

# The Grass Roots

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## About Our Cover:

Artist J.L. Eberhardt has captured, as only she could, the beauty and dignity of Romey Orth's Wisconsin Golf Course Museum. The museum is a dream destiny of Wisconsin's golf course superintendents.

*"Summer is over but the sun is warm again, and there are days throughout the land of gold and russett.*

— Thomas Wolfe

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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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# A POTPOURRI

*"A potpourri of random thoughts from a random man."*

By Mark Kienert



A very warm welcome to Dr. John Stier and his family from our family of golf course superintendents here in the Badger State. If you attend any Badger vs. MSU football games in the future, John will be the one looking like the "Yule tide" kid all decked out in red and green I'm sure. The WGCSA is looking forward to years and years of applied research data that you can generate, complementing the staff members already in place.

Red and green are the colors that remind me of one of my favorite television shows, "The Red Green Show" found on PBS. Who hasn't used a roll of duct tape to quickly make a repair to those ever so comfortable mower seats? One of my favorite episodes was when Red was going into the compost business and was going down to the golf course at night to remove the top 12 inches of topsoil from a par 5 fairway to mix with all the refuse from the lodge. Just the thought of Red placing a plow blade on the front the Possum Lodge van for the purpose of rolling back the sod almost caused me to split a gut. He informed viewers that golfers would never miss the soil because the fairway would be only a foot lower! Great humor! Check it out if you haven't seen the show yet.

Humor on the golf course has always played an important role in keeping the crew's minds sharp and the day from becoming a tedious bore. I can recall the times when we had one person who ran from tree to tree back in the days when we still used rotary trim mowers and hand clippers to groom the trees around the golf course. "Why?", you might ask. To get the job done in one day, so that he wouldn't have to mow for more than two days in a row. (By the way, it worked.)

My former mentor, Mr. Danny Quast, would always regale us with the stories of LD 'borrowing' bikes to

get to work. "Did he ever return the bikes?", you might ask. "Well, no," as the story goes. LD just tossed the bikes down a steep ravine adjacent to the course making it to work on time each day. It seems when the authorities finally found out about all the theft, there were over twenty some bikes in the ravine. The guy had to get to work on time. Seems LD had a slight drinking problem and had lost his license.

One of my favorite episodes came earlier this spring when one of our typical good humor guys spray painted Mr. Smiley face on the others' coveralls in a rather noticeable location while planting flowers up around the clubhouse. The perpetrator did not own up to the prank until three days later. This employee was the 'butt' of one of the funniest practical jokes I have witnessed in some time.

Did anyone notice or did anyone care about GCSAA's recent deal with the footwear company Etonic? Earlier this year, I was in the market for a new pair of golf shoes and I was seriously considering the new line of spikeless shoes offered by the Etonic Company for my own personal evaluation. I've always felt that golf course superintendents should be the ones to evaluate these shoes for their effects on the turf, most notably our putting greens. But because we don't sell them, we don't get them. These would be our version of the 'teaching shoe.' I have to tell you that I changed my mind rather quickly about the entire Etonic line when I bailed out our pro shop staff by changing countless metal spikes to those of the non-metal variety when they were very short staffed in May. (Who wasn't?)

*(Continued on page 4)*



(Continued from page 3)

The biggest problem, as I see it, is that the shank size used by Etonic is just too small and is recessed to the point that the plastic spike does not get a good grip in the threaded socket. I cannot tell you how many of the beige spikes I have found on the golf course, almost all coming from this brand of shoe. Nike also offers a small shank spike size which is a pure nightmare to exchange. My guess is that the shoe company is telling the spike manufacturer that your shanks are too short for our shoes and the spike company is telling the shoe company that your shank holes are too small for our shanks. If I were judging this finger pointing, I would take sides with the spike manufacturers. This is a problem that gives tremendous ammo to the nay-sayers of the spikeless revolution.

PS: For those of you still waiting to make the conversion, your job will be made easier as the Wisconsin State Golf Association banned the use of metal for tournament play in 1997. I cannot tell you how many members of Bull's Eye have come up to me and remarked at the tremendous difference in green puttability this year. I can also tell you that during my watering tour on Sunday nights of the fact that the greens appear "morning mower fresh!" Too many times in the recent past, I would head home almost sick to my stomach by the appearance of a spiked mess around cups after a hard day of weekend play. What a difference. My thanks to all of you who offered leadership and

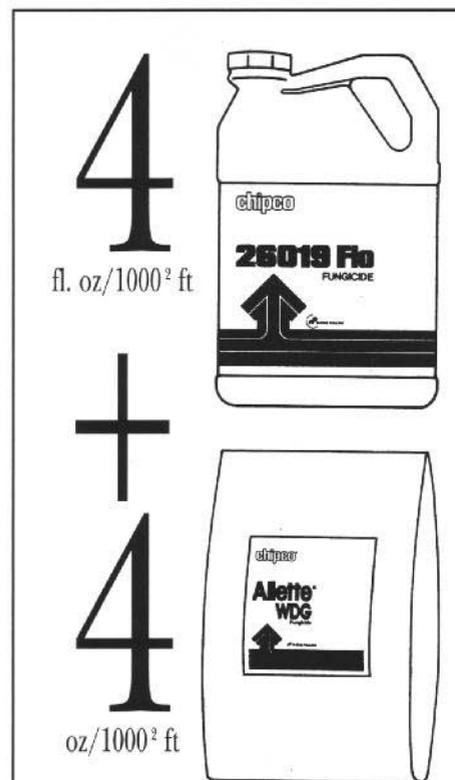
fought the battles first in your club. It has made all of our jobs easier.

Speaking of spikeless, GCSAA finally made a stand on a political issue by endorsing the spikeless movement. This is perhaps the first baby steps of what I hope will become a more vocal effort by Lawrence on all of our behaves. This in my mind was an all too easy one and somewhat after the fact, but much appreciated none the less. How about sending a message to tire manufactures to make a "soft-tire" for all of those horseless chariots that our members are so fond of? I will be adding another 1000 feet of ugly gravel cart paths to Bull's Eye just to counter the wear. Wish I could afford asphalt.

Wouldn't it be great if all equipment manufactures were required by law to send you service bulletins and updates when the manufacturer made changes to parts to beef them up in response to field failures? We purchased brand new mowers whose grass shields vibrated apart. The new part was gratefully sent to us at no charge as it was covered under dealer and manufacturers' warranties, but the part was constructed differently from the original. This reminds me of the "old" Volkswagen bug commercials that always told you that there were 97 improvements made to the car, yet it always looked the same on the outside. To think that I always wanted a '67 Volkswagen convertible for my run-around car. Can't wait until the new 'bug' arrives.

Have you ever thought of what your perfect or "ideal" golf course would be? Aside from the obvious agronomic aspects for good golf course conditions, I thought it would be fun to possibly list some not so obvious choices for your consideration. On my "ideal" golf course, trees would not die. If I wanted a treeless golf course, I would have taken a job on one of those prairie golf courses. The way I hit the ball today, my game would be best played on a golf course wide enough for a 747 to land. There isn't one day that goes by that I'm not noticing a dead tree or one in a serious state of decline due to some environmental stress.

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The standing joke around Bull's Eye Country Club is that my ideal golf course would have an optimum play level of zero. I can tell you from experience that during the drought reconstruction of 1988 when the course was closed to play, there wasn't one ball mark blemish on my greens. What a beautiful sight, one that many of us will only see in our dreams.

Members would be more understanding and would actually listen to you without their self-centered logic entering the picture at some point in time. I have always wanted Monroe to write a column on 'real members,' but he says that it would be too easy, like "shooting fish in a barrel." Boy, could we have fun comparing notes on some of our most unusual demands or complaints if we did. My all-time favorite demand comes from the public golf course I maintain. I get to work only to find a message on the answering machine stating that there were small biting bugs everywhere covering the fifth fairway and that I should do something about

them. I travel over to that fairway only to find nothing, as you might suspect. This reminds me of the member who says that there is a bees nest out on number 16 and not tell you precise location on the nest portal. Where do you start looking?

I have been a disease scout for the TDDL for a little more than three months now. I can tell you that it has been a real educational experience for me. One item that I recognized for years, but didn't really appreciate, is the swing from a *Poa annua* stand to that of bentgrass. I chose to monitor soil temperatures using an obvious *Poa* patch located in the center of my nursery green. By the middle of July, I began to notice that this patch was dissolving in a sea of bentgrass and by the first of August, the *Poa* had virtually disappeared. The patch had disappeared. The only thing still present to help me locate the exact spot is the small plantain lily weed inches to the west.

Now if we could only get through winter without the typical snowmold

or ice damage that can cause so much winterkill. That would make it an easy year to grow grass.

A lot of our winter kill can be attributed to the phenomenon of "global warming." Some disagree that this event is even taking place. I have to wonder though, as I have a candle spurt of growth on what used to be a four-foot white pine that is almost 36" taller. Talk about making up for lost growth after our unusually cool dry spring. This also supports a report that corn in the state is 19 inches taller than average for this time of year. Corn in this part of Wisconsin was at or slightly below average vs. the traditional "knee high by the fourth of July."

Here's to a great fall. Let's hope the weather is conducive to record aerification, cleanup and recovery times. Then we can look forward to our 'off season' of educational opportunities, 40-hour work weeks and football weekends. Remember, only 886 days until the year 2000. 🍂

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# JULY MEETING AT EVANSVILLE GC

The July WGCSA meeting was hosted by Jon Hegge, superintendent at the Evansville Golf Club. Seventy-six superintendents and affiliates were in attendance to enjoy the day on this excellent golf course. The hard work of Jon and his staff was evident. We were again blessed with a sunny and warm day. A strong breeze out of the west kept

the temperature tolerable and the scores higher than normal. The event played was a four-person one best ball with no handicaps. Winners of the event were the foresome of Dennis Dary, James Krutilla, Cubby O'Brian, and Mike Yontz shooting a 69. Two groups shot a 74 for second place. A scorecard playoff determined the winning foresome of Steve

VanAcker, Paul Schaefer, Tom Prichard, and Larry Lennert. Flag events for the day were long drive #6 won by Roman Kuzyk, long putt #9 won by Dave Lueck, closest to the pin #13 won by Paul Schaefer, and long putt on #15 won by David Smith. Following golf the staff of Evansville GC presented a terrific Hors d' oeuvre table for all to enjoy. 🌿



A beautiful Wisconsin July day, perfect for a WGCSA meeting at Evansville CC.



Dan De Vault and Jeff Parks relax in a cart and watch Jim Krieger swing.

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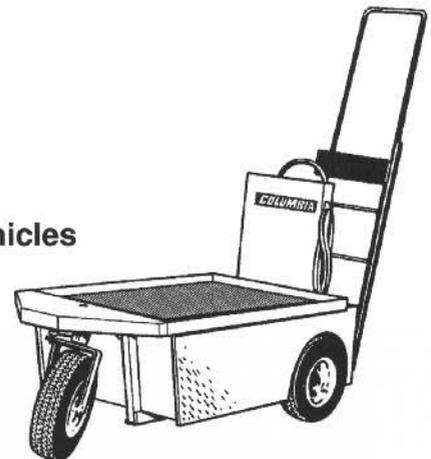


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## THE SHAW BOYS: *Golf's Fraternal Foursome*

By Lori Ward Bocher

Where there's one there's two...or three...or four. We're talking about "The Shaw Boys," of course—the only golf foursome at WGCSA meetings that consists entirely of brothers.

"We're easy to list as a foursome," Pat points out.

"And Jim wins all the prizes," Charlie adds.

The Shaw Boys are, in order of birth: Dan, assistant superintendent at Chenequa Country Club, Hartland; Jim, superintendent at Chenequa; Charlie, superintendent at Naga-Waukee Golf Club, Pewaukee; and Pat, superintendent at The Bog, Saukville.

If you're looking for a common thread, a reason why four brothers would end up in the same profession, it's not because they followed in their father's footsteps—he delivered milk. It's not their educational backgrounds—none have a turf degree. No, it's their family work ethic—at first their father's, and then their own.

I met with The Shaw Boys early in August. We sat around the table in Jim and Dan's office at Chenequa. The comradery was obvious. So was the sense of gratitude to an industry that has provided their livelihoods and given them a chance to be together as brothers.

The Shaw Boys grew up in Oconomowoc where their father, Bill, delivered milk for Hawthorne Melody and their mother, Marge, worked for Independence Bank. Both parents are retired now.

"It all started in 1963 when Dad took Dan and me to Oconomowoc Golf Club to sign up as caddies," Jim explains.

"When you're 12 years old, you can get two jobs—as a caddie or on a paper route," Charlie adds. "And our dad made it clear that we would get a job."

"That was our first introduction to golf," Dan recalls. "Before that, we didn't have a clue as to what happened on a golf course."



The Shaw brothers—Pat, Jim, Charlie and Dan.

Dan and Jim were good workers, and they started building the family reputation at the golf course. After only three weeks as a caddie, Dan was offered a job in the club house. And as Charlie and Pat grew older, the club was eager to hire more Shaw Boys.

"Charlie and I benefited from Dan and Jim having laid the ground work with their good work ethic," Pat admits. "The club was willing to hire us as fore caddies before we were even 12 years old."

"We've done every job there is to do on a golf course," Jim points out. Quickly, the others start listing the jobs they held on the course and in the club house. Even their two sisters, Jane and Kathy, worked at Oconomowoc Golf Club as waitresses. For 12 years in a row, Jim, Charlie, or Pat held the night water-man job there.

All four brothers worked for Harvey Miller, who is still the superintendent at the private Oconomowoc Golf Club. "He was our mentor, our teacher," Jim points out. "We learned turf management from him, not at school." They all enjoyed their summers on the course. But, at the time,

they never dreamed that eventually they'd all be working as golf course superintendents. They just slowly found their way back to the links.

Dan, the oldest, was the last to join the golf course maintenance profession. After graduating from Oconomowoc High School in 1969, he spent a semester at a technical school and another semester at Milton College. Then he took a job at the Carnation plant in Oconomowoc where he worked in maintenance for 18-1/2 years.

In 1991 he started working for Jim at Chenequa, and he was promoted to assistant superintendent in 1993. His strong maintenance background and past golf experience made him a natural for this new career.

Jim, who graduated from high school in 1970, has the longest tenure as a golf course superintendent. He continued to work for Harvey Miller while attending the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee where, in 1974, he received a degree in biological aspects of conservation. "Note that it took four years to get through college," Jim says as he pats his brother Charlie on the shoulder. "You'll see what I'm talking about in a minute."

Upon graduation from UW-M, Jim was hired at Chenequa as the assistant superintendent knowing that the superintendent was retiring in six months and Jim was expected to take his place. He's been the superintendent at Chenequa since August 1975.

So, how about it, Charlie? What did that pat on the back mean? Charlie graduated from high school in 1972 and then attended the University of Wisconsin-Madison as an Evans Scholar. "I studied a little of everything. I think my major changed every semester," Charlie explains. "I have a lot of credits in nothing." After 3-1/2 years, he left school and returned to the golf course of his past.

Charlie was the assistant superintendent at Oconomowoc Golf Club from 1975 to 1979. For the next nine years he was superintendent at Wanaki Golf Club, a public course owned by Waukesha County. And in 1989 he was transferred to Naga-Waukee Golf Club, which also is owned by Waukesha County. He's currently a WGCSA director.

Pat graduated from high school in 1978 and from Carroll College in 1982 with a degree in math and physics. He started a masters program at UW-M, but soon felt a strong desire to be out-of-doors. So he worked for Jim at Chenequa from 1983 to 1985. Then he was hired as superintendent at Muskego Lakes Country Club from 1985 to 1987. From 1988 to 1993 he was superintendent at Tuckaway Country Club. And since 1994 he's been at The Bog, a brand new course.

Why the latest move, away from Tuckaway? "The opportunity to be involved in the building of a golf course," Pat answers. "The opportunity for expanded responsibilities, for both the course and the club house."

"Sounds to me like he wanted more money," Jim chimes in.

All four brothers seem very happy with the golf course profession. "We don't want to be in an office. We want to work outside," Jim says for all of them. "We don't do the same boring job day in and day out. Something different happens every day—good or bad."

"Mostly bad," his brothers quickly interject.

"And we get to work with our hands," Pat adds.

What are the advantages to work-

ing in the same profession, I wonder? The brothers quickly answer.

"We all get the same time off," Jim says. "We share the same knowledge and the same problems."

"There's a certain compassion," Pat believes. "We understand each other's dilemmas and problems."

"There's a lot of sharing of information, especially about equipment," Charlie says. "When we go to the national trade show, we walk the floor together."

"We share shortcuts to maintenance, too," Dad adds.

The disadvantages? There's a moment of silence, rare with this talkative group.

"I honestly can't think of one," Pat states. More silence as they ponder this question.

"Every time we do get together as a family, the discussion is job related," Charlie finally says. "We just can't leave it. I think it drives our spouses crazy more than us."

"We rarely get together as a family because we're all so busy. It's so hectic," Pat chimes in.

All four brothers get together most frequently at the monthly WGCSA meetings where they play golf as a foursome. "That way we don't have to follow the rules of golf etiquette. We can just be ourselves," Charlie admits. "When we do play as a foursome, we don't want the other members to think we're doing it to be cliquish. We do it because it's a chance for us to be together."

"Before I worked at the golf course, I rarely saw my brothers because I worked the night shift," Dan adds. "With me being the last one to get into golf, now all four of us can get together and see each other."

"We rarely show up alone at the WGCSA meetings," Jim says. "And

we all play cards. The other members want to get in on our card games."

When The Shaw Boys were growing up, Oconomowoc was considered a separate town west of Milwaukee. Now it seems close to being swallowed up by Milwaukee's urban sprawl—just like Hartland, Pewaukee, Saukville, and many other small towns in Waukesha, Washington, and Ozaukee Counties. "Our new golf course is actually part of that urban sprawl," Pat says of The Bog. But the growing population means more play at the old courses, too.

"There's not only increased play, but increased expectations," Pat points out.

"TV golf had a lot to do with the golfer's expectations," Dan adds.

"We used to mow greens at 9 of an inch. Now 1/8 of an inch is too slow," Charlie says.

"We've gone from crews of four or five up to crews of 16 to 30 now," Jim continues. "But the biggest change I've seen is that there are no metal spikes on many private courses and some public courses."

Shortly before visiting with The Shaw Boys, I had read my daughter a book, "We're Different, We're The Same." An appropriate question for four brothers in the same profession seemed to be, how are you different and the same?

"We all take care of golf courses, but we're all different in the way we run each facility," Pat answers. "That's somewhat due to the differences in the golf courses, but it's also due to our different personalities."

Chenequa Country Club is a private course with 16,000 to 17,000 rounds of 18-hole golf in a season. The Bog is a daily fee course with about 25,000 rounds a season. And

*(Continued on page 11)*

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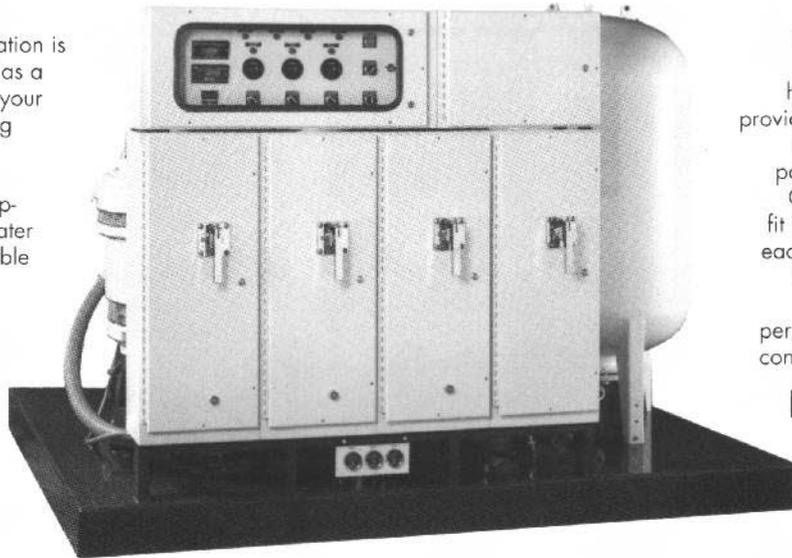
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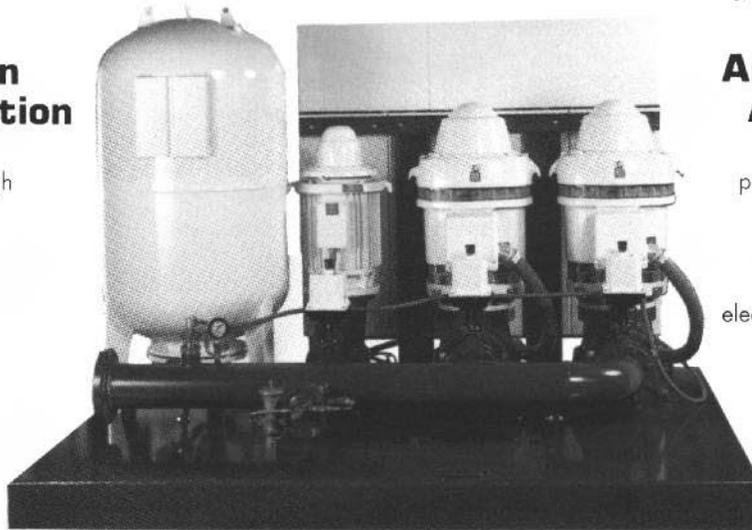
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