

TURFGRASS MATTERS

September/October 2001

Volume 72, Number 4

Stewards of the Chesapeake



Lakewood Country Club Team
Jorge Massa, Chris Ayers, CGCS, Doug McPherson, Bill Karpa

The second annual *Stewards of the Chesapeake* golf tournament was held August 27, at Queenstown Harbor Golf Links. A field of 124 players, or 31 teams, competed over the challenging and wonderfully

conditioned Lakes course. The team from Lakewood Country Club, comprised of Chris Ayers, CGCS, Jorge Massa, Doug McPherson and Bill Karpa took first place, aided by a rare double eagle on the par five fifteenth hole, by Doug McPherson.

The *Stewards of the Chesapeake* was initiated to replace the Superintendent Club Official tournament. While superintendents are still encouraged to bring general managers, green chairpersons, and other club officials, the tournament also affords the opportunity for our turfgrass industry partners to participate and compete. Proceeds from the event help to support the

MAAGCS' education, scholarship, and research efforts. The tournament's name, *Stewards of the Chesapeake*, symbolizes the environmentally conscientious manner in which superintendents and other professionals in the turfgrass industry manage their facilities in one of the most diverse, yet fragile ecosystems in the world, the Chesapeake Bay.

Since its inception, Queenstown Harbor Golf Links has exemplified the concept of environmental stewardship. Our thanks to Lex and Charlie Birney, Bill Shirk, CGCS, Tom Tokarski, Scot Forbis, and everyone at Atlantic Golf for hosting us in such fine fashion. Thanks, also, to all of the participants and sponsors who helped to make the 2001 *Stewards of the Chesapeake* a big success. Please mark the last Monday in August on your calendar for the 2002 event!

Superintendents and the Politics of Nutrient Management

Robert C. Collins, CGCS

Golf course superintendents have many and varied responsibilities. When asked to list them, an informed golfer might list management of maintenance machinery, pesticide and fertilizer applications, running an efficient and professional staff. But participation in the realm of politics and regulation?

In 1998, litigation in federal court between a coalition of "environmental groups" and the United States Environmental Protection Agency was settled. The coalition of the Delaware Sierra Club, Delaware River Keepers and others sued the EPA over en-

forcement of the Clean Water Act, in which a pollution control strategy was to be formed and implemented in waters deemed impaired. The waters in question were two out of three of Delaware's Inland Bays, Rehoboth and Indian River Bays. The pollutants to be managed were nitrogen and phosphorus. According to the agreement, Total Maximum Daily Loads of these nutrients were to be established, and "large-scale" generators and users were to be regulated. In 1999, the State of Delaware passed a nutrient management law.

Among its provisions, the nutrient management law requires that any entity within the state that applies nitrogen or phosphorus to ten or more acres of land develop and enact a nutrient management plan. Obviously, the provisions of the law apply to the state's 40 or so golf courses. Also, a nutri-

ent management commission was to be formed, and its duties were to execute the provisions of the law.

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President's Message

Chris Ayers, CGCS

I am sure you will indulge me if I take a moment to touch on the events, which occurred on September 11. I know every member of our Association will join me in offering condolences to every family or friend affected by the heinous attack on our country. Words can not describe the horror, concern and anger I felt as I began to learn of the enormity of the devastation. I am still filled with sorrow both for the victims and for our way of life that used to be. None of us ever could have imagined that anything like that could happen in our lifetime. No one can predict what the future holds for our country, but I know we will be stronger and more united.

Unfortunately, our September meeting was scheduled at Hope Valley GC for September 11th. Upon learning of the tragic events, we decided to cancel our meeting. Approximately 35 members gathered at Great Hope and watched in astonishment as events unfolded. There was no formal meeting, but those in attendance conducted a moment of silence and heard member, Ray



Finch pray for our country, our leaders and the victims. There was already a sense of togetherness evident that I have never before witnessed anywhere or anytime.

The 2nd annual *Stewards of the Chesapeake Tournament* was held at Queenstown Harbor GL on August 27th. Over 120 golfers enjoyed a wonderful day of golf and camaraderie to benefit MAAGCS education, research and scholarship. I want to acknowledge the efforts of Tournament Director, Mike Evans, Golf Director Dave Burkhart and Executive Secretary Charlotte Norris for helping to make this event a success. My thanks go to all the fine people at Atlantic Golf for hosting the tournament again this year. It is my sincere hope this tournament will continue to grow in the years to come and provide necessary funding for supporting and improving our profession.

Our Association is strong and having a good year overall. Your Board is working hard to provide you with a variety of events throughout the region and year. It is our hope that what we offer is attractive to you and you will choose to attend as many events as you can. I begrudgingly have accepted that we will not be able to please every single member of this Association, but I want you to know we have tried and will continue to do so to the best of our abilities.



Please remember the
victims and families
of the September 11th
tragedy in your
thoughts and prayers



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From the Editor's Desk

Paul Masimore, CGCS

At the last minute, after an already extended deadline, I begged some people for the articles you will find in this issue. My thanks go to you for your last minute help. I know Bob Collins will be especially happy to see my term as Newsletter Editor come to an end.

If you find this issue coming to you late, once again you can blame the Editor. I had ideas for what I thought were a couple very good front page articles. Unfortunately one turned me down early and the other pulled out after I had extended the deadline for the article. Charlotte, once again, has been very diplomatic in her dealings with me. I know I have certainly tested her patience several times this year. I have enjoyed that though; must be my strange sense of humor.

Having great ideas for articles is one thing; to actually have the articles in print is no small task. I have made comments more than once about the newsletter being late -- no more. One must devote a great deal of time and have the full support of committee members to find timely articles for each edition. I did not use the newsletter committee members very well this year. I pressed only a couple members and then usually at the

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Bullets from the Boardroom

 A special Board of Directors meeting was held August 17, 2001 regarding the Industrial Advisory Committee. The issue of allowing one member of the IAC to attend the monthly Board meeting at the discretion of the President was revisited. The motion carried by a 6-2 margin. Guidelines were established to govern the non-voting IAC position on the Board.

 The Board of Directors unanimously approved a donation in the amount of \$250.00 to the First Tee Program in Howard County.

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Politics, *continued from page 1*

Delaware, though small, is an agricultural state. Its agricultural community wields considerable political power. When the law was written, the formation of the commission specified that farm interests were to be included on the commission. However, there was a concern within the state's golf community that, in order to protect against having strict and inappropriate laws affect them, there needed to be representation. Unfortunately, there was no statewide organization representing golf courses. Through the efforts of a number of individuals, and some help by the Delaware State Golf Association, Ed Brown, CGCS, was named to the commission.

In the ensuing two years, Ed has spent a considerable amount of time in this endeavor. Until fall of 2000, most of that effort involved promulgation of regulations for the poultry and grain crop sectors of agriculture. Last winter, though, the commission turned its attention to other "large" nutrient users; a group of golf course su-

perintendents were invited to Dover to draft our regulations.

In the meantime, a group of superintendents began the formation of an advocacy group within the state under the auspices of the Delaware State Golf Association. The DSGA Green Section was formed to monitor governmental actions on the state, county and local levels for actions that impact the golf industry and to participate with those governmental entities so that any regulatory or statutory actions do not negatively impact golf courses. This allowed for superintendents to stand in the forefront of the issue, and give the commission a reliable industry partner in which to draft regulation. A series of forums was held at the Department of Agriculture building in Dover between key commissioners, the program administrator, and as many as ten superintendents.

Through the various meetings, it became apparent that the commission (other than Ed) and the Department of Agriculture knew very little about our nutrient management practices. The assumption was that superintendents dump fertilizer on golf courses in order to achieve optimal aesthetic quality. But

other misconceptions, and down right ignorance were very tough to confront. For instance, some commissioners were shocked at the minute quantities of phosphorus used on golf courses, and spoon feeding of nitrogen seemed to be a foreign concept to some of the grain farmers. It has taken a concerted effort to convince the commission, and indeed the media and the public, of the very specialized application methods and techniques used on golf courses today.

During the series of meetings, a number of topics pertaining to golf course fertility were discussed. Rates and timing of applications, in the end, did not become a major topic. This is mainly because the commission became convinced of the relatively small mounts of nitrogen and phosphorus that golf courses use. In fact, most of the document that will be required was easy to agree upon. The model that was formulated for farmers was quite appropriate. The soil-testing requirement seemed to be well within what most golf courses now do as a matter

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Thatch and Mat Must Be Minimized

Dr. Peter Dernoeden, Ph.D., University of Maryland

Thatch refers to an organic layer found in turf above the soil surface. This organic layer is composed of living, dead or partially decomposed stems, roots and leaves. At one time, a 0.5 inch (13 mm) thatch layer was considered desirable on greens. Today, due in part to lower mowing heights, a thatch depth of less than 0.3 inch (10 mm) is suggested. Mat refers to a layer of mixed topdressing and organic matter (usually old stem tissue and roots) that develops below the thatch layer. On extremely well managed putting greens there may be more mat than thatch. Under low mowing (<5/32"; 7 mm), thatch and mat layers can become extremely dense making it very difficult to brush-in topdressing. Mat layers can be just as detrimental as thatch in the summertime and both need to be aggressively managed.

Some thatch is desirable because it provides cushion for equipment, people and impact of a ball. Dense thatch, however, is detrimental. Thatch reduces the environmental stress tolerance of turf, predisposes plants to supraoptimal heating in summer, and promotes disease and insect pests. When a thatch layer becomes thick, the stem-bases of plants develop in the thatch rather than at or below the soil line. Stems developing in thatch are far less insulated from extremes of hot or cold and wet and dry weather conditions. All roots emanate from stems and they also are more vulnerable to environmental extremes when they become largely restricted to the thatch layer.

Some thatch is desirable because it provides a cushion for equipment, people and impact of a ball. Dense thatch, however, is detrimental.

Furthermore, buds that produce the new shoots, tillers and roots also are jeopardized by virtue of being exposed to environmental extremes in thatch rather than insulated by soil. Hence, the most important plant tissues (i.e., the growing point and/or meristems, and roots) are more vulnerable to desiccation during drought, freezing temperatures in winter, and supraoptimal temperatures in the summer. Wet thatch in particular contributes to scald damage during hot, rainy periods or when turf is excessively irrigated during the summer. Green plants in coring holes, surrounded by brown turf in the summer, is a good indicator of a thatch and/or mat problem. This is because the coring hole provides an opening unobstructed by thatch or mat, which allows for better water infiltration and air exchange. The surrounding damaged turf with a thatch or mat layer holds water. The water absorbs and transfers heat from the sun, which builds to lethal levels causing scald during periods of high temperature stress.

Thatch also provides harborage for insect pests and pathogens. Black cutworms (*Agrotis ipsilon*), chinch bugs (*Blissus* spp), sod webworms (several species), black

turfgrass *Ataenius* (*A. spretulus*) and other insect pests find thatch a suitable medium in which to survive. Most pathogens can survive unfavorable periods as spores, sclerotia, fruiting bodies or as mycelium embedded in dead organic matter. Pathogens often live saprophytically on dead organic matter in thatch and soil during environmental periods that are unfavorable for infection of plant tissues. In particular, pathogens causing dollar spot (*Sclerotinia homoeocarpa*), leaf spot (*Bipolaris* spp and *Drechslera* spp), and anthracnose (*Colletotrichum graminicola*) survive-in and build-up their populations in the presence of thatch. Wet thatch also provides the moist conditions needed by algae and moss to proliferate. Furthermore, thatchy or puffy stands are predisposed to scalping.

Today's high standards for quality golf turf require that thatch and mat layers be aggressively minimized. These organic layers are managed through a combination of aerifications, topdressing, and proper fertility and irrigation practices. Putting greens should be cored with wide diameter tines and heavily topdressed in the spring and again in late-summer prior to the time annual bluegrass (*Poa annua*) seeds germinate. During the golfing season, putting greens with significant thatch or mat layers should be quadranted and lightly topdressed on a 3- to 4-week interval. During wet periods, greens may be spiked frequently to promote water drainage and air exchange with the soil. Water injection aeration also is beneficial in promoting soil aeration and root growth.

During the summer, turf should be irrigated deeply and infrequently. Research conducted at Texas A & M University by Dr. Richard White and coworkers has shown that deep and infrequent irrigation results in less thatch build-up and a reduction in algae and disease problems. Too many golf course superintendents are irrigating nightly for a set period of time. This practice keeps thatch and mat layers saturated thereby promoting algae, moss, black layer, scald, large divots, scalping and generally less than op-



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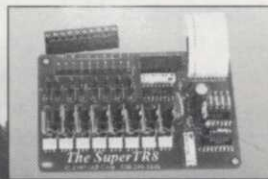
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Thatch, *continued from page 5*

imum playing conditions. It is very important to keep turf as dry as possible during the summer. Deep and infrequent irrigation improves the environmental stress tolerance of turf, helps to discourage pests, minimizes problems associated with large divots and deep ball marks, and enables creeping bentgrass (*Agrostis stolonifera*) to compete more effectively with annual bluegrass.

Fertilizer management, also, is important in minimizing thatch. Most of the annual nitrogen used on cool-season grasses should be applied during the autumn months. During the summer, light applications of nitrogen (0.1 - 0.2 lb N/1000ft²; 5-10 kg N ha⁻¹), known as spoon-feeding or foliar feeding, should be applied every 2 to 3 weeks. Spoon-feeding promotes vigor, particularly in creeping bentgrass, thus enabling the turf to more effectively compete with annual bluegrass and to more rapidly recover from divots, ball marks and mechanical damage. Spoon-feeding with water soluble N-sources, such as urea and ammonium sulfate, is preferred. Use of the aforementioned N-sources has been shown to provide as much as 30% suppression of dollar spot. Natural organic fertilizers are good N-sources and they are safe. Natural organic N-sources, however, are generally not superior to low rate applications of water soluble N-sources in promoting summertime vigor. Research conducted at the University of Maryland does not provide strong evidence that natural organic N-sources are better at promoting thatch degradation, promoting soil microbial activity or reducing diseases, when compared to synthetic slow release fertilizers or urea. Indeed, some composted sewage sludges that contain large wood chips and some dehydrated manures can promote thatch and dollar spot.



of practice. So the application rates and reporting seemed to be resolved with little contention. At this writing, the final "Nutrient Management Plan Policy Checklist" is awaiting approval by the full commission.

However, "cost-share" has been a dividing issue, not only among the commission, but also among the superintendents who have worked on the nutrient management plan. Most agricultural operations will be eligible for some cost-share, but it is too easy to claim that "the rich country clubs" should not be entitled to any financial assistance. In fact, some superintendents have stated outright that their clubs do not intend to seek reimbursement for the program if available. However, commissioner Brown has fought hard for some assistance, particularly for some of the smaller golf operations in the state. Indeed, one of the premises of the law is financial assistance for those who demonstrate financial need to comply with the law. At present, this is the largest outstanding issue that has not been settled. In what has turned out to be a tight budget year for Delaware, this promises to be a dogfight.

The Nutrient Management Commission should conclude its work with golf courses soon and have the final version ready for implementation by 2003. It does plan on using the same process on other groups, such as container nurseries and lawn care companies. Compliance with the plan should not be difficult; in fact, most golf facilities already perform the soil-testing requirement.

Three of the superintendents that have been at the forefront of this issue will be featured in GCSAA's "Golf and Grassroots" government relations forum at the conference and show in Orlando this February. "Buddy" O'Neill, CGCS, (Wild Quail G&CC) and Paul Stead, CGCS (Deerfield G&TC) will join Ed Brown, CGCS (Rehoboth Beach CC) in the session, discussing the formulation of the nutrient management plan.

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Industrial Advisory Committee Report

by Harry Fridley

Over three years ago when I was asked to serve on the Industrial Advisory Committee along with two other fellow commercial members, I didn't realize the extent of the adventure before me. It has been both a challenging and rewarding experience. My hope is that we have created a positive beginning towards further expanding the support and relations within the MAAGCS.

I feel that my fellow Class F members and I have begun to build avenues of communication where ideas can travel for the good of all members. We feel very good about the suggestions that we have been able to share which are being considered or are already being implemented.

- More direct lines of communication between the Board of Directors and the Class F members
- Resources for educational seminars

- Annual survey of Class F members to gather a consensus of information
- A structured forum for concerns and suggestions
- Suggested use of name tags at meetings that have been done in the past
- Introduction of guests from the podium at monthly meetings
- More Class F members serving on committees

I am glad that I was able to participate in the building of the foundation for continued open communication and the exchange of ideas among all member of MAAGCS including communication between the Board of Directors and the Class F members. Communication builds strength within our organization and helps to eradicate misunderstandings. MAAGCS as a strong organization, is very important to all its members.

There are many capable and enthusiastic individuals within the Class F membership who want to contribute to and be an active part of the MAAGCS. They bring energy and new ideas that can be built upon. Please give these members your support and encouragement. My three year term as a member of the IAC will soon end, but I will continue to support whoever is elected to take my place. While we as members may not always agree on specific ideas, we must always keep communication open and the best interest of the MAAGCS as our main objective.

In light of the events that occurred on Tuesday September 11, I would like to add my sincere hope that all members of the MAAGCS, their families, and loved ones are well.

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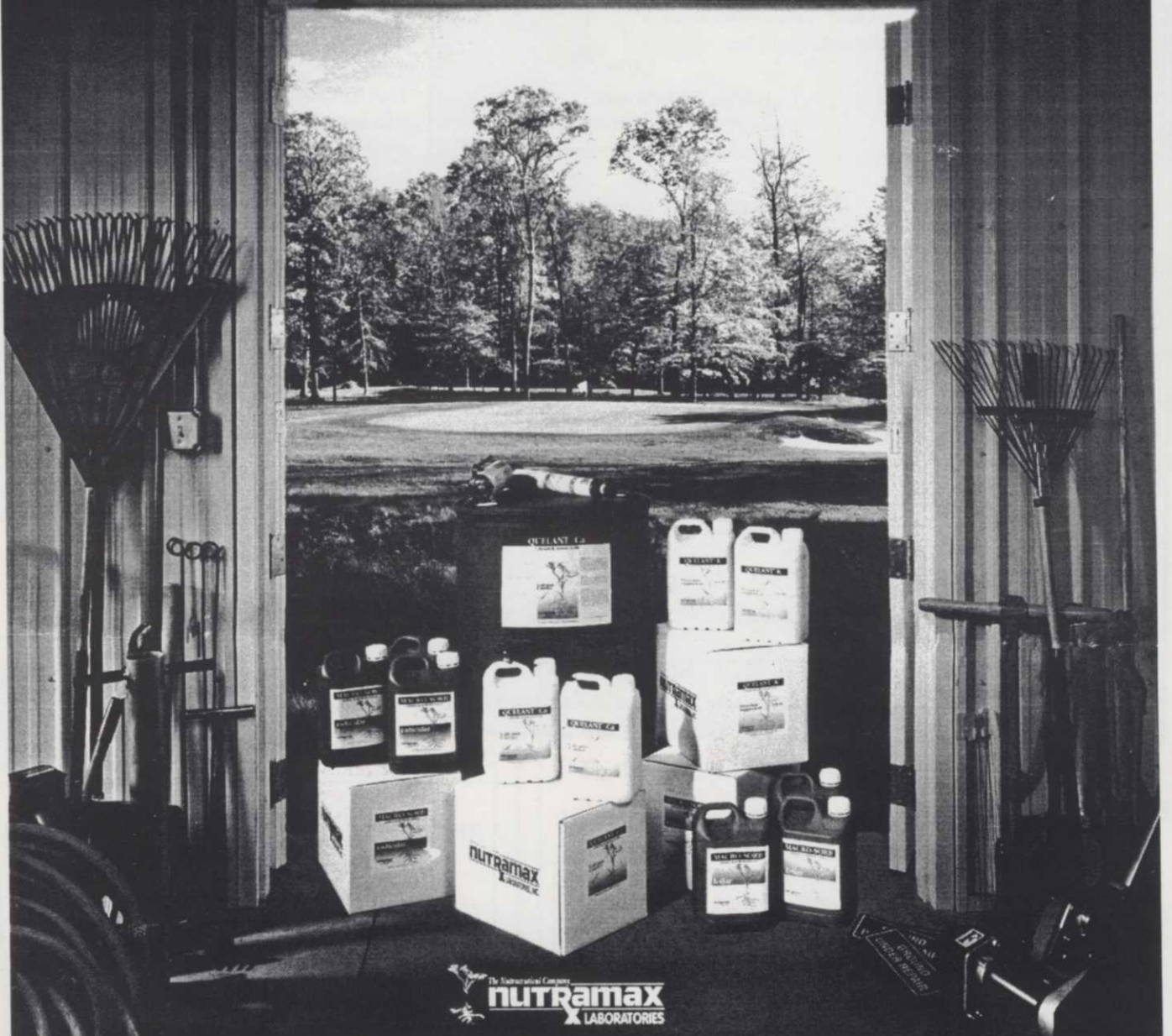
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Golf Notes

by Dave Burkhart

The second annual Stewards of the Chesapeake fundraising tournament was held at Queenstown Harbor Golf Links on August 27th with 124 golfers in attendance. Thanks to Atlantic Golf who again donated one of their courses for this event. Tom Tokarski and his staff had the course in outstanding condition. Great job gentlemen! We also wish to thank the numerous sponsors that stepped up to make this tournament so successful again. If you did not attend this year you missed out on a great event. So plan on attending next year, we would love to see you out there.

The day's winners were:

- 1st Net** (101) Lakewood Country Club
Chris Ayers, Doug McPherson, Jorge Massa, and Bill Karpa
- 2nd Net** (102 match of cards) C C at Woodmore
Mike Evans, Dave Osterhouse, Lester Tanner, and Jeff Miskin
- 3rd Net** (102) Atlantic Golf
John Newcomb, John Stern, Scot Forbis, and Lex Birney

Long Drive: Doug McPherson

Straight Drive: Sam Kessel

Closest to Pin: Jeff Johnson, Rick Wakefield, Jim Halley, David Evans

Editor, continued from page 3

last minute. This type of "Crisis Management" just doesn't work well. Fortunately, some very good people stepped up with some interesting articles once again.

This is the last issue I will have panic attacks over, as the December issue is full of Committee reports. To whomever becomes Editor next year, remember this - the position of Newsletter Editor can be fun and rewarding. There are three very important things to remember: work on your ideas before the season starts, get and keep your committee members involved and communicate with the Executive Secretary, frequently.

Years ago, I went out west and complained about the newsletter in the association I joined there. To make a long story short I became the Editor. I did everything. I wrote, took pictures, organized articles, traveled back and forth to the printer and stuffed and mailed the newsletter. I was busy but I had a lot of fun doing it. I just couldn't get into that same mode the whole year, this time. Maybe a couple glasses of good wine would have helped me.

No political buttons this time, although I do have some thoughts. As always, I hope you find something of interest in this edition.

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News & Notes

New Members

Class D
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Congratulations

To **Russ and Krista Davis** upon the arrival of a son, Russell W. Davis, III.
 To **Scott and Kathy Furlong** upon the arrival of a son, Hayden Scott
 To **Mike and Jody Gilmore** upon the arrival of a granddaughter, Madison Claire
 To **Steve and Becky Slominski** upon the arrival of a daughter, Anna Elisa

Condolences

To the family of friends of retired member **George W. Murphy** upon his passing.

2001 Upcoming Events

October 9th	Annual Championship Indian Spring Country Club
October 24th	Angie Cammarota Tournament Woodmont Country Club
November 13-15th	Virginia Turgrass Conference Virginia Beach, VA
November 13th	IAC Elections Raspberry Falls Golf Club
December 11th	MAAGCS Annual Meeting Turf Valley Resort & CC
December 11th	GCSAA Educational Seminar Turf Valley Resort & CC



GCSAA Education

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