

situation or a professional relationship can produce enjoyable and rewarding results. While providing excellent solutions to various stressful situations, Dr. Schwab's quirky humor became more evident when class participants were awarded small trinkets such as mini plastic shovels, finger puppets and "froggies." Her antics proved that even the goofiest award could bring a smile and a positive reaction to the "hard core professional golf course superintendent."

Dealing with Jerks involves a seven-step plan. 1.) **Pre-empt 'em** by predicting problems before any arise. Selling the bad news with the good. Always make yourself accessible. Make people aware of any deal they receive. Thank people for seeking you out. Follow through with your end of any agreement. Develop a good evaluation system and use it. Keep yourself positive. 2.) **Assess the situation** by determining both views of a problem and what the options are. 3.) **Stop wishing the difficult person was different.** 4.) **Get some psychological distance between yourself and the difficult person.** 5.) **Formulate a coping strategy.** Describe what behavior you'd like changed and determine what needs to be said or done. 6.) **Implement your strategy.** Rehearse, anticipate their response, and keep working at it. Becoming fed up with jerks is a very human reaction - most people respond that way, which is why their behavior "works" at least in the short run. Deal with the problem in a friendly manner, but keep at it. 7.) **Monitor it.** In the end, do not be afraid to try a different approach if your first attempt doesn't produce the desired results.

The WGCSA Business meeting was called to order following lunch. President Brandenburg presented the meeting agenda and all areas were addressed. The meeting began with Dr. Geunhwa Jung commenting on his research plans for his snow

mold studies. Dr. Jung enthusiastically explained that Wisconsin appears to have many different strains of the turf disease. He also shared that research must continue to better understand these diseases.

Dr. John Stier discussed the completion of the three-year bentgrass study and explained the newly proposed research program for velvet bentgrass. This program will investigate the potential future of velvet bentgrass as a primary golf course turf. Dr. Stier also provided an information update concerning the status of NR 151. Kevin Hensler was introduced as the new UW-Madison staff member hired to lead the development of an Integrated Turf Management program to assist golf course superintendents and other turf managers affected by the DNR's nonpoint pollution control Rule NR151. Kevin will be developing an ITM manual helping turf managers develop Best Management Practices (BMPs) for proper justification of turf inputs such as fertilizer, chemicals, etc. Although the regulations of NR 151 may be several years away, preparations are beginning.

All committee chairmen presented their reports and the expectations for the upcoming season. The 2002 budget for the WGCSA was presented, explained and approved. The new budget explained the rising costs of all association expenses. In order to continue funding turfgrass research while operating effectively and efficiently, a membership dues increase was proposed and passed. The dues increase will be the first in more than 10 years. The membership dues will increase to \$140.00. Class "E" membership will increase to \$240.00. The membership annual dues increase will begin 2003.

Following the Business Meeting the WGCSA Masters Drawing produced the following selections: James Hasz, Brent Amann, Steve Bailey, Marc Schwaarting, John Gallus, and John Hegge. First alternate is Mark Kienert. Second alter-

nate is Chad Ball. Enjoy the trip to Augusta National gentlemen!

Congratulations to Monroe Miller for his continued success with *the Grass Roots* publication. Monroe was recognized for his efforts as the editor. *The Grass Roots* has been awarded **Best Publication** by a volunteer editor for the 18th consecutive year. The Wisconsin Golf Course Superintendent Association is privileged to have members, like Monroe Miller, who are willing to donate the time, effort and passion for the benefit of the Association.

Congratulations also to Dr. John Stier. Dr. Stier was awarded the Pound Extension Award from the University of Wisconsin-Madison. The Pound Extension Award is given annually to an outstanding early career Extension faculty member in the College of Agricultural and Life Sciences at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. The award is in honor of Glenn Pound, a former faculty and Dean/Director of the College of Agricultural and Life Sciences.

The monthly meeting notices will soon be arriving. Please consider participating in these events and getting involved with the association. Have a great season. ♣

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The Five Year Plan

By **Pat Norton**, Golf Course Superintendent, Nettle Creek Country Club

One of our projects this past winter was to develop a five year plan for this golf course. Hey!!! What a wonderful idea!!! A written plan to help us achieve our goals. A veritable blueprint for short term operations and long term strategies!! On the surface...a really good idea! A five year plan...oh great!!

Now, don't get me wrong...written reports are a great way to exercise the mind and help organize lots of interrelated thoughts. These reports usually fall into the category of 'necessary evil'...sort of like toilet paper...with the paper being critically necessary to do the job...but with the distinct possibility that this paper could be used for a better purpose?? So, suffice it to say that I had some doubts as I headed down the road of writing a five year plan for this place.

Hmmm...would this be...could this be... the same type of five year plan that gets forgotten after six months? Or maybe...the kind of 'sixty month plan' that

is never taken seriously...never funded properly...and too often changed at a whim?

When it was first suggested, it must be admitted that there was a bit of 'eye rolling' going on...as in...the kind that used to happen when you were getting lectured by your seventh grade English teacher for being artistically creative with your workbook.

When these sorts of things are first suggested...everybody and their brother jumps on the bandwagon...with the first question pertaining as to why don't we have this sort of thing already?? To which I mentally reply...to our always correct consultant... "*you are so right...how have we ever survived??*"

The second question usually revolves around the idea that we need this document...immediately!!!...and how many hours will be needed to research this and get back to our illustrious committee with a full-blown



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report?? To which I mentally reply... *"later today, of course...no problem...what a crock...!"*

The last question is always one I ask myself... *"I think that I've been here before, but I'm not sure! Haven't I been through this sort of planning session before...in some past life?"*

Anybody with any golf course experience whatsoever knows that planning...short term planning, long term planning, business planning, budget planning, or whatever type of planning...is absolutely necessary...but usually absolutely frustrating!

The initial frustration comes with the fact that past planning sessions and reports by this superintendent have born relatively little fruit...as evidenced by the occasional discovery of old written reports or recommendations that didn't even come close to the implementation stage.

I find it very humorous to scan back and open up old computer files that are still installed...especially if you've inherited someone else's computer. Then, the chuckles come down both ways...rereading old reports from a younger self or some other dude who had the same enthusiastic intentions and really did expect to be taken seriously! Lots of information in there prepared by yours truly in days gone by...good now for only the laughs as a guy rereads with a touch more wisdom those items for which he was once so ardent and enthusiastic!

The computer unit that I'm typing on today also has a C: file mixed full of memos, reports, and recommendations from long departed managers...sort of an echo from their days here. Lots of good information and recommendations in these files also...depending on the quality of the author. There are also lots of unfulfilled and forgotten items...as are the managers who worked so hard in preparing them.

Annual operating budget planning is usually our best blueprint here at NCCC...is the easiest to prepare...and is the most relevant. So, this form of short term planning is essential and not the focus of this diatribe. Like any small business...this golf course depends heavily on our short term budget planning.

Long range business growth planning is something with which I'm pretty unfamiliar. I've never been a full-time small business owner...but can somewhat imagine that a good, long term business plan is essential to the survival of any business. The differences between simple employed managers and business owners are many...with one of the most telling being that business owners are 100% responsible for the success or failure of their plan/business...while superintendents/managers usually are in a position to recommend and implement only.

What captures my attention and makes me chuckle are the requests for **long range planning reports** usually entitled "Everything That You Can Think Of That

Needs To Be Accomplished At This Golf Course Over The Next Five Years" or some such similar title! Guys like us get caught in the middle at times. Most of us don't own these golf courses that we tend so lovingly...and almost all of are very creative. It's easy then...to get caught up in the frenzy of letting our BOD's, owners, Park Boards, etc. get at our innermost thoughts concerning this big piece of land known as a golf course! We pour out our ideas and our opinions with almost no guidance or limitation...and delude ourselves into believing that this report is going to be taken seriously!

Typically...November is the likely jumpoff month for reports of this nature. Everybody has just finished another long season out on the course...with problems and solutions being fresh in the mind. It's also budget time...and a natural opportunity exists to bring into focus what the future should hold.

Prepping the annual operations budget is a piece of cake...then the discussion turns to capital items, capital projects...of a long term nature. Man, I can just feel this floor turning into a quagmire! At this facility it's fortunately not a question of the Long Range Planning Committee holding all of the cards. It seems to be more a question of turning the cards over...and dealing with the cards as they're dealt to us.

In a single owner facility like this the committee really consists of one guy who owns all of the stock...trying really diligently...or sometimes not very diligently...to listen as the senior management corps tries to prepare, explain and educate as to our long term needs. Selective



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listening kicks in all too frequently, however, and lots of information falls on deaf ears.

In that sense, a true committee would be most helpful from the standpoint of having a diverse, informed committee chairman and committee members who are all hopefully on the same page.

It also doesn't help matters that here at NCCC...these long range reports are forwarded down to Florida and basically parked for the winter as the 'committee of II(owner and wife) enjoy their snowbirding for three months. Upon their return in April...the opening of the course and all of the spring activity deflect any action or discussion about long term matters!

So, thank God for this computer! Our long range, five year plan sits in its file...waiting patiently to be opened someday...and is kept company in there by all of the other inactive, unopened files just waiting for their day in the sun!

Actually, Wednesday next is our first major management meeting for this spring...at which I am definitely going to present everybody with their second copy of this long range report. Will I be prepared to explain it, defend it, educate with it, and deal with all of the little witicisms that are sure to accompany the reading of it?

Probably not...I'll more than likely get a little ticked off when it's not taken seriously enough...which is the ultimate irony threading through it all. First the 'powers' ask for this sort of thing...then are surprised and unknowing when such a complete and expensive listing of future projects and needs is presented to them.

What do they really expect...that maybe I'll just say that everything is just so peachy...that our future needs are essentially non-existent...that we'll just keep waiting patiently while the price of everything in the report just continues to rise?

What usually happens then is that the little plan gets shuffled down to the bottom of the priority list as the committee moves on to discuss other matters. The plan never really gets endorsed as a plan for the future...but will be vaguely referred to in another eight months when budget time rolls around again.

The plan is then dusted off...and the request comes down the line to...maybe revise and update the report? Because this time they really intend...and understand...and realize the need...to endorse and begin implementing the darn thing!

Wouldn't it be great if any of that were true? ♻

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There's Just Something About Wayne

By Lori Ward Bocher

Wayne Otto. Need I say more? You all know him better than I do. You see him at WGCSA and turf meetings, always ready to learn more. You call him when you want to try something new on the course because, chances are, he has already tried it. You can remember the first time you met Wayne. Some of you have stories that go way back.

But Wayne is retiring from Ozaukee Country Club at the end of 2002. So *The Grass Roots* editor wants me to do a Personality Profile on him. Surely, Monroe could write this one with his eyes shut. But he asks me to do it. And he asks me to interview Wayne in person, instead of on the telephone like I do so often. Maybe, just maybe, I saw a side of Wayne that the rest of you don't always see. So read on. And let me know if I've captured the essence of Wayne. Let me know if I've surprised you with a few things.

When I set up the appointment, I inform Wayne that I have to bring along my 9-year-old son, Andrew, who is on spring break. When we arrive at the shop two days later, Wayne greets Andrew with his dog, Max. "Would you like to take Max for a walk on the golf course?" he asks Andrew. He puts a leash on Max and gives Andrew a two-way radio in case he gets lost on the course and needs to call for help. "But Max knows his way around the course," he assures Andrew. Nice man, I say to myself.

Later, Wayne admits to me that he panicked when I told him I'd be bringing my son. "What can I find here for a 9-year-old boy to do?" he asked his assistant, Karl Wehausen, who then suggested Max. Andrew and Max are best buds for the morning. And Wayne tells me that



Max is a dog that needed a home after his step-son rescued it near the Mexican border. "What's one more dog or cat?" he rhetorically asks. There's definitely a soft side to Wayne.

Wayne and I step inside his neat shop office. You'd never guess you are inside a barn from the looks of his carpeted, paneled, and brightly lit office. Golf posters, golf calendars, bookshelves, and a golf-ball clock cover the walls. Wayne is dressed in a stylish green sweater. There's no doubt that this superintendent has a professional attitude.

Raised on nearby farm...

We begin the interview and I learn that Wayne was a farm boy. "My grandfather's farm was across Mequon Road, bordering what is today the course," he says. "I grew up on that farm. Hated every minute of it. Farming is a tough, tough life. I

used to hate summers. All the other kids would go someplace in summer and I was stuck on the farm."

Although Homestead High School now borders the course, Mequon didn't have a high school back in the 1950's. Wayne graduated from Cedarburg High School in 1957. And guess what. He didn't go back to the farm; he joined the Army Reserves where he saw six months of active duty at Fort Leonardwood in Missouri. "I had never been away from home before, never done any traveling," Wayne recalls.

But he came back close to home when he joined the grounds crew of Ozaukee Country Club in 1958. "Grunt work," he says. But it helped him find his calling. "After being born in the country, the city life looked pretty good to me. I thought about working at a bank in downtown Milwaukee," Wayne remembers. "But it didn't pay as much as working on the golf course. And I found out real quick that I was an outside person. The superintendent rode around in a golf cart. I thought that looked like a pretty nice job."

An intern from Penn State was working on the course, and that inspired Wayne to take the two-year turf management course at Penn State. He went in the fall of 1958 and graduated in the spring of 1960. "They didn't want me to intern at the same course I had been working on, so I went to Omaha, Nebraska," Wayne explains.

Wayne recalls one story that shows how much times have changed since then. "One day we received a truckload of sod that came from somewhere in western Iowa," he says. "This sod was literally grown in someone's pasture because there were cow pies



enveloped in the rolls. What a difference compared to the big rolls of sod that many use today.”

He stayed at that course until he got his first superintendent job at a 9-hole course, Sunset Valley Country Club, in 1961. “I designed it, built it and maintained it until 1964.”

In 1964 he went to Lincoln, Nebraska where he became superintendent at an 18-hole course that was built in the 1920’s. “They were building a new course and needed someone to oversee the transition from 18 to 36 holes,” Wayne explains.

In 1967, Wayne received a call from Ozaukee Country Club asking him if he wanted to interview for the

superintendent job. “I thought it would be a good chance to get back home and see my folks,” he says of his decision to come back for the interview. “Six weeks later I was here for good. The job paid \$12,000 a year versus \$8,000; and I thought a private course would be more glamorous than a public course.”

Wayne also recalls that, in 1967, the budget for course maintenance was \$59,000; today it’s \$690,000.

Too many trees...

Now that I know how he got to Ozaukee, I ask Wayne what major changes he’s seen on the course in 35 years. And so begins a long discussion about trees. I learn that

Wayne is not too fond of trees on a golf course - at least not too many of them.

“Back in the 50’s and 60’s the course lost a lot of trees to Dutch Elm disease,” Wayne begins. “The membership was worried, so they had us plant a lot of trees. We used to plant 50 to 100 trees a year. Trees were planted by committee and for memorials. Now it’s an arboretum. We have way too many trees. But the members still have a soft spot in their hearts for trees. So we still have them.”

Besides the fact that grass doesn’t grow well in the shade of trees, Wayne points out that too many trees also effect the game of golf.

“He’s a leader in our profession”

Leader. Well liked. Quick wit. Even keeled. A little guy who can eat. Energetic. Mediocre golfer. These are words that Rod Johnson uses to describe Wayne Otto. Rod, the superintendent at Pine Hills Country Club in Sheboygan, has known Wayne both personally and professionally for 20 years. The two are known for “getting the snow off their backs” each February by taking a golf trip one week prior to the GCSA annual meeting.

“He’s a leader in our profession,” says Rod, “because he’s been at it so long and he’s stayed involved and educated. Other people his age might sit back and take a ‘so what’ attitude. He’s always sitting in the front row at educational conferences and he makes sure he’s current.

“I’ve never seen anybody who doesn’t like Wayne,” Rod continues. “And when people meet him, they remember him and his name.”

Wayne has a quick wit, is confident in what he says, and doesn’t try to impress anybody with his knowledge. “He’s known for that quick wit,” Rod adds. “People wait for what he’s going to say. He uses a lot of single words and short phrases rather than a complete sentence. But you always get his meaning.

“Last fall,” Rod says, “I’m talking to him and making a comment about how close the end of the season is - how it’s all down hill from here. His response was: ‘Can you stand on your head that long?’

“One time a member at Ozaukee Country Club asked Wayne about building a golf green in his back yard. He didn’t think it could be too hard,” Rod continues. “Wayne’s quick response was, ‘You’re better off having another child.’”

According to Rod, Wayne is neither quick to anger nor easily excited. “He’s pretty even keeled. You don’t see him get

excited over many things other than really good, classic golf course architecture. And he only got mad at me once, and that was an accident.”

Wayne likes food. “This little guy can eat,” Rod relates. “He once ate 24 tortillas in one setting, plus the meal. He loves Mexican food. When we go on golf trips, it’s Mexican four nights in a row. And he’ll ask for ‘hot gravy,’ which never rings a bell with the waitresses because he means hot salsa. When they bring him the hottest sauce they have, he’ll finish it all. They’re just in awe.

“When you ask him if he wants to go eat, he always says, ‘I suppose I could eat.’ You know he’s going to sit down and eat like you just can’t believe,” Rod says.

Rod believes that Wayne maintains a trim physique because of a fast metabolism and an energetic lifestyle. “I only knew his dad for a little while, but he seemed to be the exact same way. Wayne is a carbon copy,” Rod says. “But I’ve roomed with him enough to know that it takes a little bit to get him going in the morning. And when he’s riding in a car, he can go to sleep in two seconds.”

Sorry, Wayne, but Rod says your golf game isn’t as good as it used to be. “But he’s a lot of fun to watch,” Rod points out. “Somewhere on an 18-hole course he’s going to pull off a miraculous shot. You’re going to stand there, shake your head, and say, ‘How did he do that?’ He’s going to chip one in from way out of nowhere or make a 50-foot putt. And he just walks up and acts like it was nothing, like he could do it any time.”

Rod’s favorite description of Wayne’s golf game came from John Jenkins, superintendent at the Chicago Golf Club. “After watching Wayne swing the club for seven or eight holes he said, ‘You know, if that swing ever breaks down, I don’t know where we’ll get parts.’”