

# The Grass Roots

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## About the Cover:

Dr. Frank Rossi "gazing in the grass" — don't miss the premier of his new feature article on page 13 of this issue.

Cover drawing of Dr. Rossi by Jennifer Eberhardt.



If we had no winter, the spring would not be so pleasant; if we did not sometimes taste adversity, prosperity would not be so welcome."

— Anne Bradstreet  
*"Meditations Divine and Moral"*

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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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# LOOK AT US NOW!

By Monroe S. Miller

Credit Sherri Milani. She's the one who asked me a year or so ago "when are you going to give *The Grass Roots* a '90s look? It's still in the 1980s."

Sherri was right, of course. She's been working with our journal for many years now in Kramer's art department. Her suggestions and advice over those years have been important to me.

Lots of my colleagues who edit chapter newsletters and magazines in other states have been doing the same. New looks and fresh formats have been the order for the past year or so.

For me, it has never been a question of whether or not we should change; rather, it's been a matter of when.

I've figured a dramatic change merits a dramatic moment even if it's a personal moment. So I've waited until the first issue of my tenth year as editor. This change is my way of celebrating.

Giving *The Grass Roots* a new appearance has been carefully considered. As I look to a wall in my office and see our GCSAA and NGF chapter newsletter awards, the most common

one is for 'content'. That cannot ever change.

Our magazine has been, is and always will be about Wisconsin golf course superintendents, their courses and challenges. Our land grant college has been an important part; that cannot change.

*The Grass Roots* has a serious limitation—money. We don't have much. So, unlike a lot of other chapters who contract with an agency to do their magazine, *The Grass Roots* must continue on a voluntary basis. Our chapter and state simply cannot afford to hire someone—we don't have enough members and the golf turf industry isn't big enough for such a luxury. We are sort of like the Milwaukee Brewers in that regard.

But I've always liked the purity and independence offered by volunteer staff—we are all immune from dismissal! Plus, I feel there is no greater clue to commitment to our profession than so much time given so freely for so long. I'm impressed by everyone who has put a line in *The Grass Roots*.

So we decided to make our change "statement" by changing our appearance. How about a cover?

It was obvious because we haven't had a cover; we had a key story on page 1, but no cover.

Most covers used by chapter newsletters and magazines are either photographs or an unchanging design. I'm no photographer, and reproducing the

same cover each issue wasn't what I was looking for.

"So, how about original artwork?" Great idea!

"Does anyone know a creative artist who might be willing to help?"

Thank goodness for the Eberhardt family. Chad's column has become a popular mainstay in *The Grass Roots*. His sister Jennifer is a junior at the UW-Madison, majoring in...ART!

Bless her heart. She's agreed to serve as our journal artist, creating a cover for us six times a year.

The selfish side of me hopes Jenn will continue on with her education and complete a PhD. That will keep us going for four years!

Other changes will be evident as you peruse this issue. Wayne Horman's "THE SURROUNDS" has a home on our back page. He reintroduces what was a popular feature for years. And who better than Wayne to keep us updated on our members? His area of operation takes him to all corners of Wisconsin.

And this issue introduces a new column—"GAZING IN THE GRASS." Written by Frank Rossi, this feature will be in every issue and my hope is that it will have the same devoted readers that Professors Kussow and Worf have developed.

So there you have it—the whys and whatfors behind our new look. I really hope you approve. 🍷

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## A NEW ERA

By Bruce Worzella



1993 may end up as the year of changes, good or bad. A new president, democratic control in both the House and Senate, and new by-law proposals by GCSAA. The WGCSA is looking at monthly meeting alternatives.

The members who attended the fall business meeting on November 9 heard about some changes to our monthly meeting schedule of events. Here are the reasons for these changes.

At two educational meetings, one in the spring and one in the fall, we will have our guest speaker at the noon luncheon. No dinner will be served.

We are hoping to shorten time commitment at this important time of year when we are usually short of help and very busy. At the June, July and August meetings no dinner will be served (if acceptable to our host), just hors d'oeuvres following golf.

The reason is the same—so members, guests, and others who have a distance to travel have the option of getting home at a reasonable hour. Our association encompasses a large geographic area and we feel if travel and time are problems, this could help.

One point I want to stress strongly is

the main purpose of our monthly meetings (be it golf alone or in conjunction with guest speakers) is education—through camaraderie and general golf course maintenance discussions.

PROFESSIONALISM also dictates that we attend monthly meetings and show our thanks to the host facility and golf course superintendent.

A NEW ERA—how will it turn out? We won't know until a year from now.

I hope everyone had an enjoyable and safe holiday season. Spring is getting closer everyday! 🍀

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## A Look at the Old and a Look at The New (Year)

By Monroe S. Miller

Now that the holidays are behind us, most Wisconsin WGCSA members are looking ahead to a new year and an exciting season for golf.

Before we look too far ahead, allow me to clean up a few details left over from 1992.

Due to a lack of space in the last issue (and also because of a memory that leaks like a sieve these days), several "Editor's Awards" were omitted. To complete the record, I include them here.

**The PI Award.** To normal people, the letters PC mean things like petty cash or personal computer or police car.

In this all too often goofy town where I work, PC means "politically correct". PC means you have to be careful at all times about what you say, how you say it and to whom you talk. In Madison it is immoral to aggravate, irritate, offend or annoy anybody. Truth and fact do not enter the equation. PC proponents want to influence how you think, too.

And to be PC, you dare not even look cross-eyed at some people, lest their feelings get hurt. Any form of free expression, unless it is of the PC variety, is stifled to the max.

So given this atmosphere, you can imagine how offended I was when I saw product literature from The Toro Co. introducing their new golf course vehicle—the WorkMAN!

Shame. How dare they? The vehicle should be called the WorkPERSON.

Toro's insensitivity earns them the "Politically Incorrect" Award for 1992.

Congrats!

**The SMART MOVE Award.** This honor goes to Foley United Industrial Products, maker of tool sharpening equipment, including the reel grinder, bedknife grinder and cup cutter sharpener in my shop.

Foley, in June of last year, moved most of its Minneapolis, Minnesota operation across the river to River Falls, vacating an old industrial building in Minneapolis.

The Foley move brought 45 manufacturing jobs to River Falls and has

the potential to increase that number to 85 in the next few years. The company is keeping its main office in Minnesota for now.

Asked for reasons for the move, a company official pointed out lower worker cost, lower property taxes for manufacturing and commercial operations and lower corporate income taxes. Additionally, they were looking for a reliable work force and rural Wisconsin offered them an alternative.

How refreshing. At a time when many U.S. companies are moving south for a MADE IN MEXICO tag, we have one looking here at home for quality and pride in the MADE IN WISCONSIN label.

Foley gets my applause and my continued business for a smart move.

**The PACKAGING Award.** Last year Ciba Giegy introduced a unique bulk system for some of their fungicide products. As soon as it's affordable, I fully intend on taking advantage of their conservation effort to reduce packaging waste.

Last fall I was introduced to VIG-ORO's bulk bags and was totally impressed.

Their durable bags hold 1000 pounds of fertilizer. Four straps allow you to pick the bag up with a fork lift or a loader tractor. There is a 24 inch discharge chute on the bottom center of the bag that allows you to control product flow until your Lely or Vicon spreader is full. You simply store what you don't use in the bag.

The bag is returnable and eliminates a mountain of paper bags that are either impossible to get into or so cheap that they allow material to deteriorate or have a plastic liner that precludes recycling at many places.

I predict that options like this one will more and more enter into buying decisions.

While on the subject of awards, I must admit to being remiss in recognizing a great honor bestowed upon the Jacobsen Division of Textron.

The company won the 1992 Wisconsin Governor's Award for Excellence in Hazardous Waste Reduction.

This award was earned by Jacobsen because it was able to reduce the amount of hazardous waste it generates by 75% since 1988.

The reduction was achieved by the installation of a still that recycles cleaning solvents for reuse.

Jacobsen also replaced mineral spirits cleaning solutions in parts washers with water-based solutions.

The company then converted its systems for preparing undercoating and parts painting to use more environmentally safe cleaners, sealers and paints.

Congratulations to the Racine team for such conscientious management and concern for Wisconsin's environment.

As these words are finding paper, there is still a lot of conversation about how snowy the winter will be.

If late autumn and early winter were any indication, we should be getting a lot.

Our town had over 2 inches of snow on October 19th and 20th, shattering the record for one day and tying the record for another. Some areas of Wisconsin had 4 inches of snow from the same storm. Trees were damaged, citizens experienced power outages and cars filled ditches from Grant County to Door County.

Some northern reaches of the state had similar amounts as early as the 16th.

It was the fourth year in a row that Madison's first snowfall of the season set a record.

It all seemed to fit, though. Our July was the third coldest on record. The summer of 1992 was the fourth coolest (since the NWS started keeping Wisconsin records in 1869) with only four 90 degree days.

When November arrived, the sun departed. It left us with a record breaking tie for cloudiness—we saw the sun less than 10 percent of the time.

And with the clouds came the rains, giving most areas of the state three times the normal amount. Just in time for Thanksgiving travel a storm came from the southwest and went northeast through the state dumping anywhere from 8 inches of snow to a light dusting. Our golf course was covered with 4 inches of snow for Thanksgiving.

(Continued on page 7)

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(Continued from page 5)

Lessons learned by most WGCSA members in the fall of 1991 resulted in purged irrigation systems and applications of snow mold fungicides done before the start of the month of November.

This winter will be one of much less worry than the last one.

With distinctively cooler weather comes the inevitable "why?".

Most put the blame—I'd rather say "credit" since I like cool weather—on eruptions of the Mount Pinatubo volcano in the Philippines in recent years. The volcanic activity spewed ash into the atmosphere and blocked sunlight which affected temperatures globally.

The volcanic eruptions of Mount Tambora in 1815 led to what has become known as "the year without summer". History shows that volcanic eruptions in the 1880s also cooled the temperatures of that period.

Many expect the ash to lower global temperatures for some time; others feel the effect has pretty much passed.

I'm hoping for another cool summer—it would make for another good grass year.

Somebody needs to ask, in the light of the cool weather—what happened to global warming, the greenhouse effect, CO<sub>2</sub> buildup and the many other feared consequences of human

activity that occupied the science press a couple of years ago?

In his president's message in the last issue of *The Grass Roots*, Bruce Worzella mentioned an article I'd written almost ten years ago about my sports hero—Arnold Palmer.

Well, I'm hoping to see Arnie again—soon—in our town, even.

He has agreed to become a spokesman for the Rayovac Corporation in Madison. Rayovac plans to launch the biggest national hearing aid battery campaign in history. Arnie will be in town from time to time to help with that campaign.

Some details may be in order. Palmer describes himself as a "reluctant hearing aid wearer" and admits he waited way too long before seeing a doctor about his hearing trouble. It had gotten so bad that he couldn't even hear the sound track of a movie.

So these days he is wearing a hearing aid and for the first time in years he can hear the click of hitting a putt and the sound of a golf club going through the air. He's experienced an improvement in his golf game, as well.

If anyone is able to convince people to overcome a reluctance to the use of a hearing aid, Arnold Palmer is the guy.

I received the following note from Dr. David Cookson. He rightfully responded to an "award" to the USGA in the last issue of *The Grass Roots* since he was a tourney official at Pebble Beach last year. He is also a USGA committeeman. I include it here for your edification.

Dear Monroe,

Re page 5 of the Nov/Dec issue of your newsletter and U.S. Open greens—they did not appear "in the flesh" as they did on TV (I saw the TV pictures as well as being at Pebble Beach and walking within a few feet of all 18).

They were green and looked like all Poa annua greens look cut short. Players complained of firmness of greens, not speed. They became quite firm as winds dried them on Sunday p.m.; before the wind came up (Sunday a.m.) they were not difficult.

Again—Masters greens one year (I've forgotten which one) looked much worse than any of these. The only bad greens I ever saw at any USGA championship I've worked the last eight years were at Merion for the U.S. Amateur.

In regard to your main point (which you know already I disagree with you) obviously players (including USGA tournament people) don't believe what USGA agronomists say about fast greens. For all the hue and cry about it, I've never seen any greens I've ever played suffer ill from efforts to speed them. I think this is an example of over reacting to a theoretical happenstance that doesn't seem to occur in practice. This opinion is shared by most players.

My best to you as always,  
Dave

I of course wasn't at Pebble Beach and can only comment about what I saw on TV. But I heard the griping and saw the media pictures, and neither was pretty.

And Dr. Cookson and I still disagree on the downside of ultrafast greens!

That's it for now. Enjoy the winter—it's a great time for hearty souls like Wisconsin golf course superintendents.

See all of you at the WTA winter conference. 🍷

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## There's No Place Like Home

by Lori Ward Bocher

John Mortimer was sitting on top of the world back in 1952. But he decided to come home to Chilton, Wis., where he has lived nearly all of his life and has enjoyed a career with Horst Distributing, Inc.

Of course, "sitting on top of the world" doesn't seem so glamorous when you realize he literally was on top of the world at a small Air Force base in Nome, Alaska — on the Bearing Sea just across from Russia.

"It was cold. Cold and barren," John recalls, adding that he was glad to return to his native Chilton. But he also was glad for his 3-1/2 years in the Air Force, which took him to Texas as well as Alaska. "If I hadn't joined the service, I probably never would have gotten out of Calumet County until I started in business."

John was born in Chilton in 1931 and graduated from Chilton High School in 1949. That same year he joined the Air Force, trained in Texas and then was stationed at Nome. "It was right before the Korean War. But I didn't have to serve in Korea because I was overseas already," John explains.

When he was discharged in December of 1952, he returned to Chilton and went to work for Arthur Horst who owned what was then known as Horst Engineering and Equipment Sales. "I'd known the family, I grew up with Mr. Horst's son," John remembers. "His son opted not to follow in the business but to go to West Point instead. Mr. Horst knew me. I was looking for a job, and he was looking for help. So I was hired."

Arthur Horst, an engineer, founded the company in 1946. "He would design irrigation systems and things like that," John points out. The company also sold turf equipment and supplies. "When I first went to work, there was only Art, myself a mechanic and Mrs. Horst, who did the bookkeeping. Art went out on the road and I stayed on the inside and shipped parts, did whatever. Shortly after I was hired Mrs. Horst retired and I did simple



bookkeeping until the company started to grow and personnel were added.

"We started with the Ideal Mower Company and then with the old Worthington Mower Company, which was purchased later on by Jacobsen," John explains. "Then, in 1955, Jacobsen started a new program whereby we could go out and establish dealers. That allowed us to grow over the years."

When Art Horst retired in the mid 70's, they dropped the engineering portion of the business because there no longer was anyone who could provide that service.

In the 1980's, when Jacobsen was purchased by Textron, Jacobsen changed its distribution methods. "So we got out of the consumer end of the business but kept the Jacobsen commercial end," John says. "Then we took on the Snapper mower line to service our dealer network."

"Three years ago, because the consumer market is so vulnerable to the elements and the economy, we decided that we would discontinue the consumer line and concentrate 100 percent of our efforts on the turf market," he continues. "And that's what we do now. Since 1990, we've been predicated strictly on sales direct to the end user."

Today, Horst Distributing, Inc., serves 43 counties in northeastern Wisconsin and Upper Michigan. "Golf courses represent about 60 percent of our business," John points out. "The

rest is divided up by municipalities, cemeteries, landscapers, a few airports and sod growers—anybody who's the end user.

"Because a lot of our clients are in the north, we have more small golf courses than most distributors," he continues. "We don't have a lot of the big, prestigious courses. Our 43-county area has about 189 courses, and 35 of those are located in Upper Michigan."

Working with northern golf courses presents unique challenges. "They have awful short seasons, a three- or four-month season," John points out. "And, being as remote as they are, they don't require as many calls as some of our closer-in accounts do. They seem to be more self sustaining. They don't expect us to be there as often, although we still strive to contact them on a regular basis."

Jacobsen is the prime line for Horst Distributing, according to John. They also carry Cushman, Smithco, National Mower and Turfco equipment. Plus, they have a full complement of sundry items—Milorganite and Country Club fertilizers, Standard and Par Aide green and tee equipment, PBI Gordon and Grace/Sierra pesticides, Medalist America grass seed.

John has been president of Horst since 1974. "It was just natural evolution, I guess," he says. He's also the major stockholder of this employee-owned company. "Since Mr. Horst's death in 1991, we've had arrangements in gear to buy out his stock, which we're still doing now. All 12 employees are owners to some degree. And we have an ESOP (Employee Stock Option Plan) for profit sharing."

Unlike presidents of large corporations, John's job responsibilities are quite general. "I try to do most everything. I even empty the waste baskets," he admits. "Because we're small, we don't have an inside salesman per se, so I take all the incoming sales calls with the exception of the tee and green equipment orders which are handled by Donna Budnik, assistant sales manager."

"I'm in the office all the time," he continues. "I'm a very poor traveler. Don't like to travel, never did." Horst has three salesmen on the road to service accounts: Dennis Robinson, Ron Schumacher and Greg Kallenberg.

*(Continued on page 11)*





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