



# Within the Leather

by David Kazmierczak, CGCS

**“They grow up so fast”**

**I can still hear the voice of the nurse as I was holding my son a**

**few hours after he entered this world on the final day of Major League Baseball in the strike year of 1994. He entered, and the boys of summer exited, all in about an 18 hour span. Maybe that’s why my son Kyle gravitated to football.**

**At any rate, in the subsequent months and years that followed, that phrase- they grow up so fast- was repeated to me by a plethora of well meaning individuals. From Grandparents, to friends, to Pastors, to co-workers and even complete strangers, they grow up so fast was uttered as a catch-all phrase to remind you that your children won’t be children very long and you had better make the most of it.**

**If I had a dollar for every time I heard it, I would have enough for a grand time in Vegas with a few bucks to come home with more than likely.**

**So I am going to be the first person to go ahead and say that indeed kids don’t grow up so fast. In fact, for the average person, they don’t reach maturity until somewhere in their 40’s. Heck, I know seventy year olds that act like six year olds. Every golf course has a couple of infants in saggy skin and bad plaid shorts. We’ve all seen them chunking greens with their putters and throwing clubs in a temper tantrum from time to time.**

**It takes the average child 18 years to get through infancy,**

**kindergarten and twelve years of schooling before he or she leaves the nest to college or joins the ranks of the permanently employed. Eighteen years is a long time. A lot of things have happened since 1995. Nobody had a cell phone, much less an I pad. Dial-up was the sole means of getting on the Interweb, as Homer Simpson called it. Bill Clinton hadn’t met Monica Lewinski. Tiger Woods was still in college. The Vikings hadn’t won the Super Bowl. Oh wait, that still hasn’t happened and I don’t think ever will.**

**The point being from day one you have a long, long time to be with your children and watch them mature. The real question is how well is the time spent? Have you created memories for them and you that will last a lifetime? Have you been there when they really needed you?**

**Those are tough questions to answer, and sometimes harder to have the answer be “yes”.**

**The job of golf course superintendent can be very family unfriendly. It demands long hours at times. It can be very stressful at times. Summer vacations that the Smiths and Johnsons down the street take are a rumor in Joe Turf’s home. Odds are the spouse is building the snowman because the turf manager has to plow the clubhouse. But despite these demands, there is adequate time to spend with them if one makes the commitment. And really, how can you not?**

**My son Kyle is now a sophomore at UW Madison. He spent this past summer at home and worked his fourth summer on the crew at Prestwick. I am so very lucky to have that, not many parents have their kids work with them. While we don’t see each other very much during the day, it’s comforting knowing he is around, and he’s turned into a pretty good**

worker to boot.

Now that he is back in school, all I have is memories and a cell phone.

We'll talk every few days, mostly about football. Neither one of us are big phone talkers so the conversations are brief. Despite that, I don't think he realizes how much I miss having him around, and how much I enjoyed the quality times we did spend together.

There was the one-day trip to New York. We caught a flight at 7 am into La Guardia

Airport and hit the Subway to Yankee Stadium in its' final year of existence for a day game. Back on the Subway to Times Square and back to the airport, home by Midnight.

Back to work (for both of us) the next day.

There was the trip last winter to the Rose Bowl and the Fiesta Bowl. He saw his now beloved Badgers lose their Bowl game, and I saw my Kansas State Wildcats lose theirs. At least we were losers together. Or the trip to the Boundary Waters last August with a group of his friends and dads- something way out of my comfort zone, but right up his ally. We had a blast.

But fond memories don't have to come from grand trips. Simple things like helping him with his Eagle Scout project, building a few pinewood derby cars, coaching him in a few different sports. All quality time spent together.

The latest and possibly the most unique

project we did together was a beer pong table. He masterminded the 3 foot by 8 foot piece of plywood consisting of 3,172 beer bottle caps entombed by \$150 worth of epoxy that dried to a pristine clear surface. I helped and gave pointers. While frivolous and not exactly a monumental contribution to society, it was fun to do and we will both look back on the process with pride and sense of accomplishing something together. More priceless memories created.



I would be remiss not to mention my twin daughters, 16, and juniors in high school. Allison and Susan both have their interests and while much more family centric, we still enjoy one on one times that I will cherish all my life,

and hopefully theirs as well. Soon they will be leaving the nest, their 18 years of time at home up, and begin to experience all life has to offer.

The children did not grow up too fast. They grew up, and continue to grow up, under my wife's and my watchful eye, and with slow, steady progression. As they grow, we continue to maximize the time we do have to spend with them and make that time meaningful and worthwhile. Don't just make the time or take the time to be a part of your children's lives, maximize the time you have with them and that feeling of "they grow up so fast" will never overtake you.