

# The Grass Roots

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### About the Cover:

Our talented portrait artist, Jennifer L. Eberhardt, offers her rendition of the new WGCSA president, Mark Kienert. As a complement, be sure to read Lori Ward Bocher's interview with Mark.

The day is an epitome of the year.  
The night is the winter, the morning  
and the evening are the spring and  
fall, the noon is the summer.

Henry David Thoreau  
1817-1862



## Table of Contents

President's Message .....	3
Notes From The Noer Facility .....	6
Jottings From The Golf Course Journal .....	9
From The Director's Desk .....	10
Shaw, Chenequa CC Team Compete in John Deere Tourney .....	13
The Editor's Notebook.....	14
Editorial .....	19
The Cutting Edge .....	20
Editorial and Season Finale at Hawthorn Hills .....	23
Gazing In The Grass .....	24
Golf Course Superintendents Address Owners Convention .....	28
Symposium Better Than Many Expected .....	30
WGCSA Election .....	31
Golf In Illinois.....	33
Personality Profile .....	36
From Across The Country .....	40
Soylent Green .....	44
The Cutting Edge .....	46
Tales From The Back Nine.....	50
THE GRASS ROOTS Article Index – 1995.....	53
R&R With Our Loved Ones .....	59
The Surrounds.....	60



(Left to Right): Mike Semler, Kris Pinkerton, Charlie Shaw, Dave Smith, Scott Schaller, Gary Tanko, Dave Brandenburg, Andy Kronwall, Mark Kienert.

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# To Be Heard, You Must First Be Seen

By Mark Kienert



Thanks, in part, to an event scheduled immediately on the heels of our Wisconsin Golf Course Superintendents election meeting (featuring Washington Post columnist and ABC TV correspondent George Will), I postponed my president's acceptance speech outlining my goals and objectives for you until they could appear here in the GRASS ROOTS. From my vantage point, the postponement was an easy choice as I could see that the majority of you had already departed for the refreshment stand, and that my audience was clearly dominated by the anxious faces of the approximately 25 or so banquet setup personnel ready to spring to action as soon as I adjourned the meeting. What I offer now is a refined and clarified version of my president's acceptance message.

It is my distinct pleasure to be your association's 33rd president. For the many new faces in our midst and for all of our long time members whose memories, like mine, are fading, I was first nominated and elected to the board of directors in November of 1984 when I was still an assistant golf course superintendent at the North Hills Country Club. While on the board, I maintained a determined focus, never losing sight of my desire to one day serve as WGCSA President.

Now that day has come. I have to publicly thank all our past presidents and board members who I served with over that span of time for all of our association's present successes. I was honored to assist in their efforts on your behalf. I now look forward to utilizing the abilities and skills of our newly elected board members for all our future continued successes.

I have chosen a simple theme for my term as your president that has more personal meaning for myself than for possibly the majority of you. My credo simply is:

## TO BE HEARD, YOU MUST FIRST BE SEEN.

This theme is an important reminder for me to break away from all old habits and to step out of my present comfort zones, to boldly accept and meet the challenges of tomorrow, today! As we all too well know, our offices are the playing fields that we maintain. They have no walls and the heavens serve as our ceilings. Only those that work in the out-of-doors can lay claim to having offices that are as large as ours. As a result, I find that it is too easy to get busy and remain out of reach for the majority members who employ me.

During my term in office, I would like to focus on three mandates. Those are image, education and research.

On image, I would like to assure all of our members that your board of directors will continue efforts to improve the image of the golf course superintendent in the eyes of all golfers, both public and private, everywhere. My present position is unique in the sense that I maintain both private and public facilities under one roof. I am constantly reminded of the differences between the two.

One of the ways that we might be able to improve our image is by soliciting the help of a retired business executive to serve as spokesperson for the

industry, someone to carry the torch on our behalf. This individual should have name recognition throughout the state and should be a person who has a passion for the game of golf, the golf course and its superintendent, and for all golfers in general. I think every club in the state has an individual just like that in its membership. The person that I would have liked very much to fill this position recently retired to Texas and is unavailable, and you know him as our great friend, Jim Latham. If you know of such an individual, please let me or someone on the board know.

I would also like to see the Wisconsin Golf Course Superintendents Association become active partners with the Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary Program for Schools and for all golf course superintendents to share in the joys of shaping the young minds of our future generations. **Remember to be heard, you must first be seen.** Volunteer your efforts in church, school, youth athletic activities and in your communities. Increase your visibility in a positive sense and live up to those expectations that you have set for yourself. There are many of us who take the time to act as volunteers in many worthwhile events, yet how many times do we accept the recognition for ourselves when it is so richly deserved?

*(Continued on page 5)*

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(Continued from page 3)

### Now for Education:

Besides our own educational offerings, we have maintained strong ties with several allied associations, like the Wisconsin Turfgrass Association, the Golf Course Superintendents Association of America, and the Metropolitan Milwaukee Sewerage District. They have provided us with additional excellent educational opportunities for our membership. We must thank all of our members who serve as volunteers in those organizations that help to organize worthwhile educational programs for us. Please continue to support those programs with your attendance.

Future educational opportunities for the golf course superintendent will be enhanced by a computer forum that will be held in the Spring of 1996 or 1997. I'm personally pushing to see that more superintendents get "On Line." I would like to see every superintendent in our state not only have , but use an "internet" address to their advantage. I would like to see that more superintendents learn how to make the computer a "time saver" instead of a "time waster," to use the PC as a means of communication instead of an alarm clock for an irrigation system or just another glorified typewriter.

For starters, I would like to establish a computer bulletin board service at the O. J. Noer Facility with Tom Schwab serving as systems operator. This bulletin board would link more of us together via a computer network very similar to the very successful "Turfbyte" managed by the Heart of America GCSA in Kansas. Superintendents who regularly log on find value in sharing real experiences with products and services throughout the industry. The rapport among users is shared by individuals coast to coast.

The benefits to us would be in the form of messages and alerts that are posted by both University professors and superintendents alike. This bulletin board could also serve as a fax network that could quickly alert other superintendents of opportunities to buy, sell or trade any unused equipment in our service center warehouses.

Overall, opportunities for education shouldn't stop there. I would like to see further development of programs to assist the other valuable members of our staffs. Programs developed for the assistant, mechanic and the other specialized technicians on our payrolls can

only help in our jobs as golf course superintendents. The better trained our employes become the more time we will have to focus our attention on the thousands of other details that always seem to demand our immediate attention. We have already hosted GCSAA's Sprayer Technician and Irrigation seminars and we will be focusing our attention on other GCSAA seminars that are offered to improve the value of our employees.

I would also like to encourage the education committee to set up a new golf course construction tour field trip. We have all seen the results of some of the unique projects in Wisconsin that have been built in the last dozen years. I think the ability to preview a construction project in the making, up close and in person, has the potential to make us better stewards of our own golf courses, especially during our construction projects.

### And for Research:

I shake my head every time I think about the revenue the Badger Chapter of the Club Managers Association of America generates in a single day when they host a Club Managers, Club President, Club Pro, and Superintendent golf outing. This past year they raised \$24,000 for scholarships tied to their side of the profession.

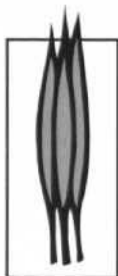
I have already discussed the need with Dr. Rossi and several of our members for new ideas and means of generating additional revenues for research dollars. At present, there are a number of projects that we should get off the ground at our research facility, but can't due to the lack of funding. Another golf outing, scheduled some time in the summer months has the only real potential to bring together a large group of people at one given time. Those possibilities will be explored further along with the idea of possibly co-hosting of an already established event.

These goals are by no means set in concrete. They are laid on the table to be discussed and modified as needed. They serve only to establish mileposts along the way and will be implemented should they prove useful to the organization as a whole.

As your president, I would like to paraphrase our association's creed by pledging to promote the knowledge that is gained through continued education and to promote the benefits of camaraderie to all members of this great association. My legacy to this association depends on the pride and integrity that each individual takes within themselves, to volunteer and to serve.

**REMEMBER, TO BE HEARD,  
YOU MUST FIRST BE SEEN! ♣**





# One Year Down; Many To Go

By Tom Schwab, Manager  
O.J. Noer Turfgrass Research and Education Facility

It's been exactly one year since I've become manager of the Noer Facility. It's been an interesting change from being a golf course manager at Monroe Country Club. Some of the changes have been great. In many other ways, I miss being on the golf course. I'd like to jot down some of these thoughts, both positive and negative.

- I miss creating that most beautiful of landscapes: a golf course.
- In many ways I miss being the only one in charge. Taking all the credits and/or blames, for the golf course was good for the ego. Working in a team with professors, technicians and students isn't as personally rewarding but this team-work approach is able to serve the whole industry better.
- I'm stuck in the office more. Working outdoors made me feel more productive because you can see your accomplishments.
- The hours and thus family life are better now, though.
- The UW-Madison Department of Agricultural Research Stations is a great group to work for.
- There are no more reels to grind.
- The amount of pesticide spraying is slightly less.
- I still have to pinch a penny but not nearly as bad as my old golf course. The budget at the Noer is only possible because of the unbelievable generosity of the turf industry, with their gifts of both hard and soft goods, to the Noer.
- It's great working at a top notch facility. I've only seen a couple other turf research facilities. From what I've seen and also heard, through the industry, the Noer is one of the best of it's kind. This is due to the great professors, both past and present, and the strong Wisconsin turfgrass industry.

- It's harder to hide from Miller at the Noer when he wants GRASS ROOTS articles written. I could hide from him and didn't write many articles when I was in golf. It does make you feel great when you turn in that article, though. It would be valuable if more of you wrote down some of your turf tips or told about some of your projects for the publication. This will keep the GRASS ROOTS the nation's best.

The early winter this year caught us, at the Noer, with our pants down. I applied snowmold material later than I ever have because of the early snow that came and stayed. It wasn't until November 20 that I applied any fungicide. This may not have even been possible if plant pathology technician Gary Gaard hadn't shown up to help me shovel off the remaining snow on the plots that day. The application I used was a combination of Penstar 75WP PCNB @ 6oz/M, Chipco 26019 Flo @ 4oz/M, and Daconil 2787 Flo @ 8oz/M. I'm not endorsing any of these products. I was just using some materials that have been on our shelves the longest. The actual fungicide trials from the facility did finally get applied in the incimate weather however. Thanks go to Henry Berg and Amy Sausen for installing these trials, despite the weather. Professor Doug Rouse will be analyzing the results next spring, comparing a great variety of different fungicide products and rates.

The end of an era happened this fall. The WTA retired the Turf Truck that they purchased in 1984. This vehicle was purchased for the professors to get to their research



Gary Gaard chips in to remove the last bit of snow.



Steve Milliett delicately prepares his plot for trial.



throughout the state. The need for the truck has diminished lately. The building of the Noer allows the professors to do more research while traveling less. The professors also seem to use their own department vehicles lately when they work on their remote plots. Before the facility was built they could not have gotten along without the truck. I have some fond memories of seeing Gayle Worf show up at my golf course in that shiny brown WTA Turf Truck.



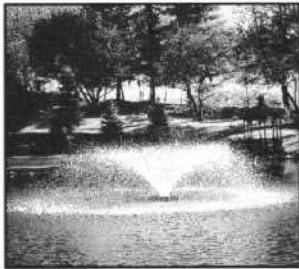
Now that the WTA's truck is at the end of its useful 12-year life, Dr. Worf returned the keys to Tom Harrison!

I hope you and yours had a wonderful, relaxed, and blessed holidays. I hope to see you at the 1996 Wisconsin Turfgrass and Greenspace EXPO on January 9, 10, and 11 in Madison. Call us at the Noer if for some reason you didn't get the information: 608-845-6536. 🍷



Thomas Harrison presenting keys to Dr. Worf in 1984. Both of these men have aged very gracefully!

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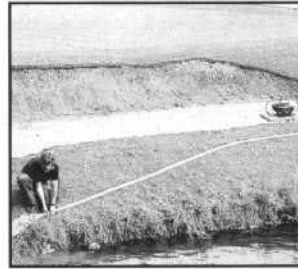
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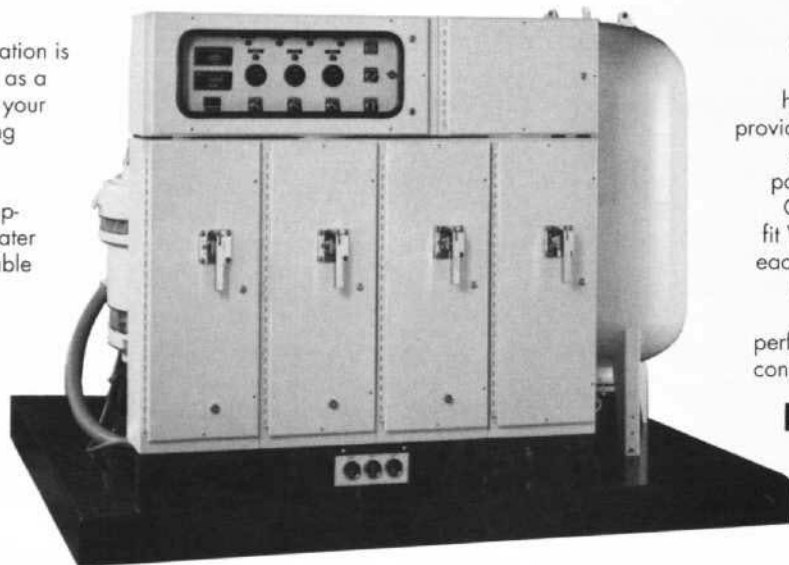
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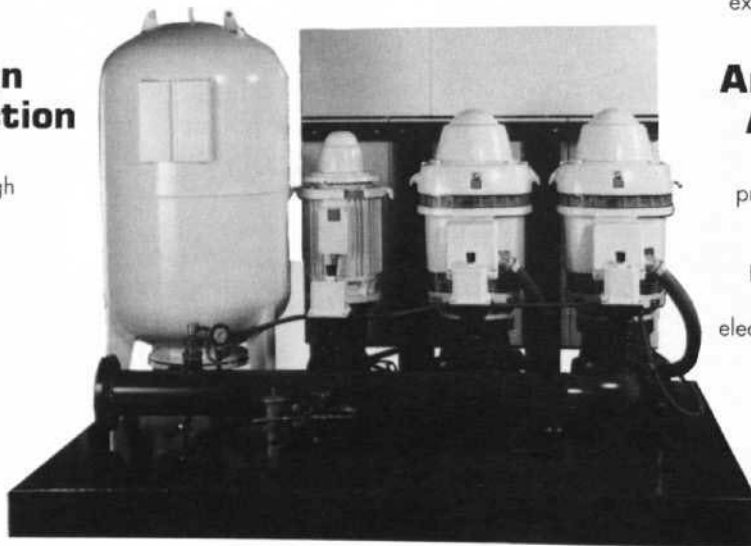
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# A Tranquil Time

By Monroe S. Miller

I'm sleeping like a rock these days. It's almost scary—I don't hear a thing for eight hours, and I hardly move. It all makes one feel guilty, being so comfortable and relaxed and free of care. But it is, after all, winterlude.

Contrast is what makes it so startling. This winter season—cold and calm and quiet—couldn't be more different than last summer—hot and hostile and stressful. I barely slept last summer and only now am I getting caught up.

A tranquil time like this is absolutely essential to the physical and mental health of Wisconsin golf course superintendents. The golf season is too intense, the days too long, the pressure too great to not have some time to recover. That is especially true after a brutal summer like the one 1995 served us.

The advent season was really welcome this past Christmas. A church is a great place to slow down and think and relax, removed from the breathless pace that Christmas itself can even bring. A church is a quiet place, too, and especially comfortable when people like us are trying to get back on an even keel.

The frantic pace too many Americans keep can lead to hypertension, ulcers, heart disease and any number of other stress related disorders. Golf course superintendents are not immune. I always thought as I got older the job would get easier—experience and savvy and all that.

It might have been true, if the world had stood still as I aged. But the times have changed, as I have. Nowadays it is FED EX and fax, call waiting and answering machines, car phones and beepers. Hurry up—it isn't the 1960s (when I grew up) anymore when "time is on your side" as the Rolling Stones declared. Add to the mix the ever increasing demands from golf players, and golf course superintendents find the days don't have enough

hours and the weeks don't have enough days.

Guys my age worked on golf courses when greens were cut at 3/16" and fairways were short if they were cut three times a week at 7/8". Crews numbered half a dozen or so. Many courses in Wisconsin didn't have irrigated fairways. Everything about the game was simpler, the pace was easier and there was plenty of time for all we had to do, simply because there was less of it.

Often times our crews today number in the range of 15 to 30; many are young and need close supervision. The level of government intrusion is greater, creating the additional workload of paper. Who would have believed a short ten years ago that some golf course managers would have secretaries today just so they can actually get on the course once in a while?

Weird—on summer mornings after the crew is rolling I am already thinking ahead to the next day—"will we have time tomorrow to do all the things that HAVE to be done along with too many others that should be done?"

The pace in our shop is hectic all too often. Dave arrives at 3:30 a.m. to get equipment ready for the dozen and a half who arrive at 6:00 a.m. Or 5:00 a.m. Then he works at a quick pace until late day, making repairs and servicing the expensive pieces of machinery that have to roll tomorrow. He only hopes I don't ask him to fill in as an operator at mid-day, usually because we are behind and have too much to do without him. The time stress affects his work greatly.

Getting frazzled and frustrated wouldn't be so bad if you had a long luxurious vacation to look forward to. Sorry—for most of us that is out of the question. No summer vacations, ever. Come Labor Day and school begins—no vacations then, either. It is just plain damn difficult to get some

leisurely weeks away when the weather is nice, which makes it vital to turn the pace 'way down' these cold dark days of the year.

It is hard to figure. Not long ago we were hearing that Americans would soon enjoy a shorter work week with more free time for family. Computers, robots, microchips, and all the rest of other new technology of the current revolution were supposed to leave us wondering what to do with ourselves. What, for crying out loud, happened?

Just the opposite. Instead of giving us more freedom, the time-saving inventions leave us with less time and more frustration. Golfers are on a cell-phone while a partner lines up a putt—making the most of limited time. I even saw one last year on our course with his laptop computer on the seat of his golf cart as he headed to the range for some practice!

All that technology, and we are no better off. The sanctuaries are all but gone. Maybe that is why I treat myself to mowing greens most summer mornings—exercise for sure, but also the feeling of sanctuary it gives me.

One sanctuary is not gone. We still have winter days. Cold, dark days and short days. Normal times for us. Home on weekends, most of them anyway. Great holidays. Crisp and fresh air. Plenty of meetings, some out of town. One, at least, in a warm climate. Time with family and friends and colleagues. And black coffee really tastes best in the winter time. The tranquil time.

Four hundred years ago, old Queen Elizabeth I, while near death, said those famous words "all my possessions for a moment of time." These are our moments of time, peaceful and quiet.

And right on cue, sometime in March, one of us in our shop will say to someone else, "I'll sure be glad when opening day gets here." I will probably be on one end of that conversation! ♣





# Let it Snow! Let it Snow! Let it Snow!

By Bob Vavrek  
USGA Green Section Agronomist  
North-Central Region



The end of the 1995 season could not arrive too soon for most of us across the north central tier of states. Even as the season winds down, the weather still refuses to give anyone a break. Early November snowfall that lingered for several weeks was a cause of concern for many superintendents who had not yet applied snow mold protection to greens and tees. Widely fluctuating temperatures and intermittent rain and snow during late November and early December have raised the usual battery of questions that have no definitive answers: *Should I apply an additional snow mold fungicide treatment to greens? Did the first fungicide application wash away or begin to break down? If the snow mold protection has partially broken down, when is the best time to treat the turf again—January, February, or early March? And at what rate?*

Unusual late fall weather patterns also throw the proverbial monkey wrench into the works regarding late fall fertilization and the use of protective covers.

## They Don't Call It Annual Bluegrass For Nuthin'

If there was at least one hard lesson to be learned this season, it was just how quickly a stand of turf dominated by *Poa* could thin out and die under ideal conditions for disease activity and/or direct heat stress. Extensive losses of turf occurred on fairways within a matter of a few days during late July and August at a number of courses following extended periods of heat and high humidity.

Courses in Detroit and in the Twin Cities were particularly hard hit while only a few superintendents managed to avoid at least moderate losses of *Poa* that commonly occurred in high traffic areas, in poorly drained areas, or in heavily shaded areas of the course. The losses of turf had little

regard for a particular course's operating budget or its reputation.

Just about every disease known to affect cool season turf was seen at some time or another this summer. The patch diseases—brown patch, take-all patch, summer patch, and necrotic ring spot—were particularly troublesome, perhaps due to the cool weather during April and May and the early arrival of hot weather during mid-June. This limited the growth and development of a deep, healthy root system this season.

Pythium blight caused losses of turf at northern courses where the last and, perhaps, only time the superintendent had seen this pathogen was in a textbook. Turf injury associated with "high" counts of plant pathogenic nematodes were also reported from a few scattered courses in Minnesota and Wisconsin. It may be difficult to

blame losses of turf to nematodes in the northern states, however, because there is little baseline information regarding the populations of these pests in healthy turf, let alone turf under stress from a variety of other factors.

In my opinion, diseases were too often considered the primary cause of the injury to turf this summer. The pattern of injury was similar at many courses and the pattern suggests that direct heat stress, high soil temperatures, low cutting heights and other physical stresses caused more death to *Poa annua* than root pythium and crown rot anthracnose. Yes, these stresses can predispose the turf to disease infection, but I believe the weather and maintenance practices had a greater role in the quality of turf this summer than more superintendents are willing to admit. I often won-

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