

The Great Lakes Region includes Michigan, Indiana, Wisconsin, Illinois, Minnesota, Iowa, the Dakotas and Montana. Montana a Great Lakes state? "Oh, there's Flathead Lake out there, the largest natural fresh water lake in the West," Jim jokes. "Just like the great lakes of the Dakotas, which is the dammed up Missouri River. And, of course, there's Spirit Lake, Iowa."

Of the 14,000 golf courses in the U.S., about 55 percent are members of the USGA. And about 20 percent of those subscribe to the Green Section service, according to Jim. "We visit golf courses and do an audit on their conditions as we see them. We assist in planning programs for improvement of the course. We make suggestions for their general operation. Our job is to make golf courses better, more playable, to try to get the biggest bang for the buck of their budget," he explains.

Once again, the job involves a lot of travel. "We do most of our traveling by car. It's less expensive. And we can do a milk run—go out as far as we can in a week and then fly home for the weekend. My car is a floating office. Sometimes it might not get back to Milwaukee for six weeks," Jim says.

"If you don't like to travel, this is the wrong job," he continues. "Travel is absolute. There's no way out of it. If you don't want to be gone five days a week, best not come."

Jim has always been intrigued by travel. "I enjoy seeing things that I haven't seen before," he points out. "I'm

a sight seer, not a tourist. I like to look at things, be there, visit with people. I get bored doing the same thing in an office or some other place. This gives me an opportunity to meet new people or visit old friends. Then we have some common ground when I see them at a meeting.

"My favorite part of this job is getting to golf courses and doing a one-on-one with golf course superintendents and the green committee chairman," he continues. "We talk about growing grass on their particular golf course. Every course is a little different. It keeps me sharp."

His least favorite aspect of the job is report writing. "We do that at night when we are tired," he points out. "Some people find report writing a breeze. But it's difficult for me. I just want to make sure that what goes in the report is absolutely accurate so that the superintendent and green committee chairman get the right information."

It helps to have his wife, Lois, as his secretary and office manager. "It makes it quite easy," Jim reports. "She does a lot of cleaning up on the reports because she knows the terminology and a lot of the people we work with. She does a lot of things that I don't have to instruct her on every time.

"Sometimes it's a little difficult for her because I can yell at her like I might not yell at anyone else," he admits. "But she can yell back at me. That's an even-Steven type thing."

When making golf course visits, Jim

always likes to see the green committee chairman as well as the superintendent. "It helps because, in our conversation, he will get some idea of the problems involved or the procedures they need to take or the benefits they're going to get," he says.

"I'm not saying that superintendents can't give clear and precise information," he continues. "But sometimes it helps to have a second opinion. To hear it from someone else is always a great help. We mostly back up the judgement of the superintendent. We don't get into too many arguments with the superintendent." Jim also finds that, in recent years, they're being used more and more as informal arbitrators. "We're seeing more cases where a municipality owns a golf course but doesn't want to run it. So they contract out the maintenance job," he explains. "We come in to make sure the contractor is fulfilling his part of the agreement and to make sure he's doing the work and not letting the golf course run down hill. We're also making sure that the municipality is not asking more than they agreed to in the contract."

While reflecting on his 40-year connection to golf courses, Jim points out that the business has gotten much tougher. "Years ago, the biggest difficulty in golf turf management was to keep the grass alive and green," he believes. "Now there are so many special conditions people want—faster

(Continued on page 33)

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(Continued from page 31)

greens, closer-mown fairways—that it's not as much fun as it used to be. I've heard several people say that keeping the grass alive is the easiest part of the job now.

"Now so many other things have been inserted into the business—pesticide restrictions, government requirements for record keeping, training, OSHA safety issues, DNR invasion of properties, everybody being subject to a lawsuit," he continues. "Golf course superintendents today are under a great deal more strain than they used to be. But they're also much more knowledgeable today. We're growing better grass than ever. But it has become a great deal more tedious and stressful on the people involved."

After having worked with golf course superintendents all over the country, Jim believes that those in Wisconsin can stand up with the best. "The superintendents here are very well skilled. They ask other people for information. They're not clannish as they are in many areas. By and large, there's as good a group of superintendents in Wisconsin as there is in the world."

The same goes for the golf courses in the state. "I don't think anyone could complain about the quality of golf courses here compared to any other area in the country," Jim says. "That goes for the courses farther north, too, because you don't go up there for the same experience. You're looking for a more rustic experience."

The golf course superintendents think quite a bit of Jim, too. In 1990 the WGCSA presented him with its Distinguished Service Award. He also received a similar award from the Noer Foundation.

Jim used to play golf quite a bit but hasn't in recent years. "I've got too many other things I need to do on Saturdays," he points out. "I do a lot of paper work, play catch up, on the weekend. During the summer months I keep about the same schedule as those golf course superintendents—seven days a week and as long as it takes to get the job done."

When he has spare time he likes to read. "And I like to travel," he says. "Personal travel as well as business travel. And in both cases I end up looking at golf courses." He and Lois recently traveled to the British Isles and to Australia. "I can never get enough travel."

Now that he's 65 years old, Jim is thinking about retirement but has no

concrete plans as of yet. "It's just nice to know that now I can retire when I want to," he points out. "I like to work."

But I do get a little tired sometimes. But everyone goes through that with every job."

When they do retire, you can bet the Lathams will do some more travel-

ing. Maybe some more time to visit their two daughters, two sons-in-law and four grandchildren. And they may even end up back in their native Texas. "We bought a piece of property down there that we may build on some day. Of course, it's on a golf course," he concludes. ♣

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GETTING READY FOR WINTER

By Monroe S. Miller

The circumstance for asking the January/February SURVEY questions were perfect.

We'd had a spring with too much damaged golf turf as a result of a miserable winter.

Almost coincidentally, the Symposium Committee had selected a topic that was more than timely. And I was there. So it was a natural for me to ask colleagues what, if any, changes they anticipated in getting ready for the winter of 1993/1994.

The questions and results follow.

1. Did you make any of the following changes in preparation for the cold weather season?

	YES	NO
Increase height of cut?	18	18
Adjust late season N application?	12	24
Increase K fertility?	12	24
Irrigate differently going into winter?	10	26
Drainage work resulting from last year?	22	14
Are you using covers on greens?	14	22
Did you last year?	12	24
Has mercury loss affected how you will prepare for snowmold this year?	14	22

2. Have you done anything else in hope of better and increased survival of golf turf this winter?

- A. Aerified later in the fall versus right after Labor Day.
- B. Testing of snowmold materials on my own course.
- C. Better and more thorough leaf removal than in past years.
- D. Increasing the areas sprayed for snowmold protection.
- E. More overseeding with perennial species this fall.
- F. More and heavier topdressing of greens and tees.
- G. Expanded the areas aerified this time of year.
- H. More use of excelsior mats.

It is clear from the responses of the 36 WGCSA members who answered the above questions that there has been a lot of thinking put into winter preparation, hoping to gain an edge against the potential for damage in the coming months.

And, after the lectures given at the Symposium, there will be more praying this winter! 🙏

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A Seething Foundry; Energy Production and Utilization

By Dr. Frank S. Rossi
Department of Horticulture
University of Wisconsin-Madison

Perspective

The Golf Symposium held in November highlighted the lack of understanding of the causes and solutions to winter injury in the turfgrass research community. The multi-causal phenomenon involves all aspects of turfgrass physiology and metabolism, but most importantly it raises the question of how the turfgrass plant responds to environmental stress—in this case low-temperature and freezing.

Plant stress physiology has been an area of active research since scientific principles have been used in turfgrass research to elucidate specific responses to drought, disease, traffic, etc. We have learned that the healthy plant is more capable of withstanding stress. Yet, maintaining healthy plants remains a challenge. And maintaining healthy plants demands an understanding of how the plant produces energy and uses it for growth.

This spring my wife Barbara will begin her first semester as a Horticulture major at the UW-Madison. Barbara enjoys the beauty and the art of flowers, trees, shrubs, and grasses. She looks out over a landscape and sees a place of beautiful serenity. I view the same landscape and discern unceasing turmoil, as Daniel Hillel states in "Out of the Earth"—*a seething foundry in which matter and energy are in constant flux*. Light hits the plants, heat is exchanged, water moves through pores and changes phases, and the leaves absorb CO₂ and synthesize it with other products to form the primary components of life. While the soil is the heart of the system, the plants (in our world, the turfgrasses) are the soul.

Energy Production

Cool-season grasses, like all other green plants, are capable of capturing energy from sunlight and combining it with Carbon (from CO₂), Hydrogen (from water) and Oxygen (from CO₂) to form an initial source of energy, a 3-carbon molecule (4-carbon in warm season grasses). Three carbon mole-

cules then undergo conversion to a 6-carbon molecule—glucose or 5-carbon molecule—fructose.

Carbohydrates, such as glucose and fructose, can be utilized as basic structural components of the grass plant. Structures such as cell walls and membranes, xylem, phloem, etc. Also, photosynthetically derived carbohydrates are utilized by the plant to provide energy through respiration. These compounds are referred to as nonstructural carbohydrates or carbohydrate reserves. Respiration is the alteration of these reserves that releases energy to support growth. For example, stopping at the fuel pump and filling your car with fuel is comparable to the plant producing glucose and fructose through photosynthesis; the explosion that occurs in the engine, forces the piston, and ultimately moves the wheels is similar to the utilization of glucose and fructose during respiration. The result is the car moves, or in the case of plants, growth occurs.

Young turfgrass leaves produce energy in excess of their needs. This energy is immediately available for other plant parts, or can be stored for later use—similar to having a spare fuel tank for those long trips. Corn and potatoes store these reserves by building long chains of glucose molecules—starch. The cool-season grasses store their reserves as long chains of glucose and fructose molecules—fructans. These reserves are considered the energy currency (or fuel) of plant growth.

Energy Utilization

The elegance of our turfgrass energy system lies in its simplicity. Established turf utilizes most of the energy produced to generate leaves, tillers, and roots. Complex reproductive biology is virtually eliminated from the system, as a result of mowing, except for an occasional seed germinating. Interestingly, annual bluegrass management adds this dimension which subtly complicates the energy dynamics. Still, the elaborate responses to

stress, interaction between plants and microorganisms, and water and nutrient acquisition and cycling, reveal the system's complexity.

Plant growth and maintenance are purchased with the energy of carbohydrates obtained from recent products of photosynthesis or from reserves. The amount of reserve is often used as an indicator of the health of the turfgrass plant. Energy accumulation is greatest during periods of high light intensities and minimal shoot growth—generally late summer-early fall. Energy utilization (depletion) is great-

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est during periods of rapid shoot growth—generally the mid-to-late spring. For example, our car engines get more miles to a gallon of fuel on a highway, leaving our reserve tank untouched (accumulation). However, stop and go around town depletes our fuel more quickly and, as a result, we draw on the reserve tank sooner (depletion).

Environmental and cultural factors (stress) conducive to high growth rates deplete energy reserves more rapidly. If reserve energy levels are allowed to deplete, plants are less likely to tolerate stress and recover from injury (disease), regardless of fertility or irrigation practices.

Summer on our putting greens provides one example of the impact of low energy reserves. Fertilized and irrigated greens actively producing shoots because of daily mowing, burn energy reserves rapidly through respiration. Similar to your car carrying a heavy load uphill. You must push the accelerator further down just to remain at constant speed. Also, your primary fuel tank is empty, now you are depleting your energy reserve.

For your grass plants this stress period burns all available energy, immediate and reserve, to replace leaves. Little energy remains for other plant parts, especially roots. We refer

to this as sink priority. Leaves being the source of energy and sinks where energy is sent. Except, energy is in such high demand by leaves, and because their closest to the source, they take priority over other energy sinks, such as roots. Root growth virtually stops, and is possibly lost under these conditions. Taken with the fact that annual bluegrass already is stressed under typical summer growing conditions and it is easy to see our challenges. However, strictly from an energy perspective, in our car example, you can't push the accelerator any further, the car with (a heavy load) won't climb the hill, so you start to roll back down.

Low-Temperature Stress

In my symposium presentation I raised the importance of energy reserves, in the form of fructans, as an avenue of enhanced winter survival. As mentioned earlier, the plant experiences periods of high energy production and low energy utilization—notably late summer-early fall. For annual bluegrass, its biology as a winter annual suggests that it germinates from seed to overwinter in the vegetative state, resuming growth again in the early spring.

Increasing fructan levels has been shown with several crops to significantly enhance winter survival from freezing and low-temperature pathogens, such as the snow molds. However, there are several studies where there is no relationship between winter

survival and fructan content. If new annual bluegrass plants are germinating, as indicated earlier, most of the energy produced might be going to create new leaves, not for storage. Additionally, many of us struggle deciding if we should manage the annual bluegrass or deter its growth. Existing plants, of the perennial type, possibly benefit from some type of fall fertility. To what extent is still not known.

Summary

The energy dynamics (production and utilization) must be understood if we ever become less reliant on energy intensive inputs such as synthetic fertilizers, water, and pesticides. Managing our "simple" closely-mowed turf system will continue to pose new challenges as consumer expectations continue to rise. Proper timing and amounts of fertilization and irrigation should be implemented to maximize energy production, always leaving some for a "rainy day".

Specifically regarding winter injury, we are beginning experiments to understand the relationship between reserves (fructans) and winter survival. We need to get more annual bluegrass from around the state to investigate any differential responses and compare them to creeping bentgrass. Also, possibly other grasses possess energy mechanisms for enhanced winter survival. I believe that understanding turf-grass energy relations is the heart of the soul of our seething foundry... 🌱



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Winter – Not My Favorite Season

By Pat Norton

I don't know about you all, but winter is definitely not my favorite season. I do not enjoy ice fishing or snowmobiling at all; hockey skating is beyond my coordination level, and cross country skiing is a thing of the past for a young father who isn't getting any younger. And it's always too damn cold, too windy, too icy—it's a season of too many extremes. So if I had to rank the seasons, winter places a distant fourth.

Winter is OK from a family point of view, which means that Dad spend a lot of time providing child care so than Mom can take a break now and then. My child care, by the way, consists of endlessly playing "Disney" videos and making peanut butter and jelly sandwiches, giving baths and yelling at the kids.

Professionally, I despise winter. I hate it. I can't stand it, especially once the holidays are history. After that, it drags. Any golf course superintendent who enjoys being in the shop or at the clubhouse day after day, week after week, is totally nuts!

Can anyone really derive professional satisfaction from putting up Christmas decorations, shoveling sidewalks, repairing bathrooms, installing shelves, cleaning chairs, shampooing carpets, or changing light bulbs? Are these the reasons that we all gravitated toward this profession? The last time that I checked, neither the WGCSA or the GCSAA has ever sponsored any educational offering on clubhouse maintenance—so why do our employers assume that we know all about it? It must be that we are all just blessed with loads of overall talent, craving to put that talent to use up at the clubhouse...

Fortunately, I'm not directly involved in most of those chores, but I do my share to help out when needed. Which is seemingly too often. I help out because I consider myself a team player. I try not to have a 'prima donna' attitude, unlike some other employees. The 'not my job' attitude really annoys me—people appreciate a good attitude

toward performing the many mundane tasks in the workplace.

Every so often, though, the limits of cooperation need to be stated loud and clear. "Take care of it yourself," I'll boldly state, especially when asked to manually pressure wash out the dumpsters!!

So just what is the deal with all of these winter loving superintendents? Got a real itch to spend the next four months indoors painting tee markers? Or is it just the lure of snow shoveling until you can't stand straight anymore?

It seems that every fall superintendents breath a collective sigh of relief that the golf season is over! Is the golf season that torturous? "Whew, I'm glad that's over. Now I'm looking forward to—what?"

Bitter cold, bitter winds, dark days, darker nights, being indoors always, pale, white skin...Oh joyful days! Can't wait for the fun to begin! Sign me up, before it's too late!

Gentlemen, let's not kid ourselves. Winter is the pits, and we all secretly hate it with a passion. Hey, call me a fool, but being out on the course as much as possible is our reason for being! Spring, summer and fall are really great. Winter just sort of stinks. It drags on...forever.

Winter here at "the Creek" consists of reducing or eliminating spending, working without employees, endless discussions of "possible" course renovations, and snow removal until that white stuff makes me depressed just to look at it.

My priority—the golf course—does not match the club's winter priorities. They are geared up for the holidays, so it's not until January has passed that anyone thinks about the next golf season. "Oh, yeah, I guess that the big open space outside is a golf course, isn't it? Is there anything we need to do?"

Remarkable it is that there's such a casual attitude toward our winter work. And no amount of explanation, justification or rationalization is ever enough

to make people realize that our winter days do not consist of "playing cards down in the shed." My poker playing disability can attest to that!

So what does a winter hating Wisconsin golf course superintendent do to tolerate "the dark months"? I pretend to like it! I pretend that going to work in the dark and freezing my butt off is a character building experience. I pretend that I'm just about the best darn snowplow operator in this county, when I know full well that the rankings show me right down there near the bottom. And I feign interest in clubhouse happenings. "Gee, only \$5,000 to redesign that dinner menu again—what a bargain!"

On the brighter side, consider the great weather that Ma Nature gave us during November and early December. No Halloween snowstorms, no ice storms so far, and pleasant working conditions outside in December. It's been great. I hope that it lasts all winter.

And winter shop work isn't really too bad—if it's golf course related. Reels and bedknives, packing bearings, and painting trash baskets—a gala annual event!! Restaining those thirty benches gives me a real thrill!!

Winter really is great! It's a blast! Better than summer by a bunch...If only I can continue to delude myself for the next four months, I'll have survived another winter as a Wisconsin golf course superintendent. 🍷

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Don't Look Back

By Monroe S. Miller

The north wind roared down the hillside and the road to the Maple Leaf Country Club shop, whipping newly fallen snow around the corner of the building and sweeping it into a long drift right by the front door.

I parked my truck as close as I could, but hesitated before getting out.

I knew Tom Morris was already at work. The lot had been plowed, despite the growing doorway drift. Taking care of the snow was something too many of us had to deal with and didn't particularly care for. Winter was bad enough; early morning snow plowing made it worse.

It was still dark outside. The winter solstice wasn't far enough behind us to effect noticeably longer days just yet.

The shop windows were spilling yellow paths of bright light onto the drifting snow. I looked out across the golf course and could see the lights from neighbors' homes and even the clubhouse twinkling in the white world, not unlike the stars on a clear night.

I gathered my courage, zipped my coat up tight, pulled my hat down, opened the truck door and made a mad dash for Tom's shop.

Going from the cold and snow into a warm and humid shop of course fogged my glasses. Before I had them wiped clean a voice from behind the partially closed office door said, "the coffee's fresh. Help yourself."

It was the familiar voice of Tom Morris. As usual, he was the first one in the shop in this morning, had already cleaned the lot and was working behind his desk.

We had two missions on this blustery winter day. We were headed to a retirement luncheon for Ben Baxter. Ben was retiring after a long career as a golf course superintendent around Wisconsin, most recently at Glacier Valley Country Club.

On the way there we were stopping at an implement dealer in Bennington to look at a used utility tractor we had gotten a lead on. The faculty at the Noer Research Facility needed one, and since we've run tractors for all our lives we were asked to keep an eye open for a good used one.

When it comes to shopping for tractors, one needn't ask either of us more than once. It would be more fun than work.

I finished my cup of coffee while Tom wrapped up his office work. We looked out the shop window and Tom said he'd drive since he had a four-wheel drive truck. It looked like we might need it.

He was really prepared for winter travel. His truck was not only four-wheel drive, but he had split rims and huge, heavy treaded tires. I dreaded the inevitable noisy ride. He also had a winch mounted on the truck's massive front bumper. We were ready for any travel conditions. Or at least Tom was.

We ran out, piled into his Ford and swung out the shop driveway. The snow was swirling and blowing and drifting. It was kind of scary, making me very glad Tom was driving.

It had been, so far, a typical Wisconsin winter. The weather variously gave us bone chilling cold, sleet, freezing rain and drifting snow. The weather so far this winter had been so ugly

that we were actually glad to see the snow, but would have preferred not having the wind.

The weather was bad enough by itself, but it complicates life dramatically with slippery and hazardous roads.

And then there was the worry about winter survival of grasses. Often what should be a calm time for Wisconsin golf course superintendents wasn't.

"Why do we suffer through all of this, Tom?" I asked sincerely.

"Beats the hell out of me," came the curt reply. A moment of contemplation led to an expanded answer. "Maybe we put up with winter because it feels so good when its finally over and springtime arrives."

By the looks of this day, spring was a long way off.

The highway crews had done a pretty decent job of clearing the roads, and we were clipping the miles off at a good pace.

"I don't think it's snowing much anymore," Tom observed. "The wind is blowing the snow around, making it look worse than it really is. I hope the weather doesn't keep anybody from going to Bennie's party."

"Same here," I replied.

"Ben had an interesting career," Tom said. "Or at least it was varied."

"If you ask me, it was more of an up and down career, Tom. And I always hate to see a colleague on the down side."

Tom nodded agreement. We both knew what the other was thinking.

Bennie had managed a couple of the absolutely best and biggest private clubs in Wisconsin during his early and mid-career. He had received job offers from all over the country, so well know he was.

He had held every office in our state golf course association and state turfgrass foundation. He had entertained overtures from some to run for national office.

Ben was in demand as a speaker, had offers for consultant work and had someone asking his advice about something almost continually.

He was, simply put, on top. The circles of leadership in the Wisconsin golf community always included Ben Baxter. He was respected by just about everybody, but most of all by the players for whom he toiled at any given time.

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But then something happened. We weren't paying much attention, but it seemed to occur about the time he turned fifty.

He left what was easily the state's best job, in terms of salary and prestige and about any other yardstick you'd care to use. He wasn't fired, and there weren't a lot of wild rumors about any pending dismissal. Quietly and simply, he resigned.

Bennie was tight-lipped about the incident. Shortly after leaving he was hired by another good quality golf club, and put in a few decent years.

But it was at that club it seemed Ben had lost something. Just what it was, we didn't know. We couldn't put our fingers on it.

Before we knew it, he was gone from that club. This time, he wasn't given the opportunity to resign; he was simply let go. He, we had heard, was devastated.

Glacier Valley became his home, a course he worked at until now, his retirement time.

The last dozen or so years of his life, obviously, hadn't been pretty. I asked Tom if he had any theories on what had happened to the guy.

"Yeah, I have some ideas," Tom thoughtfully answered. "They aren't very original, to be honest with you, and I've seen what happened to Ben happen to other guys in our profession, too."

"Well...", I said, trying to nudge him on. Sometimes Tom was as Scotch with his conversation as he was with his money.

"Ben made a critical mistake. He worked hard to reach the absolute zenith in our business. He was focussed on goals for over 20 years, and he got what he wanted. And he deserved it.

"But once he got it, he sort of gave up. He figured he had it

made. It seemed he felt that the world 'owed him'. He went from a guy who was always trying to 'max out' to one who would rather play golf than work."

"Or work on his small farm or monkey around with one of his apartment buildings," I added. I confess I said it with some sarcasm.

Time was passing quickly. It was Tom who noticed that it had not only quit snowing and blowing, but that the sun was now shining and blue sky was evident.

We were riding along a ridge that overlooked the beautiful Wisconsin winter landscape. The newly fallen snow created a new world, fresh and white and clean. The small villages with church spires reaching skyward toward the heavens looked like scenes from Christmas cards.

We had the road to ourselves, making driving easy for Tom, and in a way, encouraging him to visit about our friend Ben.

I had a notion about men like Bennie that I wanted to try out on Tom, just to see if he felt the same way or had noticed the same thing.

"Tom, as I think back to the many times I've visited with Ben in the last decade or so, it seems like he always wanted to talk about the past. Today didn't matter and he had no real program for his course for tomorrow. He was, it seems, living on past laurels and seemed to think that was enough. He expected others to feel the same way."

Tom didn't say anything. He adjusted his sunglasses a little and kept looking straight ahead. Rather than worry if he disapproved, I kept talking.

"He lost the edge you have to have to compete. He became hesitant about everything, reluctant to adopt new prac-

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tices or equipment on his course. He insisted on using what had been working for him in years gone by. And all the while the rest of us not only caught up, we passed him by. At times it was painfully obvious to all that he was falling behind."

I was relieved when T.M. cleared his throat.

"Ben never recognized my philosophy—unspoken or not—of never looking back. It is probably an appropriate attitude in lots of other places, but it is absolutely paramount in a country club setting.

"A golf course superintendent cannot live in the past. You can't look back to the days of yesteryear, at least around any golfers. Few care what went on before, and you have to accept that. A green committee won't give a hoot or a holler about how little money you spent building new bunkers on the eleventh hole ten years ago, or how what a great job you did at the State Amateur just three years ago. Today matters. Tomorrow matters. Yesterday doesn't mean a damn thing. And I have also learned that most members don't even want to listen to you about the past on the golf course. They simply aren't interested.

"Ben, for whatever reasons, couldn't stop dreaming and talking about years previous. Maybe he thought he'd never grow old or something. Here it is—straight up—golf course superintendents who want continued prosperity must live on for the future. They must lead the club and the players into coming years. Reminiscing about past accomplishments can be fatal."

"It sounds like we are criticizing poor Ben," I said to Tom, feeling a little guilty. "But he did some things that you and I and others have to avoid if we don't want to end our careers like he did. And I know darn well HE didn't want to close out like he did."

"The truth is the truth," Tom responded with a shoulder shrug.

"It doesn't matter if you are a college professor or a computer consultant or a course superintendent, you have to be willing to change, to keep up, to make the most of what is available. You must recognize that progress is your friend.

"Ben simply did not do that. He resisted using new pre-emergent materials, didn't believe new disease controls were effective and wouldn't plant new grass varieties. He hung onto the heavy mowing equipment of another day. He wouldn't even recognize value in IPM.

"Our world of turf management is complicated. Survival, let alone success, demands adjustment.

"Let's be honest," Tom said, "it isn't always easy to change when you should. It takes effort. It's like the old Serenity Prayer 'God,...give me the courage to change the things which should be changed...'"

"Spoken like a good Lutheran, Tom."

I decided to share with Tom a line I'd learned as a result of our trip to New England last fall. We visited Edith Wharton's home, near Lennox, Massachusetts, and that visit inspired me to do more reading of her books—*The Age of Innocence*, *Ethan Fromme* and *A Backward Glance*. They were all written in the 1920s and 1930s, some while she lived there near Lennox.

It was in *A Backward Glance* that she gave advice that merited a commitment of it to memory: "...one can remain alive long past the usual date of disintegration if one is unafraid of change, insatiable in intellectual curiosity, interested in big things, and happy in small ways."

When I recited her advice, Tom nodded approval and smiled.

"You ought to put that in *THE GRASS ROOTS*," he advised.

I promised I'd think about it.

It seemed we were both somewhat relieved we'd had this visit. After all, we were at that age when it could happen to us.

The tractor we'd driven up to inspect wasn't exactly what they needed at the Noer Facility, but we bought it anyway. On halves. I knew Val would haul it home for us with his truck and fifth-wheel trailer.

"You don't very often see a Golden Jubilee Ford in that good a condition," I told Tom. "It will be a great restoration project for us."

"You'll probably be driving it in next summer's Good Neighbor Festival in Middleton," Tom said with a good belly laugh.

We slowed down as we pulled into Stockbridge, keeping an eye open for the Neptune Diner where Bennie's party was being held.

We found it—hard to miss with 37 pickup trucks in the parking lot. Not surprisingly, most of them were Fords.

Ben hollered at us as soon as we walked in. He was glad to see us, and we were happy for him.

Although the recent years past hadn't been the best for Ben, he was now retired with good health and sufficient resources. It could have been worse.

We hoped he would be happy for years to come, happier than he had been of late.

And although it was cruel to think it, I vowed not to make the mistake he had in his life.

Somehow, I knew Tom was thinking the same thing. 🍷

