

# The Grass Roots

Vol. XXII, No. 2  
March/April 1994

*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:

Aerification in Wisconsin — survey and report by Bob Erdahl.  
Cover artwork by Jennifer Eberhardt.

"I hold the sudden breaking up of winter in my cupped hands.  
Spring stirs in urgent circles, breathing and beating in bareness, raising all the nerve endings in a growing going circle after circle a wave length into night buds reaching and teaching all the new birds still sleeping how to sing."

— *March Night*  
by *Mary Jean Irion*

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(Left to Right) Scott Schaller, Mike Handrich, Tom Schwab, Bruce Worzella, Bill Knight, Mark Kienert, Mike Semler, Joe Kuta and Pat Norton.

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# CONTRIBUTORS

By Michael Semler



It is always enjoyable to pay your respect to a member who has just received the Distinguished Service Award from the WGCSA. So few have received it, that those who are members of that elite club certainly have deserved it. Our hats are off to Rodney Johnson for all he has contributed over the years, and for all he will undoubtedly contribute in the coming years. Just remember, old guys never fade away, they just keep contributing!!

While I am speaking of contributing, how about a hearty thank you to all of those clubs who make annual contributions to support turfgrass research. Whether it is through a line item in their budget or through donations by other means, their silent and dutiful bestowals should not go unnoticed nor unreported. They are also in a class above the rest!

And let us not forget all of the distributors of turf equipment and supplies. For years, they also have silently supported the turfgrass industry and its research. Often the only recognition was a mere round of applause at a symposium or conference. Where would we be without their generous contributions?

Now as I tell you of these wonderful leaders and contributors, it seems

I must also tell you that their support for the turfgrass industry is just not enough. In fact, what they need is help! Not only do they need help from their peers, but help from the true benefactors of their work—the golfers.

It seems that the golfing public does not understand the need for turfgrass research and the need for money to support it. And therein lies the problem. How do we get the golfers, who are playing on the grass we grow and who are the true benefactors of turfgrass research, to help support this research?

Hypothetically, if Wisconsin had 300 clubs, and each club had 250 members who were each willing to donate a single dollar to support research, we would reap in \$75,000. Wow!!! In short order and with very little pain, we would have a large sum of money to work with. Do you think we could find useful projects for this money at the O.J. Noer Turfgrass Research Facility? I do.

But this leads to some logistical problems. Foremost among them are getting golfers to realize the need for the money, coming up with a means of billing and collecting the money from them, showing them what their money has purchased, and making

sure we can count on their annual support.

I know many others have tried to get this type of involvement from the golfers and their respective clubs with little or no success. But the fact of the matter is that in order to gain the potential bounty of turfgrass research, we need more help in finding these contributors.

Since we do not have a defined means of collecting money from golfers as a whole, the job of finding these needed contributions rests on the shoulders of the golf course superintendent. We must be the ones to take it to our members and make them understand the importance of research and the need to support it. We must be the ones to show them the kind of research that is going on and what needs to be done in the future. We must be the ones to show them that a dollar from every golfing member is a small amount to pay when talking about the total operations of the club and the beneficial results that come from supporting research. And finally we must be the ones to show them the importance research plays in the overall future of golf.

If we don't do it, nobody else will. 🍷



Steve Scoville



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# We Applaud...

By Monroe S. Miller

It is time to get caught up on thank yous to those people who made our businesses and profession better in the last while. We are indeed lucky to benefit from the efforts of the fine people noted here.

In fact, next time you see one of these individuals, offer up your own pat on the back. I know it will be appreciated by each and every one of them.

**Governor Tommy Thompson:** We owe thanks to our top elected state official for signing into law the legislation which gives the state pre-emption in matters of pesticide regulation. It is a relief to know that common sense and fairness has prevailed, and that Thompson had the courage to ignore the doom rhetoric from extremists. Really, it is no wonder the governor is so popular and has now held the gov-

ernorship longer than anyone else in our state's history. I love this guy!

Kudos, too, for those legislators in the Senate and Assembly who voted for uniformity. We appreciate it.

**Russ Weisensel:** This well known and very well-liked executive director of the F/RoW/T Coalition and the WABC was a key hitch pin in getting the pre-emption bill to the governor's desk. Five pens were used to sign the bill, and Governor Thompson gave one of them to Russ. Well deserved! Thanks from us, Russ.

**Jennifer Eberhardt:** What a difference this talented gal has made in our chapter publication. Her artistry has dressed *THE GRASS ROOTS* up in a 1990s style that is pure enjoyment. All I can hope is that she starts her career after graduation this spring in the Madison area.

**Diane Haas and Marilyn Gaffney:** We should thank these two people on a daily basis for all they do to keep our organization running along so smoothly. And they do it with a cheerfulness and professional touch absolutely non-existent anywhere else. They are, to put it simply, the best.

**Larry Lennert:** For several years now Larry has graciously kept track of *THE GRASS ROOTS* articles that appear in each calendar year. And at the end of the year he organizes that inventory and presents it for publication. Editors are really grateful for work like Larry's, and I'm no exception.

A big thank you, Larry.

**EXPO 94 Committee Members:** I am still hearing good things about EXPO 94. It was a huge improvement over our previous winter conferences and a giant step into the future.

And, as usual, it didn't just happen. It took a ton of work to plan and pull it off, and most will agree that Dr. Frank Rossi was pivotal in both leadership and execution.

But he had lots of assistance from the planning committee. So let's applaud Frank and other WGCSA members who provided us such an excellent opportunity: Wayne Otto, Fred Fabian, Curt Larson, Wayne Kussow, Pat Norton, Randy Smith, Greg Youngs, Wayne Horman, Ed Devinger, Julie Meyer, Bob Vavrek, Steve Bailey, Chris Wendorf, Chuck Koval, Mike Handrich and Bill Vogel.

Your job next year will be tough—EXPO 94 will be a tough act to follow. 🍷



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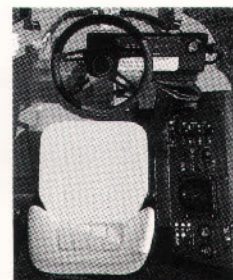
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# The Roller Coaster Ride to Spring

By Monroe S. Miller

The temperature today is 35°F. above normal; a mere two weeks ago, it was an equal amount below the norm for that time and the wind chill factors were at -70° F. Two weeks ago we looked out at two feet of snow on the ground. Today, little remains.

Rollercoaster weather—spring must be getting closer.

Dan Jansen loses a medal in the 500 meter ice skating race in Hamar, Norway. Then, he wins the gold in the 1000 meter event! Our beloved Badgers clobber Purdue, lose to Minnesota, beat Illinois, lose to Northwestern. Griffith starts one game, misses the trip to another, then plays, then doesn't.

Rollercoaster sports—spring must be close in Wisconsin.

The good thing about the winter so far, at least here in our town, is that we have been relaxed with the luxurious snow cover. Although most of us would have liked snow earlier in December, we have been lucky to have what we had for as long as we did. It reminds us that a year ago, ice was the thing instead of snow.

Another month or so, and we will know for sure how spring conditions will likely be for our golf courses. Make no mistake—a lot of grass can be lost in that month with the radical temperature swings we usually experience. But regardless of the outcome, winter's end—and the emotional rollercoaster ride—is nearly here.

February brought some really exciting news to the world of Wisconsin golf. The USGA made a decision at its 100th annual meeting, which was held in Scottsdale, Arizona, to invite Blackwolf Run to host the U.S. Women's Open in 1998.

It will be the first open event conducted by the USGA to come to Wisconsin, and only the eighth USGA tourney to be held in the state overall.

The tournament will be played on

the Rivers Course, rated No. 31 on *GOLF DIGEST's* list of the nation's top 100 courses.

Congratulations to Mike Lee and his gang. They'll be up to the task and make us all proud.

Reality slapped the College of Agricultural and Life Sciences in mid-January like a cold blast of frigid arctic air.

On January 18, Dean Roger Wyse, subject of this issue's *Personality Profile*, announced plans to reduce the CALS budget deficit of \$3.1 million over the next three years. Programs and faculty positions will be cut 10 percent to accomplish the savings.

Planning for the changes that will be necessary has been going on for a year and a half. There will be no layoffs needed. Savings will be accomplished through retirements and resignations. Thirty of the 262 faculty positions will be eliminated, along with 25 staff members and five administrators.

An exercise of prioritization in CALS will be used to help make the reduction decisions. The bad news here was the low priority given to entomology. Plant pathology was accorded a "low-medium" priority. Soil science, horticulture and agronomy rated a medium priority.

The tough decisions going on in CALS give a strong signal about how important our past support of turfgrass education, research and extension activities have been. Clearly, it will be even more important in the time to come.

I came across a "guide" to the 1992 *Worker Protection Standard* (WPS) that may merit investigation and clarification by a WGCSA committee. The WPS is a federal regulation designed to protect workers involved in production of agricultural plants and pesticide handlers. That may include us and our employees.

There is a raft of rules and requirements. Among the most interesting for employers is a requirement to provide a "decontamination" site. There are seven items requiring a standard, but few details on the "how" to do this.

I'd like to know one thing, about this and umpteen other government regulations: why don't public employees who make these rules seem to have any responsibility or accountability in getting them to people in the field affected by their rules?

It is merely one more reason, in an endless list of reasons, why Americans dislike, distrust and disrespect government. It doesn't get the job done.

Can't you hardly wait until government starts the Slick medical plan? The only clear detail you'll ever know about it is how much more of your money will disappear to run the damn thing.

You can bet a story on global warming that came out in mid-January didn't get much attention then. Temperatures were stuck in the sub-zero range. But, as the snow is melting today, I looked it up for a reread.

A scientist from the National Climatic Data Center in Asheville, N.C. says data is implicating global warming in making snow melt earlier than it did 20 years ago. The result is that average spring temperatures rise more than in other seasons.

Scientists found a link between variations in the amount of snow covering the ground and a rise of one degree in the average spring temperatures from 1973 to 1992 in the U.S., Canada and Russia. Weather satellite photos were used in the analysis.

They were trying to explain why average temperatures have risen more quickly in the spring than they have during summers and winters. Overall, the average temperatures in the Northern Hemisphere during April



is up more than a degree from the early 1970s.

The increase is small, but in the spring the small increase raises temperatures about freezing more often and more snow melts. Bare ground then absorbs more heat than snow does, and this raises the temperature more and allows even more snow to melt.

The result is that farmers could plant crops a little earlier. And, maybe, golf courses could open a little sooner.

We will know in a month how it works out for this year.

Spring is really variable. I looked back in my records to determine when we opened in each of my past 21 seasons at Blackhawk. Half of the time we opened in the first week of April. The other half of the time we opened equally either in March or after April 7th.

In 1987, we opened for play on March 25th. In 1993, we opened on April 23rd. This little bit of local data indicates the hazard of telling mem-

bers when their course will open.

I usually wait until the sticks are in the greens to tell them EXACTLY when the course is open. That's when I know for sure!

Few missed the electric greens mowers at the GCSAA Conference and Show. Ransomes and Jacobsen are out front in this area; these machines are clearly going to have a place in the future (unlike the greens rollers so evident on the show floor a year ago).

And the future is even brighter, now that a device has been developed that can recharge a battery-powered car almost as quickly as you could fill it with gas. The job may take minutes instead of hours.

Electric Power Technology and GNB Battery Technology, a battery company from Atlanta that supplied batteries for the testing, ran tests on a Chevy pickup that recorded how far the truck could travel on batteries in a 24 hour period. It beat the old record

by 200 miles, based mainly on less recharging time. Think of how much farther they'd have gone if the test had used a Ford!

The federal government gave a \$4 million grant to a coalition of companies last year to work on the projects. Great results in a short time, driven by potential profit, undoubtedly.

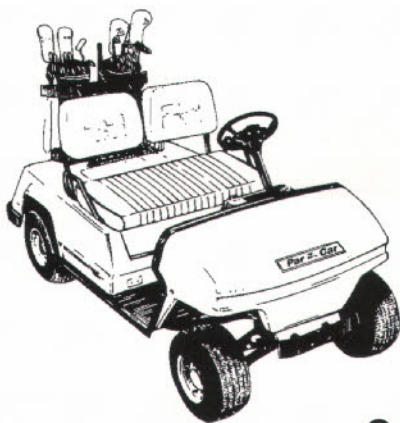
The charger rapidly activates a battery by combining a series of sharp positive and negative impulses, interspersed with a small discharge that allows a more thorough mixing of battery chemicals.

Once the technology is refined and the cost of charging units comes down, the golf course market—golf cars and greens mowers—will likely show a lot of interest.

That's it. Here are wishes for normal temperatures this spring, lots of green grass and gentle rains. And a short spring business meeting on February 28th! 🌱

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# Real Salesmen Bring Donuts

By Monroe S. Miller

It seems enough time has passed for those humorless souls among us who were offended by our last "real" articles to have recovered. We are, in effect, going to reload and take a few more harmless shots.

Same gun, new target. Easy marks this time. Real easy—I almost feel guilty.

I simply cannot resist the calls for more any longer. The time has come for the sales people in our business to step forward and take a turn.

And, frankly, I received a lot of encouragement and help from a good friend of mine who just happens to be a salesman. His insights were more than helpful, and I thank him. He will remain nameless; I have to respect his request for anonymity.

Good sales people are always welcome in my shop. I learned early in my career that they can be a tremendous resource. They are almost like turf-grass extension agents when they have a good educational background to go with their experience and wide travel.

So here we go. A warning to the thin skinned and politically correct—if you cannot find your sense of humor, do not read any further.

- Real salesmen making early morning calls always bring donuts. Fresh ones, not day olds. If you are coming from the Racine area you may bring a ring of fresh Kringle with you.
- A real salesman NEVER has to ask to borrow a pen.
- Real salesmen NEVER have to ask the golf pro or the clubhouse manager "how do you get to the shop?"
- Real salesmen don't wear:
  - Earrings (saleswomen may, however)
  - Wing tip shoes
  - Polyester pants
  - Bib overalls
- Real salesmen tell the truth at least 50% of the time.
- A real salesman always remembers

the assistant golf course superintendent's and the golf course mechanic's name.

- A real salesman knows he will never sell any piece of equipment with a half hour demo while he looks over everyone's shoulder. That's worse than no demo at all.
- Real salesmen don't show up at the editor's office unless they are *GRASS ROOTS* advertisers.
- Real salesmen brush their teeth regularly and buy breath mints by the case (cheaper that way)
- Real salesmen never gossip.
- Real salesmen don't rip on their competition, preferring instead to sell the strong points of their own line.
- Real salesmen don't have low handicaps. Customers get to thinking that all they do is play free rounds of golf.
- In that same vein, real salesmen don't drive around with their clubs in the box of their pickup or in the trunk of their car.
- Real salesmen show up on time, or at least on the right day of the right month.
- A real salesman doesn't drive a fancy, new or expensive vehicle—Lexus, Explorer and similar brands. Convertibles are forbidden, too. It's pretty tough to convince some of us of how low your prices and bids are as we look out the office window and see a \$25,000 vehicle. Maybe we are jealous—so what? Let's face it—a real salesman would be smart to drive a pickup truck that was a couple years old with a bit of a worn look. It should be clean, however.
- Real salesmen don't try to "act cool". Real golf course superintendents don't appreciate it. Lose the sunglasses on a necklace, wear socks and for heaven's sake, don't dress like a golf pro.
- Just as the real golf course superintendent is disgusted by implications of

the title greenskeeper, the real salesman loathes the connotations carried by the contemptuous title peddler.

- The real salesman knows the jacket size of all his customers!
- Real salesmen don't make their calls wearing tennis, basketball or soccer shoes.
- Real salesmen don't wear a suit for golf course calls.
- When in those situations that call for a coat and tie (the Symposium, for example), real salesmen don't wear a clip-on necktie.
- Real salesmen wipe their nose between calls.
- Real salesmen always pick up the tab when sharing a meal with a golf course superintendent. The reason is that most salesmen usually make more money than golf course superintendents, and they most certainly have a bigger business expense account.
- A real salesman never tries to "smoke" his way through a question. Golf course superintendents are shrewd people and aren't fooled by fast talk and false pretense. If a salesman doesn't know the answer to a question by a superintendent, he should reply, "I don't know, but I'll find out."
- A real salesman knows, either by instinct or through experience, when to leave.
- Real salesmen are able to handle, even enjoy, an occasional humorous jab at themselves.
- Real salesmen keep a case of hats with them at all times.
- In Wisconsin, the real salesman is a Badger fan, or at least pretends to be. If he secretly likes another collegiate team, he does his rooting quietly in a closet. The same is true with the Packers, Brewers and Bucks.
- Real salesmen have their vehicle radios tuned to Rush Limbaugh.



- A real salesman remembers his customers at Christmas. A card or calendar is fine.
- A real salesman actually knows how to operate the equipment he sells, and has actually used the materials he offers.
- A real salesman knows that lecture attendance at educational seminars, symposiums and meetings is time well spent. He knows he might learn something.
- The real salesman isn't a sore loser, and always comes back strong. He doesn't take a lost sale personally, and he doesn't hold a grudge.
- Neither does the real salesman take a sale for granted or assume it's automatic. Real superintendents make business decisions and let the chips fall where they may.
- The real salesman gives his best bid (or lowest price) immediately, NOT after he's learned the competition has beat him.
- "Service" is a word the real salesman understands and actually believes in. 🌱

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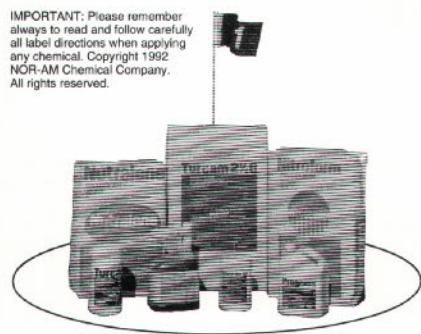
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