

SYMPOSIUM HIGHLIGHTS, SIDELIGHTS AND OBSERVATIONS

I will admit I am a rubber neck from way back—you'd think I was from Backwoods CC in Hicksville, Wisconsin. I cannot help myself; it is a lot of fun checking out the famous and the newsworthy.

The Hyatt and Milwaukee, and the Phister in years past, too, have given me some fine moments rubber necking. This year was tops.

Hyatt staff were anxious to get us out of the meeting hall after our chapter election. I asked a busboy "why?" He told me that the Medical College of Wisconsin had a banquet and that George Will was the speaker!

I nearly fainted! George Will is one of my heroes—I watch him every Sunday on David Brinkley's show, I buy and read his books and I read his column in the State Journal. Steve Millett feels the same way—he's from the Backwater CC in Nowhere, Iowa. And he's a rubber neck, too.

So we hung out for an hour or so, waiting for George to arrive. I paced around, wringing my hands, wondering if I should try to get close to him once he was in view. He showed up, and while I was busy being indecisive, Millett (who clearly is young and didn't know any better) goes over to the guy, strikes up a conversation and gets his

autograph. My respect for Steve grew exponentially! All I got was the poor quality picture you see here.

The Wisconsin Sports Hall of Fame had its induction dinner when we were there, and NBC announcer Bob Costas was the speaker because Al McGuire was an inductee. I saw Costas up close and can tell you he really is short!

Oscar Robinson was also inducted and I will confirm that the "Big O" really is tall!

BEST SLIDES — Gary Grigg showed some of his disastrous situations with water and a golf course, like 65" of rain in Naples, Florida in September and October of 1995. Gary did disappoint me in that he didn't talk about affiliation issues.

DRESS CODE — Do we need a dress code for the Symposium? I do not like wearing a necktie, but I realize some occasions require it. I do like wearing hats, but I realize some occasions forbid it.

Imagine my reaction when I was in the back of the hall and saw several people wearing golf hats! It was tactless and crude—the same goes for blue jeans, wrinkled shirts and work boots. C'mon boys, we're in town.

Maybe ties aren't necessary, but work clothes should be outlawed for the meeting.



Ron Semmann, deputy DNR secretary, was the 1995 luncheon speaker.

A SAD MOMENT — When Bob Welsh told me his wife had passed away one year ago to the day—November 8, 1994—I knew why he seemed so sad. It made me feel for him.

BEST QUOTE — Easy winner—Peter Beaves deserves credit in this category. While discussing the extreme lengths we sometimes go for golf turf, his advice was, "remember, boys, it's only grass!"

BIGGEST WELCOME — Goes to Jim and Lois Latham. It was not difficult to see that retirement suits them both. But it was just as easy to see that they were glad to be back "home"! 🏠

WGCSA Election

By David Brandenburg

The annual WGCSA election took place November 8, 1995 at the Hyatt Regency Hotel in Milwaukee after the first day of the symposium. This format of following the Symposium has been in place for a few years and worked out well with increased attendance and participation.

First, a thank you is needed for past president Mike Semler who has served our association with two years as president and many other years on the board of directors at other positions. His time and contributions have helped make WGCSA what it is today and for years to come. Also leaving the board of directors and deserving thanks for their efforts are Mike Handrich and Joe Kuta.

The nominating committee of Roger Bell, Rod Johnson and Bruce Worzella submitted the following people and they were elected as shown.

<i>President</i>	Mark Kienert - Bulls Eye CC, Wisconsin Rapids
<i>Vice President</i>	Scott Schaller - South Hills CC, Fond Du Lac
<i>Treasurer</i>	Kristopher Pinkerton - Oshkosh CC, Oshkosh
<i>Secretary</i>	David Brandenburg - Camelot CC, Lomira
<i>Director</i>	Andrew Kronwall - Lake Geneva CC, Lake Geneva
<i>Director</i>	Charles Shaw - Nagawaukee GC, Pewaukee
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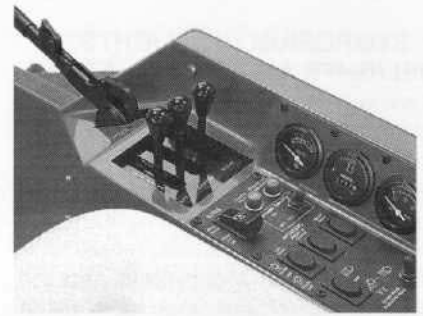
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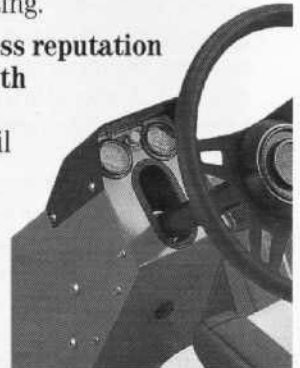


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The Other Aspects

By Pat Norton

I missed a golden opportunity back in October. Our course hosted the usual season ending Mens' Scramble (in which I played my usual mediocre game). During the awards ceremony following golf, I was introduced to the assembled crowd and thanked for our efforts toward shaping up the golf course in 1995. Almost everybody reading these lines has been in the same situation at some point, I'm sure.

So what did I do when thrust into a very minor spotlight for a few moments? Did I respond graciously, say a few words of thanks, throw in a few tidbits of golf course happenings for '96 and ask everybody to patronize our great golf course in the future?

Or did I clam up at the mere men-

tion of my name, get that uncomfortable feeling, wave feebly to the crowd, and all but refuse to say anything?

Unfortunately, I neither said nor did anything close to what was appropriate for the occasion. Later on I'm driving home...trying to kick myself...which is difficult to do at 60 mph. "What an idiot," I say to myself. "Say something...say anything, you dork."

So what's the point? It's that guys like myself are pretty good out on the golf course and pathetically uncomfortable at public relations. Talking to a roomful of boisterous golfers is not that difficult, shouldn't be avoided, and actually should be taken as an opportunity to let people know just who you are and a bit of what happens out there.

Public relations is really very easy to do. It is one of those 'other aspects' of golf course management that we are not used to doing. Consider, though, that each of us has a golf showpiece just outside the door that can profoundly affect the golfer in very positive ways. Talk about positive public relations and a recipe for PR success!!

Also remember that most golfers, especially at public facilities, have no idea who is really responsible for the beauty that surrounds them. A new friend of mine admitted to me rather sheepishly that he's been golfing for twenty years and had no idea that a formally trained and educated person was needed to manage a golf course!!

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And just who is going to educate these golfers if we don't seize the opportunities when they present themselves?

So what are some of the 'other aspects' of being a success in your field...in this case, golf course management?

An obvious strength must be the ability to shape and groom a golf course so that the best possible product is presented to the golfer on a daily, weekly and season long basis. In a recent telephone conversation with a VERY veteran superintendent he pointed out the simple truth that "we are paid to produce a product...which is a great golf course." That is a very easy and accurate way of explaining what we do, and a heck of a lot better than "I take care of a golf course" or some such lame explanation.

And although golf playability is the chief criteria by which we are judged, there are a host of emerging 'other aspects' that are employed by forward thinking superintendents. These 'other aspects' will soon be adopted as standards by which course officials at every level will judge us.

A new and emerging 'other aspect' for many golf course operations is the desire that the course blend more harmoniously with nature. Most of us would probably agree that the days of manicuring the entire course are fading fast. It is generally cost prohibitive and doesn't leave the landscape with any food or shelter for wildlife.

Many new courses down here in Illinois have employed the native, prairie look in their design and construction phases with great results. People here in general are proud of their prairie pioneer heritage and it does show up on their golf courses.

Others, such as Nettle Creek, have the extra acreage to incorporate prairie grasses, wildflowers and perennials as a substitute for lining the roughs with ornamental trees. These relatively simple ideas can dramatically change the look of a 'parkland' type course if space and budget allow. We have used this look to effectively frame in fairways, as a back drop on mounded greens, on tee banks to create the illusion of teeing off out of a chute, and especially as borders for OB areas.

Understanding these non-traditional golf course concepts—plant knowledge, design, establishment, and maintenance of these areas—are new

'other aspects' for many golf course superintendents.

Another new aspect for many of us, especially us older types, is the use of personal computers in our work. For example, I am writing this piece with pen and paper and, then, a typewriter. I am not in the least computer literate or even comfortable with word processing. Yet, I've had access to a computer in the office and at home for about five years now. It's just a lot more comfortable and creative for me to write using this old fashioned method.

The guys who do feel comfortable with PCs have a huge advantage. Our golf professional uses his PC for word processing on a daily basis with very effective results. Lots of good event info, outings pairings, membership and golf shop promotions, employee memos and schedules—a real host of solid information is produced in a fraction of the time necessary to do it with this typewriter.

Another aspect that's certainly not new, but is missing from the careers of many superintendents, is that of professional involvement. I know of two superintendents locally who do not attend any meetings, seminars or national conferences. They are not members of MAGCS, ITF, or any other professional organization. It sort of stuns me that they're totally content to stay confined to their own little corner of the golf world. Take it from a guy who has been fairly involved and is now relatively uninvolved—it's a lot more fun and interesting to be involved in all of the extras that are out there.

Professional involvement also tends to grant credibility and respect to the golf course superintendent in the eyes of his or her employer. Club officials will recognize the extra effort to be involved, respect the person who makes the effort, and generally encourage this participation and service.

One 'other' aspect that's been very important and enjoyable for golf course managers in this era is the opportunity to manage course construction and remodeling projects. Just about all superintendents have been involved in some type of golf construction in their careers. And most of us view our roles as being the person responsible for continually improving the golf course, which at almost any golf course nowadays, includes some remodeling or reconstruction. The golf course that does not modernize and update is either brand new or otherwise simply

not in need of the services of a modern, educated superintendent.

The last of the 'other aspects' to discuss is that of regulatory compliance. Golf course managers must now, with very inadequate knowledge or training, comply with a host of regulatory issues. And since it's no fun at all to tackle this issue, many of us tend to somewhat avoid the issue. By doing so, our golf courses are put in a position of non-compliance on one or more issues. But, is the issue that simple and does the fault lie directly with the superintendent?

No, not usually. Compliance can be a very tough sell to an ignorant or reluctant governing board. It often-times gets pushed down the priority list of planned projects.

It is the responsibility of the superintendent, ultimately, to aggressively pursue compliance until all areas do comply. It's no fun, there's no visible reward, and it's too easy to remember that other, more enjoyable priorities beckon us.

In closing, let's recognize that each of us has our respective strengths and weaknesses. Let's also recognize that there are so many aspects to modern golf course management that it's impossible to be an expert in them all.

The challenge is to enhance the aspects that are among your strengths and embrace the 'other aspects' that are becoming such an important part of our careers. Those who do will rise to the top of the heap. Those who do not embrace the 'other aspects' may be left behind as the last years of this century fly by and the next century of golf course management looms. ♣

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One Eye On The Goal Line

By Lori Ward Bocher

Mark Kienert, the new president of the WGCSA, has me a little confused as we begin this interview. We're talking about his childhood—about how he was born and raised in Waupaca, Wis.

"Not getting the paper route really shaped my life," he recalls. "I had trained with a neighborhood boy, learned the route, went down to the newspaper office to receive the route. But the manager had given it to her nephew. Back when you're 12 years old, there aren't many other jobs you can have besides being a caddy. That's how I got started in the golf business."

So far, so good. But then he goes on, talking about how his goals to become a golf pro never materialized. And how he looked into being a golf course architect but decided against it because there weren't many new courses being built at the time.

"I decided if I couldn't build them, I'd maintain them," Mark says of his decision to become a golf course superintendent.

"Wait a minute, Mark," I'm thinking to myself. "We were talking about your childhood. Why did you jump so far ahead in your life story?"

But Mark's next words answer the question in my mind.

"It was then, at the age of 15, that I started working for superintendent Jeff Bottensek at the Waupaca Country Club," he says.

"All of that career planning happened before you were even 15?" I ask with amazement.

"Unfortunately," Mark answers. "I should have had more fun growing up rather than spending as many hours as I did on the golf course. I remember asking Jeff what I should major in in college to become a superintendent."

Jeff received his degree at Penn State University, but Mark had his heart set on being a Badger. "I had been hooked on Big 10 football," he

explains. "I love the Badgers and I love Big 10 football. Bar none, there's no other conference in the world that compares."

"The first game I saw as a high school student, Wisconsin was completely blown out of the water by UCLA. So it's kind of appropriate that the last time I saw UCLA play, we beat them in the Rose Bowl," he adds.

Not surprisingly, when Mark graduated from high school in 1972 he enrolled at the University of Wisconsin-Madison where he majored in soils science under the guidance of his advisor, Dr. J.R. Love.

"Terry Kurth credits me with saving his life on campus," Mark relates. "He stepped in front of a bus and I pulled him back. Who knows. Maybe that's the reason I was put on earth."

Mark also remembers his talks with a kind, old gentlemen on campus. "It wasn't until a couple of months later when I read a big article about him that I realized I had been talking to

E.B. Fred." (He was a former Dean of the College of Agriculture who lived right on campus).

While a student, Mark worked for Randy Smith at Nakoma Country Club. He also worked there a short time after graduating in 1976 so that his wife, Karen, could finish school. "Working there opened doors for me once my wife graduated and we were able to look for a 'real' job," Mark remembers.

His first 'real' job was at the Milwaukee Country Club as an assistant to Danny Quast. That course is still Mark's favorite nearly 20 years later. "It's just beautiful from an architectural standpoint," Mark relates. "It's a grand old lady, a tremendous golf course that was made way back when. It has withstood the test of time. There are a lot of copycats out there, but you can't touch this one. It's a classic."

Mark wasn't hired back a second year at Milwaukee. "It wasn't one of the highlights of my career," he remembers. "So then I took a job

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down in Evansville, Ind., working in the transition zone. This summer I realized that, even though it was hard here in Wisconsin, they get weather like that every summer in the transition zone. Goose grass, to boot."

The Fendrich Golf Club was the most heavily played public golf course in Indiana, according to Mark. He remembers when the Mayor called him and told him to cut the roughs shorter. "I had made a definition in grass height between the fairways and roughs, but the Mayor wanted the roughs short again. He said it slowed down play too much. They wanted to see the turnstiles moving to generate as many funds as they could on a public course. The public golfer, in his words, didn't care about cosmetics."

Mark stayed at Evansville for a year. "I moved back to Wisconsin to be closer to family and to be back in the state. But it's not the way to build a resume. Let me tell you that right away," he says of his first two jobs lasting only one year each.

His next job was at the Prairie du Chien Country Club, a 9-hole, semi-private course, where he stayed four

years. "They were probably the best years of my life," Mark says. "People treated me well. It was a great job — you just maintain nine holes and then after work go out and play golf. It was before we had kids, so I became very active in the Jaycees. As a result of my hard work and stupidity, I was their Jaycee of the year one of those years."

Even though things were good, Mark moved on in four years — this time to the North Hills Country Club where he became the assistant superintendent under Bob Musbach. "Prairie du Chien couldn't pay two months of the year," Mark explains. "And Bob had a reputation for taking assistants under his wings and propelling them out into bigger and better jobs in the golf course world. So I went there to learn how to maintain fairways and irrigation systems — how to maintain a quality golf course in a large budget setting.

"I also went there for tournament experience," he continues, adding that the Lombardi Golf Classic is played there. "It was very interesting to see how pretty, how manicured, how detailed the course could look."

After four years at North Hills, Mark accepted his present position as superintendent at Bulls Eye Country Club, Wisconsin Rapids, in January of 1986. "I just completed my tenth year here," he says, adding that he made the move so that he could manage his own course again.

Bulls Eye is an 18-hole, private club that also owns a 9-hole public course. Mark manages both.

"We just accomplished a major goal here — bringing this course up to speed with a new irrigation system," Mark explains. "We still had a manual quick-coupler system. There's only a handful left in the state."

In the future, he'd like to build a new maintenance facility. "And ongoing golf course improvement," Mark adds. "Trying to keep up with the Joneses on a limited budget."

His most challenging year at Bulls Eye was the drought year of 1988. "The DNR suspended our irrigation permit for the year," he remembers. "The golf course essentially burned up under the severe heat. We had to regrass the golf course."

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(Continued from page 37)

Even though he made the decision to become a golf course superintendent while a mere lad of 15, Mark is happy with his choice. "Being outdoors, bar none, is my favorite aspect of being a superintendent," he reports.

Mark has been involved with the WGCSA since his student days, and he's been on the board of directors since 1984. He's held every office except treasurer, which is kind of unusual. "Every other organization I've been involved with, I've always been the treasurer," he explains. He's also served on every committee except for education.

Mark has definite goals for his term as president. "I basically set up three mandates," he explains. "I'm going to state them right up front. The first one is of image. The second one is for education. And the third mandate is for research."

For image, Mark would like to see the WGCSA and all superintendents become involved with the Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary Program. "It's a great opportunity for students to ask questions and for us to explain what it is we do on the golf course," Mark says. "There are too many pot shots taken at golf courses, especially when it comes to pesticide use."

In terms of education, Mark is talking computers. "I'd like to see more superintendents on line," he explains. "I'm not necessarily talking about the internet, but about the ability to communicate via computer bulletin board systems."

"I'd like to see the WGCSA members support their staff members through education as well — the assistant superintendents, the mechanics we employ, the other technicians," Mark says. "I'd like to see programs developed to enhance their lives because I feel that if their lives are enhanced, our jobs as superintendents would be made easier."

When it comes to research, Mark would like to find a way to generate more research income for the O.J. Noer Turfgrass Research and Education Facility.

And another challenge he'll face as president is coming to a consensus over the chapter affiliations agreement with the GCSAA.

"Why do you take the time to be so involved in an organization such as this?" I ask Mark.

"It's one of those goals I've always

set for myself," he answers. "I never lost sight of that. It's something that I've always wanted to do, always thought I would do."

"You sound like a very goal-oriented person, from the time you were 12 years old until now," I comment. "Is that true?"

"True," he says, almost as if ashamed. "I'm goal oriented almost to a fault. I set my mind on something and too many times I keep going for it even though it's an impossible goal. I'm a perfectionist. I'm my own worst enemy. When I can't attain something, it bothers me."

Not all of his goals center around his career, however. Mark takes time to spend with his wife, Karen, and their two daughters, Cara (15) and Cassie (12). Karen, also a graduate of the UW, is a bank officer for the Firststar Corporation.

"We've been Badger football season ticket holders since the Morton years. We bought low," he laughs. "The kids enjoy it. They wouldn't miss it. Going to the games as a family — that's my payback, a reward to myself and to my family."

Indy car racing is another one of Mark's passions. "You can't tear me away from the tube," he admits. "People say, 'It's so boring. All you do is watch cars go around in circles. It's as boring as watching paint dry.' You know what I tell them? I watch grass grow for a living. Go figure."

Mark also likes to work with computers. "It's a black hole. You can't keep up with the technology," he points out. "I enjoy the technology in all aspects of our industry and in all walks of life. Sometimes I think about my grandparents and all the changes they saw in their lifetimes, from the horse and buggy days to a man on the moon."

"In my lifetime, I remember buying my first calculator at Madison and paying \$90 for it. Now the same calculator they give away in a box of Wheaties," he laughs. "Maybe some day my kids will look back at my life and say, 'Boy, look at all the technology changes he lived through.'"

As we close the interview, I ask Mark for a favor. "I feel little funny interviewing you because all of THE GRASS ROOTS readers know you much better than I do. Tell me a few things about yourself that they don't know."

"Well," Mark says, "we have our family tree traced back to the point

where people went by one-word names. As a result of that, we have found out that we're related to Lady Godiva. We were related to William Brewster, the first mayor of Plymouth, Massachusetts.

"I also have royal blood in my veins," he continues. "My great, great, great grandmother was either raped or was a concubine of one of the English kings. But we were on the wrong side of the royal bed to lay claim to anything."

"And in the great play, Hamlet," Mark continues, "when he's making his famous 'To be or not to be' soliloquy and holding the skull aloft? For some reason I'm related to the skull."

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How I Spent My Summer Vacation

By Ken Flisek, Golf Course Superintendent
The Club at Nevillewood, Pennsylvania

EDITOR'S NOTE: It only took me one phone call to obtain permission to reprint this article. Its author, Ken Flisek, is the golf course superintendent at The Club at Nevillewood near Pittsburgh and he is the editor of THREE RIVERS GREEN, published by the Greater Pittsburgh Golf Course Superintendents Association. Ken had the kind of summer in western Pennsylvania that most of us had all over Wisconsin. It makes for some fun reading in the dead of winter and adds credence to the old saw, "misery likes company!"

Ken is a Penn State grad and has been a golf course superintendent in Maine and New York State, both before moving back home to Pennsylvania. He also spent some time in northern lower Michigan, near Traverse City. As the crow flies, he wasn't that far from our Door County.

This article appeared in Volume 10, Issue 4, September/October 1995, THREE RIVERS GREEN. Enjoy.

For the past month I have occasionally had these reoccurring dreams, maybe nightmares, about the summer that just ended. Some of these dreams may have really happened, but I am not entirely certain of that. The reason for this indecision is that, for me, this summer was just a blur.

Friends and relatives keep asking me, "what was the summer like?" for those of us who maintain golf courses for a living. My answer is that I was a better golf course superintendent than either a father or a husband, but that doesn't say much. I know my family will agree, and can only hope that the members at Nevillewood feel the same way.

Back to the question, "what was this summer like?" Let me share some of my thoughts about this summer, and let me know if any of this sounds familiar.

THE SPRING

I don't know why it is, but it seems like every year I have more and more projects scheduled. With all of the things we have done over the past few years, how can there be this much more left to do? A cartpath project was started because one of our homeowners wanted a little better view from his patio. That meant lowering the old path four feet, tying in the new elevations to the areas around the left side of the green, and moving 500 feet of the irrigation mainline away from another homeowner's property to prevent any future problems. Fortunately, this was all done at their expense.

We also built a new halfway house and needed to, among other things, install an 1,100 foot sewer line across the course. And since this project was underfunded from the outset, we had to absorb the cost of all the plant material, sod, and irrigation supplies within my operating budget. Of course, on top of that, our crew had to do all the work. And does it surprise you to hear that the deadline for this project was the day before the Men's Invitational in mid-June?

Fortunately, both of these projects turned out very well. I hope we didn't make it look so easy that we will be asked to do even more work with even less time and money next year. Has that ever happened to you?

THE CALM BEFORE THE STORM

Let me backtrack for just one minute. One of the things I do remember from the spring was that I told a few of my key employees that I did not want to mow our bentgrass greens below 9/64ths of an inch at any time this summer. We always have a few problem greens once we start cutting too short, and I was determined not to make the same mistake. This year.

Well, right before our Invitational, the greens were looking perfect, were rolling perfectly smooth and true, and had great color and density. So what do you think I decided to do? Well, I wanted to see if they could look that good and roll just

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