

The Grass Roots

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July/August 1997

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About Our Cover:

As the tradition continues, our July/August cover features the favorite golf hole of the golf course superintendents hosting the 1997 Wisconsin State Amateur and the Wisconsin State Open. Bob Erdahl is the superintendent at North Shore CC in Mequon, site of the State Am. Opening in 1966, NSCC is a Dave Gill design that was updated in 1984 by Dick Nugent. Bob's fave is the seventh hole on the Blue Course.

Scott Spier is the course superintendent at Cedar Creek CC in Onalaska. His favorite hole on the Lohmann designed course is the par 4 fifth. CCCC hosts the 1997 State Open.

A PRAYER FOR THE FOURTH

May freedom be seen, not as the right to do as we please but as the opportunity to please to do what is right. May it ever be understood that our liberty is under God and can be found nowhere else.

May our faith be something that is not merely stamped upon our coins, but expressed in our lives... To the extent that America honors Thee, wilt Thou bless America, and keep her true as Thou has kept her free, and make her good as Thou hast made her rich.

— From "The Prayers of Peter Marshall in the U.S. Senate"

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(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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Beyond the Millennium

By Mark Kienert



We've all been guilty of the day-dreaming from time to time that comes from looking, wishing, or hoping that our tomorrows are better than what we have experienced today. So for a little fun I chose to do a little crystal ball gazing for myself. I think it is important for all of us to look into the future, to anticipate its changes and what effects they will have on our industry and our working environment.

How many of us anticipated legislative mandates that forced us to remove our underground fuel storage tanks or further yet, would have thought that we would have to build separate chemical storage facilities? I bet my guess would be like yours. Not many of you would have foreseen those impending changes, either.

What changes do you see for yourself beyond the year 2000? To get some insight for myself, I philosophically planted that idea on our local internet relay chat group and at GCSAA's membership forum to see what kinds of response it would generate. I have to say that the conversation at the local level was greatly appreciated and a little more on the mark than what I gained from the national forum; but both were useful and thought provoking.

I'm sure the greater response to my question on the local level was due in part to people knowing me. The three responses I gained from the GCSAA forum reported that we would be mowing with lasers in the future. That would be great from the superintendent's and the mechanic's standpoint. I think that the turfgrass blade would be instantly cauterized, minimizing disease infestation entry wounds. Obviously, this machine would have to be designed with many of prisms and mirrors not to mention one whale of a power source. I wonder if it would fracture sand topdressing particles into smaller pieces that would cause problems

with the fines filtering down causing a layering effect?

With any advance, there is always trouble. The purpose of posing my question on GCSAA's membership forum was to see if I could glean any forward thinking from the leadership of our association. They obviously have to plan for the future, (especially if they hope to be re-elected,) but alas, none came forth. I did receive a personal response from Mr. Joel Jackson, editor of one of Florida's "better" chapter newsletters, who poked a little fun at our newsletter editor Monroe Miller by suggesting that he would become editor-in-chief of Buckley's *New Review* by the year 2000. Joel, if you do not know him, is golf course superintendent at one of the new Disney's Golf Courses named Osprey Ridge. He suggested that we will be looking for "pure strains of grass." We would still be at "loggerheads with the environmentalists," who insist that "No Man" is better than man with best practices, but on a positive note will have gained ground with the "common sense" folk.

He sees laser guided mowing units and "Global Positioning Satellite" systems monitoring equipment tracking. (We could use that right now to track any employee that falls asleep while operating the mowers or find out their

favorite ball hawking areas. They are not looking for morels, you know!) Mr. Jackson also predicts that 30-50% of superintendents will be on-line. Thanks for your response, Joel. Can you forward Mr. Buckley's home phone number to Monroe?

Stan Mesker wrote, "The superintendent of the future will be even more of an administrator than today. Already our local membership directories have mechanics and irrigation technicians listed where there used to be none. Our business is becoming more technical. I suspect that we will have to have even more 'experts' on our staffs because no one person will be able to do it all." Thanks, Stan, for your thoughts as well.

I can concur with Stan's thoughts. Who couldn't use a compliance officer to keep our facilities up to date with all the legislative changes mandated by the bureaucrats that we elect into office each time we cast our vote? I have also seen the need for an office assistant to handle telephone calls and place orders with vendors. You have to realize that not all golf course superintendents have access to their club's secretaries. The person I'm speaking of wouldn't necessarily have to be a full time person either. It would be so efficient to be able to

(Continued on page 5)

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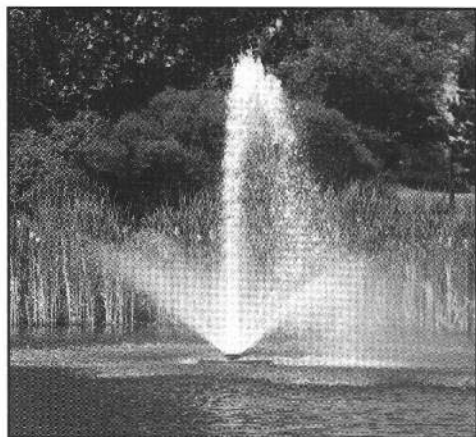
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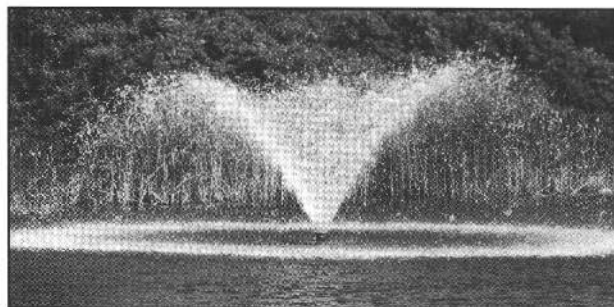
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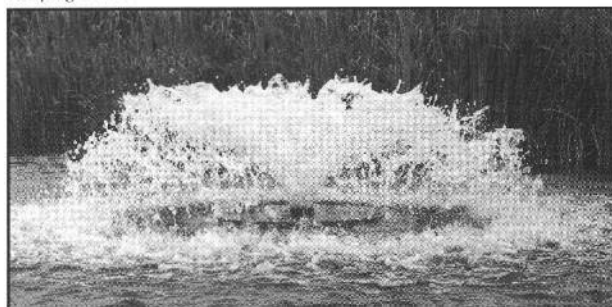
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(Continued from page 3)

have someone just to run errands, to do the small typing for committee and board reports, to make posters to communicate upcoming golf course maintenance practices, or to just keep the files organized. Too many times my files end up piled on the floor, as I have to make desk space ready for the next batch of work, which ends up on the floor.

Our Wisconsin group hit the issues a little bit harder and wrote to express some fears and frustrations as well. Issues like job security and what to do when you are feeling a sense of "job burnout" were discussed. Still another wrote about the saturation of turf students into the profession. Others pondered how much longer the current "golf building boom" would last and wondered if water would become an issue again at some point in the 21st century. Will Wisconsin and Minnesota find themselves having to sell water to the dry desert southwest as more and more senior citizens retire to those warm winter weather points?

We had one member write about the GCSAA's certification program

complaining about the ease of some of the program's exams. He also saw the need for higher membership standards when speaking of joining the GCSAA. One member even suggested that there be an entrance exam just to gain membership into the GCSAA similar to those that physicians take to become certified and licensed by the AMA to practice medicine.

Another member wrote about maintenance standards in our industry and where they were heading. He felt that everyone's expectations of golf course conditions had grown to the point that it is almost to the point that you are made to feel like you are walking into someone's "white carpeted" living room and you wondered whether or not you should remove your shoes. His concern was over the escalating costs required to maintain a golf course for those players "with Augusta of the Mind." Still, two other members implored that golf course superintendents must hone their communication skills or be left in the dust. "People" management skills would also become increasingly important as we begin bidding for

laborers from a limited pool.

So you have heard the predictions of others and I suppose I will have to lend my two cents as well. Labor will become increasingly difficult to find and to retain. One of the big three equipment manufacturers (A) will purchase C and stomp on B in the process. The building boom will continue with still a number of new golf facilities coming on-line. For those of you wishing to own your own golf course, wait, there will be many bargains to be found out there caused by some of this speculation.

The cost of golf will continue to rise with the high budget venues still raking in tremendous profits for the product they produce. As always the cost of fossil fuels and weather will have larger part in the cost of maintaining golf courses. The individual golf cart will be a hit in the market place and their popularity will overtake the present two person carts. These will cause further maintenance headaches if we don't watch them. And unfortunately, even with 401K programs, people in this industry will largely find themselves unprepared for the cost of retirements burdens. ♣



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A Cold, Dry and Windy Spring in Wisconsin

By Monroe S. Miller

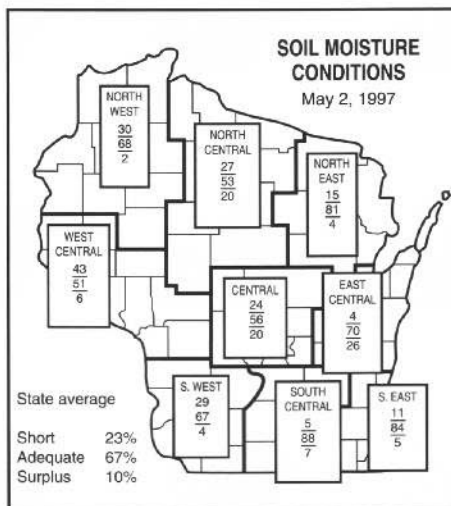
An early Memorial Day weekend seemed to exaggerate what everyone associated with our club was feeling - COLD! The early holiday had been preceded by an early opening. In Madison, Wisconsin the lilacs always have blossomed and passed by Memorial day, along with the flowering crabapple trees. Tulips and other spring bulbs are long gone and the deciduous trees are leafed out at their fullest.

Not in 1997. Tulips were still in full bloom, *Poa annua* hadn't seriously started seeding, no fungicides had been sprayed and honey locust trees were just pushing leaves from their buds. Winter injury, where it did occur, was still evident. In our town, the temperature dropped to 27 degrees F.—a record—on May 17th. And two days earlier there was scattered snow mixed with rain. An unusually strong jet stream spent the spring pulling cold Canadian air into our fair (and normally warmer) state.

There would have been more griping from my corner except for the fact it was dry, which set this year apart from last year when it was cold and wet. This year we were able to do a lot of work in the spring unencumbered by either mud or golf players. It came close to being a fair trade.

March, April and May were very windy months. Those three months had 34 days with wind gusts of at least 25 mph. Adding to the evidence is the statistic that only two days saw wind gusts of LESS than 15 mph. It was so windy that our normally busy five lakes in the Madison area were pretty lonely. And those strong winds made golf almost impossible on some days.

Wisconsin is considered a four season state, but many years, including this one, we leap from a long winter into summer. There were only four—70 degree F. days in our town in May; temperatures were below normal 25 days of the 31 in May. My hunch is that we'll once again begin hearing

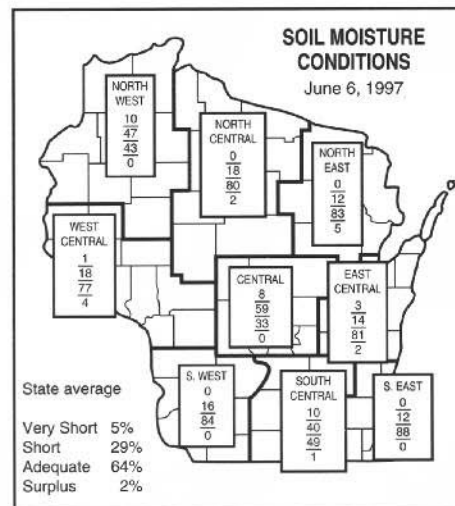


about El Nino, the cause of a lot of our weird weather.

Wisconsin Agricultural Statistics Service data are included here to confirm what you already know from your own experiences this spring.

It finally rained significantly in town on May 29th. It had been dry and the soil soaked up every drop.

As happens very often, you could almost "smell" the rain coming. Many



times I've been told that this pleasant, fresh odor was ozone. The theory was that ozone molecules were carried to the earth with the drops of rain and gave the air the distinctive aroma most people who work outdoors know about.

I checked the theory out and even though it sounds good and makes sense, it isn't factual. One simple piece of evidence is that most of the earth's ozone is above any rain clouds. Also, ozone is odorless unless



it is burned! There goes a perfectly believable theory down the drain.

In fact, what we smell as rain approaches us are oils that have been given off by plants and absorbed in the soil where they blend with the "earthy" aroma of the soil. These oils (and their smells) are released into the air when the relative humidity hits 80%. And often times when the R.H. is that high, it rains, making our connection between smells and rains an easy one.

The walking tours at SENTRY-WORLD were terrific. It has been a while since I have visited that beautiful facility in central Wisconsin, making the visit even more fun. The day was beautiful and warm, Gray Tanko and the SENTRY staff were wonderful to us, and there was a lot to learn. To all of them, a heartfelt thanks.

The only downside was the somewhat low attendance. The first Monday in June is an aerification day on many golf courses in Wisconsin and many of the WGCSA members

were committed and couldn't attend. It was their loss.

I want to extend my compliments to the arrangements committee for including an event like this one for the second consecutive year. It adds greatly to the overall program offered to our members, moving a step closer to "something for everybody."

Dr. Frank Rossi was in town on Sunday, May 18. He flew into Green Bay to stand up in Scott Sann's wedding on the 17th, drove to Madison to meet with Emily Buelow and discuss her M.S. thesis the next day and stopped by our house before he left late afternoon for business in Chicago on Monday.

He's still a busy man—tons of speaking engagements all over the country in the past year, travel associated with the USGA research committee, and turf extension duties in New York State. Covering the bases in New York alone is a big job because it is a big, big state. Look at a map sometime to see how far it is from Buffalo to the tip of Long Island.

Then there is the matter of getting a program of his own started at a new institution. And students, both undergrads and grads. And writing assignments.

In the midst of all his activity is family and farm and those responsibilities, which are most important to him.

It is a good thing he is a high energy guy.

Among many golf course superintendents least favorite things to do is dealing with the press. One is never sure how an article will be written, and we tend to fear the worst.

No wonder. Often times in the past that is what happened to us. To a lesser degree, it happened to me this spring. After spending time with a reporter from one of the city newspapers, I was quoted (accurately, at least) only once and the serious matters I discussed with the reporter were not even mentioned. He had his article written long before he sat and talked with me on my golf course on a spring afternoon.

I believe we are all better prepared to deal with the changing times and inquiries made of us get answered

(Continued on page 9)



Gary Tanko explains his design to Dave Smith and Sheri Bay.



The planting crews were hard at work on the flower hole, No. 16 at SENTRYWORLD.



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(Continued from page 7)

straight away. But the slanted stories, misquotes, out of context quotes, articles meant to convict golf course (or at least indict them) still happen. But we now see stories like the one that appeared in the Saturday, April 12, 1997 *Sheboygan Free Press*.

A reporter spent a fair amount of time talking with Michael Lee and other staff at Blackwolf Run. The result was a fair, balanced, close-to-the-truth article I was proud to read. Rod Johnson was also interviewed and his experience came through in the words of the reporter.

So, a good story about golf courses, wildlife, pesticide issues and fertilizer use can happen—if we are prepared for it. And if the reporter is unbiased. Congrats to Mick.

A sad note to report: Tom Mascaro passed away on May 6, 1997 at Pompano Beach, Florida. Tom was 81.

Few ever have or ever will match this man's creative talent in the golf course industry. He invented the aerifier for cultivating turfgrass and the vertical mower for thatch removal. Both were revolutionary machines.

For his contributions, Tom was given the USGA Green Section

Award and the GCSAA Distinguished Service Award, among hundreds of others.

It was probably ten years ago that I had the privilege of a visit from Tom Mascaro at our golf course. He was working with Helmut Adam of Ransomes, Inc. in Johnson Creek on the vertidrain. He was intrigued by my collection of toy tractors, and a month after his visit I received an old toy tractor from him in the mail. I still have it.

Tom was quite a guy and he will be missed by thousands in our business.

Looking to 'soup up' your 68" National mower or LF-100 or John Deere LGT? If you are you need to order a video produced by a Clinton, Wisconsin guy. Mark Madson's video is titled, "How To Build a Pro Street Lawn Mower." It costs \$29.95 and runs two hours in length. He's sold over 500 so far and the video was chosen on one of the 20 best of 1996 by *Outdoor Power Equipment* magazine.

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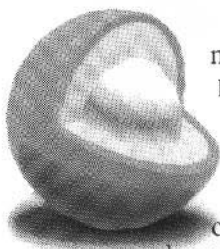
There's only one problem, however. When completed, it won't cut grass!

From the "Is This A Great Country Or What?" department: Let's see; you cannot fly a B-52 bomber if you commit adultery. You cannot serve as Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff if you commit adultery. But you can be president!

I don't care much about what the summer solstice says about summer beginning or end. In Wisconsin, summer is June, July and August. Evidence was with us on May 31st—our first warm 80 degree F. day. Weather stats actually show the three warmest months begin on about June 7, so we were pretty close in 1997. The longest day will have passed when this issue hits the newsstand and the shorter days with longer nights are here. The march to winter has begun!

Regardless, these summer days for golf course superintendents are hard work days and seem to stretch out forever and forever. My wish is they will be rewarding and satisfying, filled with many successes. Adiós until next time. ♣

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MOVING AHEAD

By Dr. John C. Stier,
Department of Horticulture
University of Wisconsin-Madison

As the new turf faculty member at University of Wisconsin, Monroe Miller quickly tapped me for an article for the upcoming issue of *The Grass Roots*. Instead of giving a hard, fact-based research report for my first article (plenty of time for those in the future!), I thought I would write an article about some of the new turf developments I've come across in the last week.

I expect that Lori Bocher will be writing a personality profile for this or an upcoming issue so my article won't focus on myself. One of the first things I did to prepare for writing the article was to review a recent edition of *The Grass Roots*. Of course I was familiar with the publication, occasionally reading science-based articles from it while I was at Michigan State University. When I actually read through the entire May/June edition, though, the one word that came to mind to describe the publication was "eclectic"—it contained a wide variety of topics and writing styles. Quite refreshing, it seemed something was there for everyone. Being new to Wisconsin, I especially enjoyed the articles discussing the top golf courses in the state and movements of the superintendents from one course to another.

I expect things will be quite interesting for me in Wisconsin. Already this week I have had two noteworthy things happen. The first was a "weed" sample I was asked to identify, sent from a county extension agent with no description of where it came from or any other remarks (these are always helpful, you know!). The sample was obviously a grass species, apparently dead (my first thought, of course, was it's always hard to identify something when it's dead compared to when it's alive!). It turned out it was the best possible sample he could have sent to me as it was zoysiagrass! After I looked at it, I did manage to contact him and find out it was from a home

lawn with a southern exposure which was somewhat protected from the elements. I also spoke with the folks at the Turfgrass Disease and Diagnostic Clinic to ask if they had ever seen a sample of zoysiagrass at the clinic, but they hadn't. Did I mention I like new and unique things?

The other noteworthy event was my trip to Lambeau Field to see The Renovation. The day was cold (few days haven't been across the Midwest this month!) and rainy but, as the Norwegians say, "There is no such thing as bad weather, only bad clothing." Fortunately I was able to make a day of it since I was well bundled. As you know if you read Wayne Horman's article in the last issue, the former turf is being replaced with a product called SportGrass. When I arrived, they had finished installing the drainage, 4" lines at 10-ft. centers, and were finishing adding a 4" gravel layer over the tiles. Apparently the existing soil was so compacted the contractor had to spend \$1500 to fix his trencher after digging the trenches! An eight-row irrigation system, running widthwise across the field, had already been installed. This marks the first time Lambeau field will have automatic irrigation. I did get to watch the plastic piping (1" diameter) being installed for the heating system. This was installed by three groups of two people each, and they were moving fast (they had to in order to keep warm!). A water-glycol mix will be heated and pumped through the piping with the goal of maintaining a root zone temperature of 65°F and a surface temperature of 45°F. Several manifolds alongside the field will be used to supply each section with the water-glycol mix. Each pipe, and there were hundreds, had to be tied down at frequent intervals to re-rods which were installed in the soil beneath the gravel. The root zone mix, a 90:10 sand:peat mixture

according to the company that mixed it, will be placed on it for a depth of 10 inches. I saw the mix in the parking lot as I was leaving and took a small sample home to look at (don't tell anyone!). It is expected the SportGrass will be placed on the field sometime between June 1-June 15.


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