

# The Grass Roots

Vol. XXI, No. 5  
September/October 1993

*The Grass Roots* is a bi-monthly publication of the Wisconsin Golf Course Superintendents Association, printed in Madison, Wisconsin by Kramer Printing. No part of *The Grass Roots* may be reprinted without expressed written permission by the Editor.

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## About the Cover:

Some of our 1993 meeting hosts are featured clockwise, from top left. They are Jake Renner, Bruce Worzella, Scott Schaller, Allen Fude, Ric Lange and Gary Tanko.

Cover artwork by Jennifer Eberhardt.



"Frost is on the land at last, the stiff rime of it dusted across the grass, treacherous on the stones, exquisite along each vein of the skeleton leaf."

— Donald Culross Peattie

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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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## The Season That Wasn't

By Monroe S. Miller

It's finally starting to dry out here in our city. We can even see Kentucky bluegrass showing dormancy in deep rough areas. That's a sign we wondered not long ago if we would ever see again.

It is almost criminal for anyone in most areas of Wisconsin to complain too much. After all, you could have been on a golf course or owned a farm or lived in a town along the Mississippi or Missouri or Des Moines Rivers the past two months. The tragedy for some of those people will last a lifetime; their suffering puts our misery into perspective.

That notwithstanding, the weather has foisted on us some of the worst conditions we will see in our careers. Many areas of Wisconsin were simply dealing with record amounts of rain—here in mid-August we are still 15 inches above normal in precipitation, crowding TWICE what we should have. It has gotten worse month by month—in mid-July we were only a dozen inches above normal in our town.

Amazing to most was how often it rained. Everyday, every other day, twice a week, every weekend. Endless clouds and wet conditions. Saturated soils. Unmowable grass—some areas on some of our Wisconsin golf courses didn't see any mowing equipment until some time in August.

There was more than just too much rain. Storms, especially in July, were devastating to areas of our state. The first week of July brought violent winds that took out 100 trees at the Edeiwiss Golf Club in New Glarus, 85 more at Janesville Riverside and a bunch at Monroe C.C. Each course here in Madison lost several.

At various times in July, you could find bluegill and carp and catfish and other species swimming golf course fairways somewhere. A sod farm not far from here had a 17-foot speedboat cruising one of its biggest fields, clarifying why we could not buy badly needed sod in August. Some golf course fairways were also under water—four and more feet of it. Rob Schultz, in the lead on the sports page in *The Capital Times* for July 10th, had the headline "Skip the golf cart, just use a canoe".



The 3rd hole at Oneida.

Details of individual courses don't matter too much, although I am including a photo Randy Witt sent me. It's a shot of Oneida's par 3 third hole—water from Duck Creek submerged the fairway and half the green. Most of us had similar photos and nightmare stories.

"Crisis" is the only word that could describe the disaster facing John Galus at Baraboo Country Club on the morning of July 18th. A storm the previous evening devastated the golf course, taking out acres of the course and big sections of his irrigation system. Reports on the actual amount of the rain torrent ranged from 8 to 12 inches.

Tons of silt covered acres of John's course, including putting greens. The aftermath had an up side—John reports they often had 75 or more members at any given time working to get the golf course back into play.

In a way, golf course superintendents may be the lucky ones in a natural disaster such as this. Our jobs are linked to the ups and downs of Wisconsin weather (it seems they've been mostly "downs" lately!) and we likely are psychologically more prepared to handle the elements without feeling too sorry for ourselves.

Residents are usually less affected by severe weather than those of us in agriculture. Not so with THIS weather. Flooded basements, soggy and closed parks, mosquito plagues, floating bogs on Lake Mendota, no sump pumps for sale anywhere and the prospect of higher food costs have all impacted our neighbors like seldom before.

Some golf courses, however, will suffer huge revenue losses because of so many no play days, exacerbating the dilemma of busted budgets resulting from repairs and renovations. Those hundreds of thousands of rounds won't be played this year, either.

Similarly, tourism all through Wisconsin has suffered. When some of our lakes are closed to boating for fear of wake damage, you know there will be problems for those who provide vacations. Devil's Lake park even had to be closed.

Last year Farm Progress Days closed barely after it opened because of heavy rains. This year, at least it stayed open, despite 30" year-to-date precip on the host farm near Fond du Lac.

For many WGCSA members, it was a season that left us feeling frustrated and unfulfilled. For golfers and golf course superintendents in many areas, it was a tragic loss of the summer of 1993. Rain fell like snow usually does in a blizzard; flash flooding washed out bunkers so many times that your employees thought golf courses had more sand than grass. This "season of discontent" was a matter of nature gone crazy; an overriding question many of us have is "why". In a way, I hope we never know.

Not all of our state suffered the torments of rain, however. Too much water dominated June and July in lots of places (causing \$1 billion in damage), but a northern area was actually dry with below normal rainfall.

From Wisconsin Rapids north, you could find some very dry conditions. The best evidence may be data from early August which show Wisconsin River flow at Eagle River in Vilas county at 79% of normal while downstream at Muscoda in Grant county the flow was 230% of normal! Park Falls, for example, received below normal rainfall in July (by 1"), and Wausau was 2" below July's normal. Madison, in contrast, received 10" of precipitation in July!

Many grizzled veterans (like I am slowly becoming) will remember the soaked season of 1993 as the one they wished for a very large sponge to dry out their golf courses. It will rank among the worst for some of us—remember the summer was preceded by a spring noted for winter kill, too cool temperatures and (yes) too much water way back then. Thoughts were

*(Continued on page 5)*



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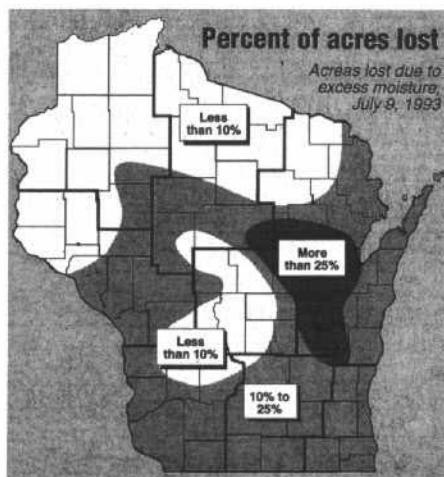
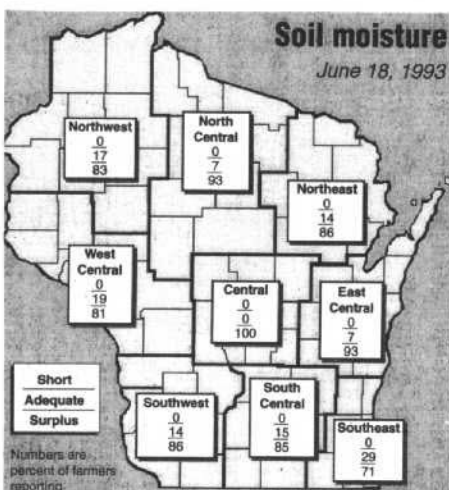
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(Continued from page 3)

more often on arks and umbrellas and 'red sky in the morning' than on mowing equipment and green speed. You could not buy a roll of sod in July.

Pray for a nice autumn. We have really earned it.

The accompanying graphics chart our weather problems in mid-summer, from data supplied by the Wisconsin Agricultural Statistics Service and from the State Climatologist's office.



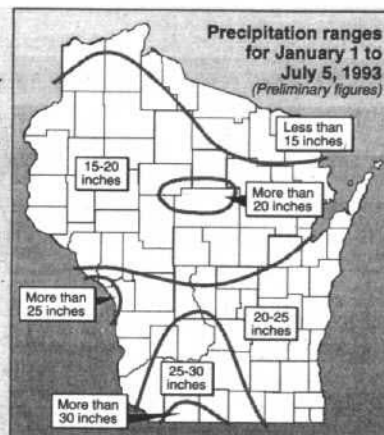
Finally. They've broken ground on the new \$29 million Biotechnology-Genetics Center on the University of Wisconsin-Madison campus. After a decade of planning, arguing and politicking, I am almost surprised it is really going to happen.

It will be a five-story building with 140,000 square feet of floor space. It will be built in the heart of the College of Agricultural and Life Sciences campus on Henry Mall. The building will necessitate demolition of the old Wisconsin High School building which now houses the School of Social Work. The new building will bring together UW

## Drought to drenched

Precipitation so far this year exceeds most totals for the so-called drought year of 1989 and is nearing the normal totals for the whole year.

City/station	1993 year to date	Normal year to date	1989 total year	Normal total year
Beloit	28.80"	NA	22.94"	33.05"
Darlington	31.80	NA	24.49	34.27
Green Bay	20.71	13.35	20.42	28.83
La Crosse	29.13	14.50	23.06	30.55
Madison	25.81	14.53	23.39	30.88
Milwaukee	22.69	15.90	30.30	32.93
Neenah	22.38	NA	21.99	NA
Wisconsin Dells	27.27	NA	22.62	31.89



scientists who are now scattered in 25 laboratories from one end of campus to the other.

It should allow the UW to continue to recruit the best scientists and students and even more formidable research grants. The bright future of the Biotech Center bodes well for the future of all of Wisconsin.

Including the turfgrass industry. It may well be that biotechnology holds the key to some of our oldest and toughest problems.

There are already 158 firms with 10,000 employees doing research and related work in biotechnology in Wisconsin. The work ranges from pure science to legal services to instrument manufacture to marketing.

It was a difficult battle getting the facility here. The GCSAA conference a number of years ago—it may have been the Anaheim meeting before last year's—featured Rep. George Brown, D.—California, as a speaker. The old goat is on the House of Representatives "Science, Space and Technology" committee and had the nerve to "investigate" this year's \$2.1 million federal appropriation for the Center, calling it "academic pork". That, from a representative of a state that has received trillions of federal defense dollars over the years! Never dawned on the man, most likely, that the way out of our country's problems just might be progress in science. No wonder there is such widespread dislike of people in the public sector, especially the politicians.

Anyway, the building is going up and it represents a bright spot in Wisconsin's future.

The Federal Center for Disease Control and Prevention has issued exercise guidelines that were probably made for golf course superintendents. With a definite break from the past, new research indicates that modest intermittent exercise during a day, doing

the kinds of things most of us do routinely, is almost as much good for you as one heartpounding non-stop workout in Gold's Gym.

I knew there were good reasons why I always laughed at joggers and fitness club fanatics.

Physicians are now claiming that you don't need to be an athlete in order to get the health benefits of physical activity.

Mow a green, lay some sod or load some fertilizer—all will help make you healthy. Plus, you are being paid for it! The benefits of small bursts of activity are essentially comparable to longer, more intense workouts. The most important factor appears to be the total amount of activity you get and the calories spent.

Next thing you know, we are going to find out a fresh cigar or a bowl of pipe tobacco or even a few Winstons are good for you!

"I don't think so, Tim."

But it turns out that the activity we engage in almost daily not only helps you sleep well at night, it really is good for the body.

Here's hoping autumn makes up for winter, spring and summer. My fingers are crossed and I've quit washing my car, started carrying an umbrella and try to look for the brighter side of things. Which means I should wrap up with a joke I heard during the worst of the rainfall and flooding.

Fast rising flood waters forced a golf course crew onto the roof of the shop. While they were waiting to be rescued, they couldn't help but notice a hat—a golf hat—that seemed to be moving up and down the sixth fairway.

One crew member turned to another and asked, "I wonder what that is?"

"Oh, that's the boss," came the reply. "He said he was going to cut that fairway today come hell or high water."

So long. 🍀



## ARE YOU PREPARED?

By Bruce Worzella



By the time we get to this time of the year, most Wisconsin golf course superintendents can hardly wait for cool weather, low humidity and additional rainfall. This is one of those years when we can do without the rain, however. The other thing we are anxious for is a slow down in play and lower player demands.

By now we are preparing for some fall aerification, well into construction projects, working on budgets for the next year, and analyzing what worked and what didn't work during this golf season.

Once again, a lot of what happened on Wisconsin golf courses was influenced by "Mother Nature", a constant frustration that can lay waste to our best made plans. Nevertheless, we are held accountable for the final results and that reality places more and more emphasis on education.

The Wisconsin Turfgrass Association Field Day, the education offerings of our monthly meetings, the upcoming Symposium and a GCSAA seminar in our own backyard can all be helpful in successful execution of our responsibilities.

The information and advice available at these offerings are essentially there for the taking. But you have to be there. Add into the mix ready access to the Turfgrass Information File that is managed by Peter Cookingham, our valued USGA agronomists, the extremely capable faculty at the UW-Madison, and our own peers and you have an educational network that could not be much better.

But we have to make the commitment to participate. If you aren't already doing that, please do. You will only be helping yourself and making the product you offer even better.

Finally, I would like to answer some

of Monroe's questions from the last issue:

1. Yes, I did thank Rod Johnson for all his time and effort for the pesticide sign campaign. It was encouraging to see that most of the golf courses I have visited this summer had that sign on display.

2. I do not think that, with the millions and millions of people playing the game of golf these days, that there is or ever will be a practice tee that is large enough. I find it difficult just filling divots on my tees and fairways. A practice tee is something else.

3. I had a hand on the decision to change the format of our summer meetings and I think they were well received. I think it was nice to get to bed before my wife, by 9:00 p.m., on a Monday evening after a meeting that was two hours away! 🍷

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## Communing With Professor Leopold

By Monroe S. Miller

I remember when I got my copy of Professor Aldo Leopold's *A SAND COUNTY ALMANAC* as clearly as though it happened yesterday.

It was in 1970 and I was living about 20 miles north of a city named Saigon in a little country in southeast Asia. I was a sergeant in the U. S. Army, doing what I was told in hopes of surviving to make it home again to Wisconsin.

As with most GIs, I was in a constant state of homesickness, lonely for family and homeland.

That loneliness is probably why I latched onto a copy of *A SAND COUNTY ALMANAC* when I found it in a shipment of books—all paperbacks—to our unit.

I do not remember the details of those boxes of books we received with regularity—who sent them or why. I would guess they were from publishers or some bookseller organization. They were welcomed by soldiers like me. I read constantly when I was off duty, thanks to those boxes of books.

Professor Leopold's book was especially welcome when I realized it was about home—Wisconsin.

Here I was—a proud alumnus of the College of Agriculture at the University of Wisconsin in Madison, and I had only vague awareness of this professor. He was also from the College of Agriculture at the University of Wisconsin. At the time I wondered about that, but only briefly. My focus was on the words he had put on paper, words that reminded me so much of home.

From that time to now, I often randomly open it and read, if only for a bit. The lines are familiar but it often happens that they convey new meanings to me. That reflects, I'd guess, my own accumulating experiences and maturity and changing ways of looking at all things. It also is testimony to the wisdom Professor Leopold shared in the *ALMANAC*.

I've kept the same book for all these years—sentimentality and all that, you know. I smile every once in a while as I am looking at the faded and worn pages that are coming unglued from the binding. It sold for a meager 95

cents, a fair price for a 300 page book. Today you cannot buy a Sunday newspaper for 95 cents!

I have felt a kinship with Professor Leopold grow over my years as a golf course superintendent in Madison, a kinship I'd guess of what I imagine are shared experiences and emotions. The beauty is that he was able to put those experiences in words like no one else.

Professor Leopold made his *ALMANAC* observations in the context of months and of seasons. That has obvious appeal to people like you and me whose work and lives also closely follow those time breaks.

It is curious that I have come to this, a camaraderie of sorts. I cannot quite explain my increasing awareness of Aldo Leopold and a need to know more about him. This spring, for example, Cheryl and I walked from Camp Ran-

dall to 2222 Van Hise Avenue after the Cardinal/White intrasquad football game. Professor Leopold and his family lived at that address during his life in Wisconsin. We stopped only briefly for a look and went back to our car.

I cannot quite explain why, lately, I've been doing a lot of reading about Professor Leopold. There are a number of biographies—really good ones—about the man who was the first professor of wildlife management anywhere in the world. The best volume (in my opinion) is one written by Dr. Robert C. McCabe, appropriately titled *THE PROFESSOR*. McCabe was one of Leopold's graduate students, earning both a M.S. and a Ph. D. under A.L. (as he was called by many who knew him).

McCabe went on to become a faculty member in that department at Wisconsin and ultimately the chairman of Leopold's department. For an inexplicable reason I called the Department of Wildlife Ecology and asked the secretary who answered if, per chance, Professor Emeritus McCabe was in his office. I gulped when she said he was.

What was I to say? Why had I called? What to ask?

Well, such things must have happened to Robert McCabe before. He was perfectly happy to visit and led me on a sketch of his book, giving warm and sentimental answers to my questions. McCabe is a sentimental man.

I cannot explain why I was, this spring on a visit to campus, wandering around on a short street called Farm Place, trying to imagine from photos I have seen where the building that housed Leopold's department was located. It was eventually demolished, but not before I arrived in 1964. Why can I not remember it?

My dad is a grad from the UW College of Agriculture. "Surely he will remember Professor Leopold," I thought to myself.

He did not. I mentioned that to Professor McCabe and he wasn't surprised, telling me that Professor Leopold was ahead of his time and fame didn't come to him until after his death.

It is inexplicable why I've tried to imagine which office was Professor Leopold's in the Soils Building and King Hall. After all, I'd been there for six years. "Why hadn't someone said something?" I wondered.

I also wondered about myself. During the summers when I was an under-

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graduate student working at the Nakoma Golf Club I would occasionally walk across the street from Nakoma's shop into the Arboretum. One place I especially enjoyed was an area called The Leopold Pines. I do recall asking myself, "Who was Leopold?" I never once searched for the answer, however.

Aldo Leopold's *A SAND COUNTY ALMANAC* is reading most who manage golf courses out of a deep sense of satisfaction and commitment can enjoy and appreciate. He saw things we see (although you might have to read his thoughts first to realize it). He used words carefully, with respect for his subject, and he used them sparingly. The lines and paragraphs are warm, thoughtful, sentimental, philosophical. They are wise. He could, in a few lines, bring back a flood of childhood memories. Or a few of his chosen words can cause contemplation that will haunt you for weeks.

He can put a worried furrow on your brow or a smile on your face.

I think my favorite two lines of all he has written are in the *ALMANAC*'s November thoughts:

"The wind that makes music in November corn is in a hurry. The stalks hum, the loose husks whisk skyward in half-playful swirls, and the wind hurries on."

For me they inspire memories of my

rural childhood, the last harvest of the year, the on-coming winter. They speak, too, of life itself.

I think Professor Leopold captured emotions we commonly experience. He was more observant that we are, certainly more literate and likely more sensitive to the world around him.

Read his essay **Great Possessions**, and see if you do not share with him the sights and sounds and feelings of early mornings on your golf course.

Or contemplate his essay **Too Early**. Leopold was an early riser, like most of us, and talks of how early risers are "at ease with each other, perhaps because, unlike those who sleep late, they are given to understatement of their own achievements."

An early morning commune with Aldo Leopold would have included a piping hot cup of coffee, as you will note as you read essay after essay. The two went together for him, just like they do for lots of us who work on golf courses.

Hidden away in paragraphs about wilderness and country things are those lines and thoughts about life. "Our biases are indeed a sensitive index to our affections, our tastes, our loyalties, our generosities, and our manner of wasting weekends", or "it is well that the planting season comes only in spring, for moderation is best in all things", or

"our ability to perceive quality in nature begins, as in art, with the pretty. It expands through successive stages of the beautiful to values as yet uncaptured by language."

And so that goes, quietly and softly, line after line, page after page.

Professor Leopold's actions also provide powerful lessons. Professor McCabe recalls a time when the shack on Leopold's property in Sauk County's Fairfield township was vandalized. Is there a golf course anywhere that hasn't been vandalized, frustrating the superintendent and his staff? McCabe recounts his reaction was (and still is today) retribution for the trespassers and thieves. Professor Leopold, on the other hand, was "philosophical, almost clerical" in his attitude. Oh, it momentarily shook his faith in people, but in the end his thoughts were of redemption for the vandals.

Aldo Leopold, as I've read him, had the view and philosophy that the earth is NOT a commodity (very contrary to the belief of too many) but rather a community that includes all of us, and our golf courses.

Careful consideration of his writing reveals that Leopold had the strength and ability to change,—something all of us should acquire. You can tell it from the way he records various experiences

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and reactions to them. We should all be as open-minded as he was.

I read Leopold's words, especially his essays dealing with land ethics and wilderness and conservation, and wonder "what would Professor Leopold think of us and our profession?"

I fear that not all in the golf course industry in past years would meet his approval. It doesn't a lot of us, either. It has only been in recent times that proper awareness and sensitivity have been given to siting, wetlands, wildlife, runoff, ground water and scores of other issues that likely would have troubled Professor Leopold. I think that awareness would have his approval, although there are always exceptions.

I do not detect, in his writings, any fundamental disagreement with the existence of golf courses. He had deep feelings about man and leisure time—"how miserable are the idle hours of the ignorant man" he strongly declares in the opening paragraph of his piece called **A Man's Leisure Time**.

It is curious to me that he, in fact, makes some extensive references to golf in one of his best writings, the haunting **Goose Music**. He referred to golf as "sophisticated exercise" and fit it into his thoughts about hunting. He did not belittle our game, although he clearly viewed it as inferior to "a day afield".

I can only guess that Professor Leopold, walking Blackhawk Country Club at dawn with me, might say "yes, this is a good use of land in the middle of a busy, moving and growing city."

I think he would approve of it, knowing one alternative would be more houses, more streets, more stores, more parking lots.

I'd show him the den of fox on the south border of our course, draw his attention to old trees left standing as homes for woodpeckers, and take him to the pond and let him watch the early morning goings on there.

Professor Leopold was a serious and respected ornithologist; he would appreciate the hawk and swallows and mallards and the scores of other kinds of birds that we see every day. Many call our 100 acres "home".

And couldn't we imagine his approval of the USGA Cooperative Sanctuary Program we participate in with the New York Audubon Society?

Muskrat, squirrel, woodchuck, and other small wildlife that call our golf course home would, I know, please him.

I think Professor Leopold would nod favorably on our NOER Research and Education Facility and recognize our

efforts to constantly improve our environmental stewardship and citizenship. He likely would applaud our efforts to reduce all inputs to golf courses.

And I believe he would read with interest the many articles that have appeared over the years here in *THE GRASS ROOTS* that reflect on the lifestyle of golf course superintendents and our sentimental attachment to the out of doors.

Wouldn't he read with interest Pat Norton's piece a while back and smile on seeing the picture of Dean Mus-

bach's daughters with a fawn in the northwoods? I think so, on both counts.

Aldo Leopold wrote Part I of *A SAND COUNTY ALMANAC* based on "what his family saw and did at its weekend refuge, The Shack". I've wondered at length about it, reading grad student accounts of time their with Professor Leopold. I visited with Robert McCabe about his feelings and memories of this old chicken coop.

Each year, new faculty at the University of Wisconsin—Madison have  
(Continued on page 11)



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Shown with optional roll over protection structure

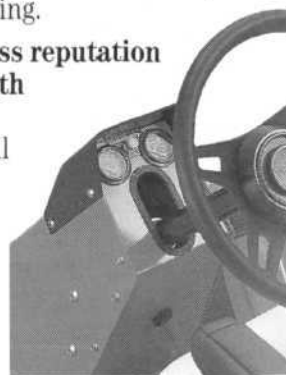


#### **Exclusive SynchroLift control—Cross cutting at its easiest & most productive.**

A simple push or pull of the synchronized lift levers is all it takes with this system. The machine automatically raises the reels to turning height, then lowers them for nimble, flawless cross cutting.

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Our advanced oil leak detection system is standard, to give you every advantage possible on the fairway.



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