is usually wrapped up when either Reinders or Wisconsin Turf or Horst has alternate years shows in Milwaukee or elsewhere in the state. Most of us never want to miss these traditional gatherings, either. They have an appeal all their own.

Arnold Palmer, sunrise over the 18th, opening day, the Masters, a freshly cut green and kicking tires are among the things that make managing a golf course the enjoyable profession that it is. I can say I hope that field days and equipment shows are around as long as golf remains played on grass.

That should be forever.

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HE WORKED HIS WAY TO THE TOP

by Lori Ward Bocher

After visiting with the quiet and modest Curtis Larson for just half an hour, I knew it wasn't his fast-talking ways that helped him progress from a service mechanic to Executive Vice President during his 31 years at Wisconsin Turf Equipment Corporation. Hard work, dedication, a working man's knowledge of the products, and a good rapport with the people who use those products, are what took him to the top. Nothing fancy, nothing clever—just perseverance and a good old-fashioned work ethic.

A native of Wisconsin, Curt was born in 1935 and raised on a small farm in Trempealeau County near York—half way between LaCrosse and Eau Claire. It was a farming community with a large Norwegian population—which suited Curt just fine. "I'm pretty much a pure-blooded Norwegian myself," he explained, adding that his great grandparents on both sides of the family were immigrants from Norway.

Curt graduated from Hixton High School in 1953 and went straight to work for a local milk co-op. A year later, he moved to Janesville to work as an auto assembly person at the General Motors plant. After building cars for a little more than a year, he switched to servicing them at Wurtz Mobile Service in Janesville, where he worked for about five years.

Wisconsin Turf Equipment Corporation came into the picture in 1961 when Curt became a service mechanic working on lawn mowers and small engines.

"What attracted you to Wisconsin Turf?" I asked.

"It looked like an interesting and upcoming business—kind of a new industry," Curt answered. "Most of all, they were looking for someone with some mechanical background like I had."

As the company grew, so did Curt's responsibilities. "I started as a service person and then also began



working in the parts department," he recalled. "Then I became the Parts and Service Manager. I did that for quite a few years, and then came into the management side of the business. I started as Assistant Manager, then worked as General Manager for many years, and then two years ago became Executive Vice President."

"What does it take to move from the ground level as a mechanic up to Executive Vice President?" I wanted to know.

"Hard work and perseverance. Wanting to get the job done. Treating everybody fairly or as you'd like to be treated as a customer," he emphasized. "I felt that I always had a very, very good rapport with the customers throughout my days in service and parts. I knew many, many people on a first-name basis."

"Does your background in mechanics help you today?" I asked. "Does it help to know the business from the ground up?"

"I definitely think it does," Curt answered. "It gives you a different perspective than if you had gone to school for a business degree. It lets you see the problems that people have to work with. In some cases, you can understand their problems better and have the ability to help them because of that."

Wisconsin Turf Equipment Corporation is a major supplier of turf

maintenance equipment and materials for golf courses, parks, schools, landscapers, sod growers, cemeteries—any place that maintains turf. Headquartered in Janesville with a branch office in New Berlin, the company covers the lower half of the state as well as six northwestern counties in Illinois.

A major distributor of Jacobsen equipment, Wisconsin Turf also handles Cushman, Ryan, National, Smithco and Turfco. On the materials side of the business, it is a distributor for Milorganite, Lebanon Chemical, Allied Chemicals and Medalist America seed. The company has 28 full-time employees and no seasonal help. About 65 percent of the company's business is with golf courses, Curt estimated.

As Executive Vice President, Curt's duties are in administration and sales work. "I enjoy getting out on golf courses to visit with the customers and check on any problems they may be having or to learn about what may be occurring in the industry," he said. "I don't get out every day, but later in the year when there is more time.

"I feel that I know the biggest share of golf course superintendents on a first-name basis," he continued. "I could call up and ask any of them a question. They're all very good friends. They have a tough job to stay very positive and to stay abreast of all the government rules and regulations."

Curt also admires the golf courses these superintendents manage. "Wisconsin golf courses are some of the finest in the country. It's never more evident than when you travel," he said, adding that he's been to Florida and Arizona courses in the winter. "I'd put our Wisconsin golf courses up against anybody. All the superintendents should be commended on their quality courses."

"What challenges face the turf industry in Wisconsin right now?" I asked.

"The pesticide issues are always very difficult," he answered. "The other one that you're going to see surface more and more is water management. There was a golf course that had to curtail all sprinkling during the drought of 1988. They lost the total golf course. Those are two critical areas. We're going to see some

real hard questions raised in the next few years."

Curt's involvement with the turf industry doesn't stop with his business. He's been a director for the Wisconsin Turfgrass Association for a number of years. "It's been interesting to watch the change in the industry and, of course, the advent of the O.J. Noer Turfgrass Research and Education Facility. I was with that from Day 1 of the development," he pointed out.

"What do you think of it now that it's complete?" I asked.

"It is going to be a first-rate education and research station," he replied.

"And how does that help or affect your business?"

"Instead of having to go out of state to find some answers to questions about seed, chemical or fertilizer evaluation, we can have those questions answered in our immediate area. These products may work differently in Wisconsin than in some other state," he explained. "Now we'll be able to watch those plots as they grow and mature and generate information for years and years and years. I think that's the biggest single benefit.

"And the Noer Center will help bring in and keep professors at the University of Wisconsin," he added.

"It just brings everything into a complete circle," he continued. "By itself, the Noer Center is one outstanding item. But, put into the complete circle of the turf industry—whether it be for golf courses, sod growers or distributors like us—it benefits all the people because of the information we can gather."

Like many who work in the turf industry, Curt's hobbies revolve around grass, too. Golfing is a favorite activity. "I try to get out once a week," he said. "I don't play very well, but I love to play."

With his work taking him to many golf courses, he likes playing a variety of courses rather than belonging to one local club. But, diplomat that he is, he wouldn't name a favorite course. "I think I've played just about every golf course in our part of the state," he pointed out. "They all offer unique and separate challenges. There are so many fine golf courses. I enjoy playing them all."

"Because of your line of business, do you see courses differently than an ordinary player?" I asked.

"That happens. But when I play, I

like to put that aside and just make it a fun afternoon. I try not to get too wrapped up in what I might see or what I might not see. I try to be just a golf course customer on that afternoon."

Curt also enjoys working in his yard. "I love to work on my lawn," he said. "We have a nice lawn and I like to keep it in good shape. Maybe some of that rubs off because of the well-manicured golf courses I see."

SYMPOSIUM TO MOVE

by Rod Johnson

Plans are well under way for the 27th Wisconsin Golf Turf Symposium. This year's event will be held on the traditional Tuesday and Wednesday, October 27th and 28th.

The annual event will continue its "Downtown Milwaukee" tradition but in a break from the norm we will be meeting at the Hyatt Regency Hotel. The Symposium Committee is excited by the potential of the move and hopes that regular attendees will share the enthusiasm. We have been assured by the Hyatt the highest quality facilities and services.

The topic chosen to be covered in depth is *Greens Site Construction and/or Renovation*. An outstanding group of speakers has already committed to share their expertise with our group. Dr. Norman Hummel Jr., Cornell University, will give news and views on USGA specifications. Bob Vavrek, USGA Agronomist, will discuss methods of greens construction being used today. Lee Bruce, owner of The Bruce Company, will offer his insights into greenscaping.

Brian Silva, Golf Course Architect, and always a trend setter, will speak twice to the group. His topics will include greens restoration, bunker renovation, and tee construction. Don Sweda, Golf Course Superintendent at Beechmont C.C. in Cleveland, Ohio will relate his experiences in re-grassing greens. John Huber, Huber Sod Ranch, will discuss the industry trend towards using washed sod in construction.

The always popular panel discussion will have two well known superintendents debating the merits and

Curt and his wife, Mary, have four grown children. Brian is service manager at Wisconsin Turf. Bruce is a professor of agricultural economics with the U.S. Department of Agriculture in Washington, D.C. Barry, who formerly worked at Wisconsin Turf, now works for Medalist America seed. And daughter Andrea just graduated from college with a degree in elementary education.

drawbacks of "in-house" vs. "out house" construction.

Keynote and luncheon speakers will be announced at a later date. The list of "possibles yet to confirm" is outstanding. Our own Jim Latham, USGA Great Lakes Region Director will again, as only he can do, summarize the Symposium.

Feel free to contact any Symposium committee member with any questions or concerns that you might have. Committee members are Bob Belfield, Rod Johnson, Jim Latham, Al Nees, Wayne Otto, Terry Ward, Bob Vavrek, and Bruce Worzella.

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