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Upcoming MGCSA Events

June 5

Scholarship Scramble
Somery Golf Club, Byron
Host Sup't: Casey Conlin

June 27

Vendor Appreciation Day
Heritage Links Golf Club
Host Sup't: Paul Eckholm, CGCS

July 17

BASF Fundraiser Tournament
Albion Ridges Golf Course
Host Sup't: Brooks Ellingson

July 27

U of M Troe Center Field Day
U of M St. Paul Campus
Hosts: Dr. Brian Horgan
and Larry Vetter

August 7

MGCSA Championship
Windsong Farm Golf Club
Host Sup't: Scottie Hines, CGCS

September 18

**Harold Stodola
Research Scramble**
Rolling Green Country Club, Hamel
Host Sup't: Drew Larson

October 9

MGCSA Fall Mixer
Oakdale, Golf Club, Buffalo Lake
Host Sup't: Mike Knodel

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About the Cover

Flower gardens brighten up any day. Read a story on Page 5 entitled "Successful Flower Gardens" by Lead Landscape Gardeners Colleen Denison and Linda Wentland from Dellwood Hills Golf Club and White Bear Yacht Club. Also inside is an article from MNLA called "What is an Annual?" on Page 22.

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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

"Just call him daddy"

By James Bade

I wonder how you would define success? Webster's dictionary defines success as, the attainment of wealth, favor or eminence. Some synonymous words for success are, prosper, thrive and flourish. The Latin root word for succeed means "to go up." I suppose that is where we get the phrase "to go up" the ladder. I think we all want to be successful in life. The difference may be on how we define success.

After being elected President of the MGCSA, I went home to a waiting family. Stephanie, my wife, was very happy for me so she told Sam, my son, to call me Mr. President. I will never forget his reply. He said, "No, just call him daddy." Kids are so honest and often have the right perspective. Sam's response is one of the ways I define success. No matter how the day went at work, if my children run to greet me and call me daddy, then I know that I have been a success.

I know what will make me a success as President of the MGCSA. It is a supportive membership at Somerset Country Club that allows me to volunteer my time. It is a supportive staff that may have to do an extra job or two on the golf course. It is a loving wife and family at home who are patient when I put in long hours. It is an active MGCSA membership that comes out and supports events. And most of all, it is being surrounded by a group of sharp individuals at board meetings who care about the association. As you can see, for something to be successful it has to be a collective effort by a group of people.

Here is a list of things I think the board tries to succeed in for its membership:

Arrange places for our golf outings; put together banquets so we can honor people and get together in a casual setting; bring in the best educators from around the country; have an award-winning periodical that keeps you informed on issues; having a watchdog (Paul Eckholm) at the Capital who keeps an eye on Legislative issues affecting our industry; individuals working with agencies to help us be compliant when it comes to pesticides and labor; working with the U of M so they can support us with agronomic issues; having a Research Committee that supports programs to benefit how we can best do our job, and raise money for scholarships so someone can go to school and become successful.

Other definitions for success are "to turn out well" and "to attain a desired end."

The Board of Directors wants things to turn out well for its members. The desired end is to serve you as best we can. We will do things to the best of our ability. Sometimes things will work out great and other times we might make mistakes. However, at the end of the day if we are called a loving daddy or mommy, or brother, or daughter, or more importantly a friend, then we (and you) have been successful.

Thank you members for making the MGCSA a very successful organization. Your camaraderie is invaluable.

I hope you prosper, thrive and flourish this golf season and in the season of life.

Best regards,
James

HOLE NOTES

Official Publication
of the MGCSA

Editor
Jack MacKenzie, CGCS
jmackenzie426@msn.com

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BUSINESS OFFICE AND HOLE NOTES OFFICE

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Scott Turtinen
700 Twelve Oaks Center Dr., Suite 706
Wayzata, MN 55391
952/473-2582 Fax: 952/473-2586
Toll Free: 1-800-642-7227
E-mail: scott@mgcsa.org

www.mgcsa.org

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Successful Flower Gardens

By COLLEEN DENISON *and* LINDA WENTLAND
Dellwood Hill Golf Club *White Bear Yacht Club*

In order to achieve successful flower gardens it is essential to have an inspiring design and follow a routine maintenance schedule.

Colleen Denison has been Lead Landscape gardener at Dellwood Hills Golf Club since 1992. She designs and maintains 30 annual and/or annual/perennial combination gardens, 20 container gardens and hanging baskets. She has an annual budget of \$900 for mulch and potting soil, and approximately \$7,000 for annuals and perennial plant material. She supervises two assistants, full time, during the season.

At Dellwood Hills, the architecture of the clubhouse is Prairie-style, so she designs using an informal style and tries to incorporate a variety of native gardens plants. A majority of the landscapes surrounding the clubhouse were designed over 30 years ago, so Colleen has been updating, as budget will allow, over the years. This has been challenging as well as rewarding.

Linda Wentland has been Lead Landscape Gardener at White Bear Yacht Club for 17 seasons. She designs and maintains 15 annual and/or annual perennial combination gardens, a culinary herb garden, 115 containers, window boxes and hanging baskets. She has an annual budget of \$2,000 for mulch, compost and potting soil, and \$11,000 for annual and perennial plant material. Major landscape projects are budgeted separately, as approved by the Board. She supervises one part-time watering assistant and utilizes crew members for other gardening tasks.

White Bear Yacht Club is a seasonal club; the main clubhouse is opened from May through September. The Golf House and golf course remain open into late Fall. White Bear Yacht Club has recently built a new clubhouse, as well as, a new Golf house, so many of the landscapes were updated along with the new buildings. In addition to gardening, Linda creates cut flower arrangements for the clubhouse and the Golf House, and has a budget of \$7,500 for cut flowers. The flower arrangements are supplemented, when possible, with outside plant material from the gardens and landscapes. The gardens



Flowers greet members, guests and staff as you enter Dellwood Hills Golf Club.

are designed cottage style, with an emphasis on summer blooming plant material that may also be used in cut flower arrangements. WBYC is a Certified Audubon Sanctuary, therefore plant materials that attract and are advantageous to the birds and butterflies are frequently used in the gardens and landscapes.

Both gardeners feel that the next year's gardening season begins in the Fall. At the end of each season, we assess the gardens and containers. We take a close look at the plant materials used that season. We take time to document, through pictures and notes, our garden success, as well as failures for that season. Several variables can alter the success of the gardens, such as weather conditions, available labor, new products or plants used, or change of maintenance schedule, so it is best to take detailed notes. We try to prepare as much as possible for next season in the Fall, since we never know what Spring will bring.

Fall is an important time to thoroughly clean all flower beds and landscapes.

Disease and pests harbor in plant debris, so it is best to remove as much debris as possible. We remove all annual flowers, and cut down perennials and ornamental grasses. In recent years a growing trend has emerged leaving some perennials and ornamental grass blooms intact over the winter. This not only adds winter interest to the gardens, but provides a source of food and cover for wildlife. Fall is a wonderful time to divide and move around perennial plant material, as well as install new perennial gardens. Many suppliers offer reduced prices on plant material in the Fall. It is also time to plant Spring blooming bulbs.

At Dellwood Hills, all landscape mulch in the annual/perennial combination beds is removed in the Fall.

Dellwood Hills uses a hardwood mulch which is reapplied in Spring after planting. White Bear Yacht Club uses pine bark mulch in their annual/perennial beds,

(Continued on Page 6)

Flower Gardens—

(Continued from Page 5)

reapplying only to necessary areas each Spring.

After the ground freezes, tender perennials are covered with a winter protective mulch. Available sources from the golf courses are most often used such as pine boughs. Both gardeners limit the use of tender perennials that require winter protection and extra attention. One exception would be Hydrangea "Endless Summer," which both gardeners have planted and have found they need extra winter protection. At Dellwood Hills, they have extensive rose landscapes, but have replaced tender varieties with hardy, own-root roses, such as Carefree Wonder.

THE DESIGN PROCESS

Late Fall we begin designing the next season's gardens. Since both gardeners have worked several seasons at the same Club, the challenge is to find new and exciting designs. Over the years many new plants have flooded the market and new trends have emerged, so we stay on top of what is happening in the industry. We gather ideas and inspirations from a variety of sources, such as trade magazines, decorating and gardening books, seed catalogues and colleagues gardens and incorporate our own style and what is suitable for our Clubs.

We have both found that the Minnesota Green Expo is an exceptional source for education and networking. We attend several seminars, which provide information on a variety of subjects of interest to landscape gardeners, by professionals working in the field. We visit the Trade Show to meet with our established growers and suppliers, see actual sample plant materials, buy supplies and establish new relationships. We acquire all the new catalogues and begin to gear up for the next gardening season.

The design process for Colleen at Dellwood Hills begins with establishing a color theme. After a color theme is decided, she will look for suitable plant material.

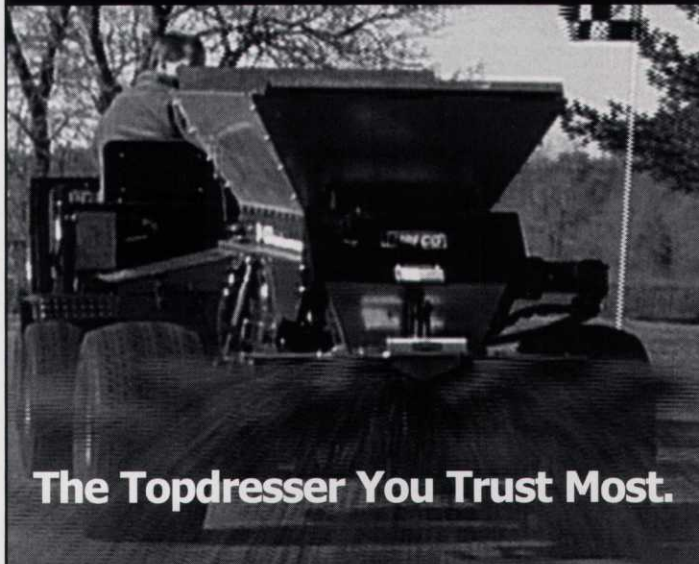
The design process for Linda at WBYC begins with an inspiration from a new plant or foliage, finding colors that complement that plant and developing a final color theme. Once a color theme has been established for the season, the gardens and containers will be designed accordingly. This year at Dellwood Hills, Colleen acquired red cannas lilies, so red will be the prominent color for all of Dellwood Hills gardens and containers. Linda, at White Bear Yacht Club was inspired by the bronze coloring of Carex "Toffee Twist"™ and established a color theme of purple, bronze, coral and pinks for the White Bear Yacht Club. Once a color theme is established, both gardeners will then look for suitable and available plant material. Since there is a tremendous amount of plant materials and colors available, establishing a color theme helps to narrow down the choices and unify all landscapes. It is easy to get carried away by all the choices



Volleyball Gardens Guys and Dolls

(Continued on Page 7)

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Flower Gardens—

(Continued from Page 6)

and end up with a hodgepodge.

Most gardeners like to use new plant materials, but until a plant has been proven successful, both gardeners suggest using it cautiously and in remote areas. We have both experienced unsatisfactory performance from some new plant introductions. For example, neither gardener found the Kong Coleus to meet their expectation; although the coloration is fantastic, it did not perform well. On the other hand, the Dragon Wing begonia and Wave petunias, are to both gardeners indispensable. We both continue to use and depend on proven performers, such as Elfin impatiens; although they have been on the market for years they remain a constant in our designs.

We recommend starting each season with a journal, which includes a diagram of each garden to be planted, listing square footage, sunlight, soil and watering conditions. We list the plants we have selected and the exact number allotted for each garden and container. We may even include a color sketch. This journal will be used throughout the gardening season

and any observations will be documented. Keeping an organized and detailed record of all designs and the plants selected will make ordering and planting easier. We add up the total number of plants needed and round up to the nearest full flat. We round to account for some plant fatality. We keep a backup plan in mind in case we need to substitute a certain flower due to crop failure or weather conditions. Orders are usually completed and received by the grower by mid-winter.

The members at Dellwood Hills and the WBYC insist on a fuller, finished annual garden as soon as possible, so we rarely follow recommended plant spacing. We will plant our annuals closer together than recommended. The advantage to planting closer is a fuller garden with less weed competition, better water retention and the ability to withstand weather conditions better. A disadvantage to closer planting is increased disease and pest probability so we must monitor the gardens carefully. We feel the advantages outweigh the disadvantages.

SPRING

Spring starts with general cleaning and preparation of the annual flower beds. At

Dellwood Hills, Colleen uses a bagged mushroom compost every year to amend the annual flower beds. She prefers this compost because it is easily transported and applied to the gardens. It is thoroughly sifted; therefore it has little debris and is nutrient rich. It is more expensive than bulk compost, but feels it is worth the cost. At WBYC, Linda amends all annual flower gardens with compost yearly, also using bulk garden compost. Some of the compost is purchased and some is on site from last year's recycled garden waste.

After applying compost, both gardeners mix in a slow-release fertilizer. Dellwood uses a well balanced 15-15-15, whereas WBYC uses 14-24-14. The compost and fertilizer are worked into the soil. The larger areas are roto-tilled while the smaller areas are hand-tilled. The areas are then hand raked until smooth, watered and left alone until planting time. Both gardeners avoid compaction by staying out until planting time.

PLANTING

Since container gardening has become

(Continued on Page 8)

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LARRY THORNTON



Flower Gardens—

(Continued from Page 7)

a major trend, and at WYBC a main focus, it has become necessary to change out the plant material several times during the season. Both gardeners design Spring, Summer and Fall container plantings. Dellwood is open year round, so they also design winter holiday display containers. Not all containers are replanted, only those in key high traffic areas. New soil is added to all containers in the Spring prior to planting. Dellwood uses the mushroom compost mixed with Scotts Plus with Miracle Gro potting soil. WBYC uses Sunshine Mix #1.

Our annual plants start arriving the third week of May, weather permitting, and our goal is to plant them as soon as possible. Ideally, we like to have everything planted by the first week of June. While both gardeners would prefer to plant the gardens themselves, this is not realistic. We need to use available crew members to assist us in planting. We both have found it difficult to give up total control of planting some areas, but the reality is we have to. We both, however, continue to plant the containers without assistance. Plant material in flats requires tremendous attention, so it is necessary to get the plants in the ground and containers as soon as possible. This point in the gardening season is the most stressful, and it is a relief when the annual gardens are completed. We can then begin our routine maintenance schedule.

Maintenance of the annual and perennial gardens include watering, fertilizing, weeding and deadheading.

WATERING

At Dellwood, the gardens are hand-watered, depending on weather conditions. In periods of prolonged dry spells, watering can take up a majority of the work day. At WBYC, the gardens are watered by automatic irrigation, usually overnight, with the exception of one small garden. With the recent completion of the Pro Shop and Golf House at White Bear Yacht Club, many additional Terra-Cotta pots and Window boxes were added, and we found it necessary to develop an efficient watering system. The answer was a 55-gallon tank mounted on a trailer that easily pulls behind an EZ-GO workhorse. The water is pumped out of the tank with a small pump, that runs off the EZ-GO battery. An assistant was hired part-time to exclusively water the tremendous amount of containers, window baskets

and hanging baskets. All containers are watered with the tank, with the exception of six hanging baskets at the Golf House that are watered with drip irrigation.

Containers, window boxes and hanging baskets need to be monitored very closely, because they are easily over- or under-watered. In periods of hot weather or under windy conditions they often need to be watered twice a day. The Lead Gardener must train the assistants that are responsible for watering carefully and thoroughly. Many plants have perished due to improper watering.

FERTILIZING

At Dellwood Hills, the containers and baskets are fertilized weekly with water soluble. Miracle Gro 10-10-10, or 10-50-10 if heavier blooming is preferred. Fertilome Rose food in a granular form is applied at the base of the roses when needed. The annual gardens are fertilized mid-summer using the water soluble Miracle Gro 10-10-10. At WBYC, the containers, window boxes and hanging baskets are fertilized weekly at the recommended rate with Lesco 16-32-16. The water soluble fertilizer is mixed into the 55-gallon watering tank. The gardens at the WBYC are fertilized every 7-10 days with 16-32-16 fertilizer, mixed into a spray tank, and applied onto the foliage. We prefer to use this higher phosphorus fertilizer to encourage blooming.

At Dellwood, specific plants that are prone to fungal diseases, such as roses, Black Eyed Susans and Garden Phlox receive routine applications of fungicide. Colleen rotates between Daconil, Safer Garden Fungicide and Fung-Onil multi-purpose fungicide. Colleen will begin spraying when any signs of disease appear. The roses are sprayed with Isotox routinely. Last season the shade gardens were heavily infested with slugs. The problem became catastrophic, so a slug bait was applied. These products have worked effectively in controlling disease problems.

At WBYC we will spray the gardens with Daconil fungicide, when the weather conditions are favorable for diseases, or if any signs of disease appear. We do not spray any pesticides, because they can



also harm beneficial insects such as honey bees and butterflies.

Another important maintenance duty is, of course, weeding. Neither Dellwood Hills or the WBYC gardeners use a pre-emergent herbicide, such as Preen, on any of their gardens. We find with routine and frequent weeding, we can keep the gardens under control. We both like to use small hand rakes to pull out the weeds, and “fluff” the soil. By hand raking, we eliminate the entire weed and its root, aerate the soil and give the garden a clean, finished look. It is labor intensive, but the results are worth the time.

Another important gardening duty is deadheading. Deadheading, which is removing the spent blooms from the plant, is very important. With regular deadheading, the annuals will bloom continuously, and the gardens will look neater. Some flowers, such as geraniums and snapdragons, need continual deadheading in order to perform successfully. Whereas others, such as impatiens, rarely need to be deadheaded. A gardener should choose plants that are suitable for the amount of labor they have available to maintain them.

It was challenging to write this article, because so much of our daily work has become intuitive. Furthermore, we did not want to repeat readily available information. So, we hope we have provided insight into this aspect of the golf course industry. We both are passionate in our love of gardening and the outdoors. Although we have differences in our methods and designs, we have learned from each other. We would be interested in sharing information with any interested colleagues, perhaps round-table discussions and/or tours of local golf courses.

Creating Nostalgic Gardens: Combining the Old with the New

Courtesy of the Minnesota Nursery and Landscape Association

This spring, gardens are evoking an emotional response! Walking through gardens this summer may bring back memories of your childhood backyard or the flower pots on grandma's front porch. Many of those flowers you remember from days of yore are back and better than ever. The Minnesota Nursery & Landscape Association (MNLA) recommends incorporating these plants into your gardens and landscapes to provide a dazzling array of sizes, forms, colors as well as nostalgia. Here are a few recommendations based on the look and emotion you're trying to create.

Bright, Fun Colors

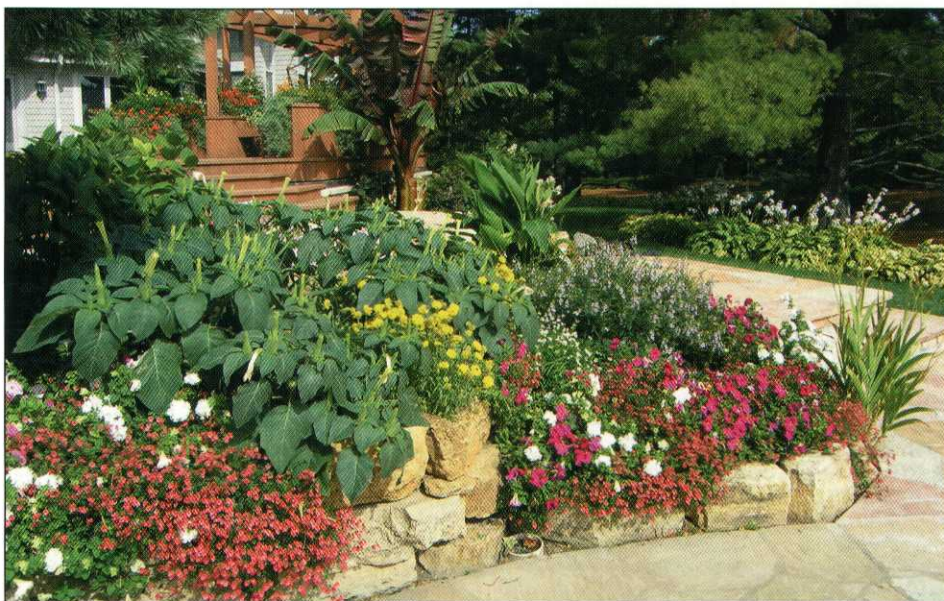
Plants with orange and purple flowers and foliage are a happy addition to any garden and will be a hot trend this spring. Look for *Phormium* (New Zealand Flax), *Strobilanthes* (Persian Shield), *Solanum* (Potato Vine), or the stable and dependable Signet marigold to complete your orange palette. Other colorful flowering options include Dragon Wing® Red begonias, Mandevilla or petunias. If it's foliage color you're after, try sweet potato vine and Kong® coleus.

A New Twist On Old Favorites

Looking for a new twist on those comforting petunias or geraniums that grew in your grandma's garden? Visit your local garden center to find some of these updated favorites: Red Signet marigold, castor bean, *nasturtium Echinacea* (Purple Coneflower)*, *Echinacea Big Sky™* 'Sunrise' (Coneflower)*, *Echinops* (Globe Blue Thistle)*, *Sedum 'Vera Jameson'*. Many of the most interesting annuals are only found in small local garden centers since they have the ability to stock smaller quantities and more variety, so visit www.GardenMinnesota.com to find a garden center in your area.

Fragrance

The smell of a garden is perhaps the best fragrance in the world, as evidenced



This beautiful garden blends a mixture of the old and the new including white petunias, *Diascia*, *Datura*, banana trees, pink petunias and *Angelonia*.

by the number of perfumes made from flower extracts. A garden wouldn't be complete without a few of these fragrant additions: *Nemesia 'Vanilla Satchet'*, eucalyptus, stock, nicotiana, petunias, oriental lilies*, phlox*, or peony*. Be sure to plant these choices near a path or under a window so you can take full advantage of the soothing smell drifting on the breeze.

Achieving a Native Appearance

Native plants are usually defined as those plants that were growing naturally in an area before European settlement and they include all types of landscape plants—trees, shrubs, vines, flowers, ferns, groundcovers, and grasses. The most practical way for most homeowners to use native plants is to integrate them with nonnative, more-traditional landscape plants. Try using native plants and grasses along with barberry shrubs, dogwood shrubs, *Viburnum* shrubs, *Achillea 'The Pearl'**, *Nepeta** or *Rudbeckias* (both perennial and annual varieties) to create a lovely garden that is native in appearance and feeling.

Incorporating Interesting Trees & Shrubs

Consider incorporating trees and shrubs that have beautiful foliage and winter interest such as colorful berries or fun, funky evergreens like the one you used to hide behind as a child. Ask a professional at your local nursery or garden center for the best tree or shrub appropriate for the conditions at your home.

As you choose your plants this spring, consider all the emotion and nostalgia they can bring to your garden or landscape. Expand your palette by including plants that are colorful, fragrant, reminiscent, and most of all fun!

To find a garden center or landscape professional in your area, visit Minnesota's online gardening resource, www.GardenMinnesota.com. The Minnesota Nursery & Landscape Association is the state's largest green industry trade association with more than 1,500 member businesses including garden centers; landscape contractors and designers; tree and flower growers; irrigation contractors; and lawn, tree, and garden services.

Note: * Indicates a perennial plant. All others indicated are annuals.

PART III

Letters From Iraq...

One Superintendents' View From the Front Lines

By ROB ADAMS

Superintendent, Ponds of Battle Creek

(Note: The following is part three in a series of communications that chronicles the trials and tribulations of GC Superintendent / Captain Rob Adams as he serves his country in Iraq. As revealed in this segment, Rob accepts a Company Commander position at the end of November and leaves his desk job behind. In his new position, Rob is responsible for 95 men as they maintain security on a section of highway in the Ar Ramadi region. Rob is the golf course superintendent at the Ponds of Battle Creek in Maplewood, Minnesota.)

Rob is more than willing to share his military experiences with his family, friends and colleagues back home. I was fortunate to receive permission from Rob to reprint all or parts of e-mails that he sends home as I see fit. He is allowing me to edit his communications as well (primarily spelling and punctuation), due to the time constraints placed on him. I hope you appreciate and enjoy his honesty, insight and wry sense of humor as he experiences these life-changing events. Please keep him in your thoughts and prayers. - Paul Diegnau)

October 1, 2005

Well I made it through the month of September without a scratch. I can't believe it is October already. This is usually my favorite time of the year. The golf course slows down a little and starts to recover from the stress of the summer. The end of the year is in sight. I like the cool, sunny days and all the colors of the trees. I don't think I am going to get a lot of that this year. We had a pretty slow week for my Battalion but not such a good week for another unit over here. They lost five guys in one day. Things are expected to get a little more exciting around here with Ramadan and the elections. We start in a couple weeks preparing the voting sites. Once they are set up we are to move away and let the Iraqi army and the civilians run the show. We are to provide protection from a distance. They want the elections to be free of the U.S. Good luck to them. Anyway I am fine and keep plugging along. I miss being home and seeing all my family and friends. Hopefully some good will come out of this mess and it won't be time wasted. There are a lot of good people over here that would like to live a safe and free life. They just need to stand up and do it though. Well enough for now. Hope all is well at home. Take it easy. Rob

October 9, 2005

Hello all. Another week in the books. It has been pretty slow this week, which is kind of scary, leading into the week of elec-

tions. I hope that it is not the calm before the storm. Things are starting to fall into place and we are working to improve the positions we already have. Life on the FOB (Forward Operating Base) is not bad. I got out and played ping pong the other day. I am still able to play pretty well but the competition is getting better. I may need to start practicing. Your tax dollars hard at work! I only work 12 hours a day so the rest of the time I sleep and read. They opened a new chow hall, which is supposed to be mortar proof. These are the things we get excited about. I'm trying to get a driving range built here but there is still the concern of sniper fire and being hit by mortars while collecting balls. I figure with a little chicken wire and duct tape I can rig a ball retriever up to a tank. There are a few people over here that actually brought their golf clubs and balls. Tee times are pretty wide open. The course has numerous holes from one bomb crater to another. Carts are free with the round and come equipped with some sort of machine gun. Beverage cart girls are hard to find so you need to bring your own water. A common complaint is that the fairways don't get watered enough and the greens are slow. Where have I heard that before? Anyway I still wish I was home working on the course. I'm having green grass withdrawals. I did get a picture off a guy who was doing a patrol in the middle of Ar Ramadi and they jumped over a fence and landed in this guy's beautiful grass back yard. They couldn't believe it either, so they took a picture. One of the guys knew I was a superintendent so they gave me the picture. I have it on my computer and look at it often. Oh the things I miss back home! Well I should get back to staring at the computer screen and listening to radios. Hope all is well on the home front. Take it easy. Rob

October 19, 2005

Hello all. We made it through the elections without too many incidents. The voting went pretty well. In our area we had around 4,000 people vote. Last January they had 67 so it was a big increase. The people are still afraid and the Iraqi government did not give the people a lot of information on where to vote. Several security measures were put in place to protect the people who voted and the workers. Nobody could drive from the night before the election to the morning after because of the threat of a car bomb. So if you lived far away from a polling center you had to walk. The coalition forces put up security around the polling sites at a distance so it didn't seem like we were interfering. The

Iraqi army had security at the polling sites. From what we were told, the polling sites with the best turnout didn't have any coalition forces securing them. I don't really believe that. Half the stuff that gets reported from over here is total B.S. We see stories about protests and riots in Ar Ramadi all the time. Truth is it doesn't happen or is overblown. There hasn't been a riot here since I have been here and we only have had one protest. Not a big deal. A local woman informed on some insurgents and wanted to be detained for her own protection. The Iraqi police took her for her safety. The Iraqis thought we (US Forces) had detained her. She was never here but the people protested at the front gate. Women are still treated poorly here, but if they think we have them they rally like it was their King. Anyway, the Iraqi police were forced to let her go. No telling what happened to her. I just saw a news story about air strikes in Ar Ramadi that killed 70 people. The press said that it was mostly innocent civilians. I read the reports that the soldiers on the ground give. Anytime a Sigact (significant act) occurs we have to write up a report and send it to our higher headquarters. They take the report and send it out to everyone so we all have an idea of what is going on. It's called situational awareness in the Army. But we see reports from all over our area. It is amazing how the stories get distorted. I can't go into detail but the story does not contain all the facts and the reporter said they saw some of the individuals. If they are reporting from that area where this occurred, they are probably working for the insurgents. Not an area where any American would last more than a few minutes. Anyway, don't believe everything you read! I thought before I came over here that some stories seemed distorted but now I know it is true. On the same token, it isn't a bed of roses and the Iraqi army is a ways off before it will be able to stand up on its own. It isn't necessarily the training or the equipment. It is more of a cultural thing. They lack real discipline, which is funny considering that they were under Saddam for so many years. After a few hours on patrol they lose interest and lie down and don't pay attention. It may be just the units around here but I have heard this is a common occurrence. Also time is not as important. If we have to leave for a mission at a certain time the Iraqis may or may not show up when they are supposed to. They argue among themselves constantly. I guess it is just the way they are. As much grief as we give them they are still pretty brave to do what they are

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