

Connecticut Clippings

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2008 SUPERINTENDENT OF THE YEAR

Hello, for those of you who don't know me my name is Mike Donahue and I'm here today as the commercial representative to the CAGCS Board of Directors with the honor to present the 2008 Superintendent of the Year.

Before I start, I would ask that the following individuals stand who have had the honor and distinction to be chosen by their peers in the past to be superintendent of the year.

- Keith Angilly – Past President
- Les Kennedy – Current Chapter Delegate
- Jud Smith – Past President, Newsletter Committee
- Heather Garvin – Newsletter Editor
- Bob Chalifour – Past President, Newsletter Editor
- Brian Skelly – Past President
- John Motycka – Past Treasurer
- Phil Neaton – Past President, NERTC Board Member
- Anthony Grosso – Past President, NERTC Board Member
- Mike Wallace – Past President GCSAA
- Fred Bachand – Recently Retired, Wethersfield CC

It's interesting to note that these individuals through their efforts and guidance have produced in what many have acknowledged in our field as one of the best managed and productive superintendent organizations in the country. CAGCS's financial management can be only described as AAA. Wall Street should take notice.

Our members involved in Government Relations has been ever vigilant about excessive or unfair regulations as well as promoting a professional dialogue with opposing view-

points This group is also ever mindful about educating the membership about agronomic developments and supporting local schools to develop and test new products applicable to our specific region. With CAGCS's generous support the UConn Turfgrass Program has in its short history distinguished itself as a leading academic and research facility.

CAGCS's support and direction of The New England Turfgrass Conference is believed by many currently in the industry as the best state or regional turfgrass show in the country. With the long term involvement of CAGCS members and past presidents Anthony Grosso and Phil Neaton this conference has excelled far beyond anyone's expectations. While many conferences and trades shows have declined recently the New England Conference continues to grow and expand.

Our recipient of 2008's superintendent of the year award is no stranger to the idea of participation. He's been a member of our organization for 16 years and has been active as a board member for 10 years. In discussing his past and present with family, coworkers, peers, mentors and subordinates some common traits keep arising. Everyone keeps describing him as competitive but in a positive way. In addition, his orientation and attitude toward a "teamwork" management approach have won him praise by everyone mentioned.

This year's recipient exemplifies these characteristics. He grew up in Madison, CT one of 4 brothers where he attended Hand High School. He participated in wrestling and successfully played baseball at the position of catcher where he received numerous awards. *Continued on Page 3...*



Chris Mauro

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Christian P. Mauro, President

The President's Message

of the past year are now nothing more than a nervous twitch that settles in when that special member calls to just let you know that someone, not them, but someone complained about the sand in the parking lot. Spring, in our profession, is like waking up on your couch after a rough night, the surroundings look familiar, you have a limited memory of the events that lead you to this, your head doesn't hurt that bad, you're still dressed, your significant other is pissed at you, the kids think you already dressed because your taking them out for breakfast so you think how bad can this be:

Yup, that time of year again, you have to explain to your wife why you're leaving for work in the dark and for her not to worry about making you any dinner because your greens chairman wants to meet with you to discuss bunker rake placement after he gets out of work at 6. You assure your wife it is ok because you will be home in time to help her tuck the kids into bed. You get home and the kids give you the biggest hug and kiss and they tell you about their day, all at the exact same time and you wouldn't have it any other way because this is the moment you looked forward to all day long!

Then you get up and the reality of it all starts to settle in, the surroundings do look familiar, somebody smarter than any of us decided daylight savings should be the first week of March which is great, we have more daylight for course clean up, at what point do we decide if the desiccated turf is dead and not dormant after all the last few weeks included 45 mph winds with temperatures in the teens and guess what some of your members walked the course and they have never seen it drier so let's get the course open for St. Patty's Day. Oh yeah, by the way, the economy is in the tank so your club needs to save money so remember how good the course was last year, you should have no problem producing at least the same conditions on 80% of that budget. Now that dull pain in your head is starting to thump as you realize its March and you're already filling out the week-end schedules.

Thank you to everyone for awarding me the 2008 Superintendent of the Year Award, to say the least that was an absolute surprise and a tremendous honor, my kids think the chair is the coolest thing. A special thank you to Mike Chrzanowski, someone who I have a tremendous amount of respect for as a Superintendent, more importantly a friend who I have the upmost respect for as a person. Working for Mike taught me that how we maintain grass is only part of being successful in this profession, knowing Mike all these years has helped me understand that sometimes it's how you spend your time away from the golf course that can really make you a quality Superintendent.

Please watch the mail for your CAGCS Event Schedule and save those dates. An important date for this year's calendar will be the Scholarship and Research Tournament, scheduled for Monday, May 18th at Watertown Golf Club. Thank you to Paul Bonini, CGCS and to everyone who has volunteered to host our 2009 events and please thank our commercial members when you get the chance, who in these difficult financial times continue to donate to our golf and social events.

As the spring golfing season is upon us and the crazies are beginning to fill our parking lots wondering why the greens aren't rolling over 10 and why the azaleas haven't bloomed yet, I sit down to write this Presidents Letter staring at a frosty thermometer that reads 27 degrees in the sun. Spring is the season of fresh beginnings, the memories and experiences

Good luck to everyone on a successful season and buckle-up because here we go again.

Respectfully Submitted,
Chris P. Mauro

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He's an avid sports fan of the Yankee's, Giants and UConn Football.

His career started at Madison Country Club, a 1909 Willie Parks designed layout working for Superintendent Mike Chrzanowski. He had enrolled at UConn Avery Point but after working at Madison he decided to switch his major and enrolled at the UMass 2 year turf-grass program. Mike noticed a serious dedication of this individual and delegated him more responsibility and actually appointed him assistant superintendent while he was still attending school at UMass. He stayed at Madison for 4 years and honed his skills.

In 1995 Highfield Golf Club, a small family oriented country club was looking for a new superintendent and our recipient accepted the position. This 1953 Orrin Smith designed layout in Middlebury, CT. was in need of some upgrades and this young superintendent was eager for the challenge. He supervised the installation of a new irrigation system from an old quick coupler system. A major increase in the size of the driving range was due and he facilitated that construction project.

Many of the greens were performing badly and he then prioritized the reconstruction of them over a 4 year period with minimal

play disruption. As an avid golfer, his club recognized his appreciation for improving course conditions and sought out his input for elevating the course's playability. This high credibility paid off when his position was expanded to General Manger of the course 6 years ago. By now most of you know who our recipient is.


Our recipient has been a very active member of our association. Beginning In 2000 he served 2 years as Scholarship and Research Chairman where he ran the S & R Tournament. Afterword he served 2 years as membership chairman. In 2004 he served as Secretary where his organizational skills surfaced. In 2006 he was elected Vice President and finally in 2008 he was elected President.

His family life is very active as well. He met his wife Amy, from Dalton, MA, while both were attending UMass. Both were taking a class in Early Child Development. They dated for 4 years and have been married for 12 years. They obviously took that class to heart. They now have 4 children, Zach - 9, Alli-7, Jason -4 and Sage -3. Even with this busy schedule dad finds time with his children coaching little league. And for the second year in a row we have a marriage where opposites attract. Our Superintendent is an avid Yankees fan and his smarter half is a Red Sox fan.

As we see, our recipient embodies the concept of healthy competition and teamwork. As association president he seeks input and dialogue before finalizing decisions. He's receptive to opposing ideas and values with respect all ideas and viewpoints. I've learned that he's also a good manger by always being prepared & organized at board meetings. He's also encouraged employees to improve their situation by pursuing their education and professional experiences even when it temporarily inconvenienced him. He also recognized the value of this organization and takes seriously its stewardship that has been delegated to him.

They say that the baseball catcher has the toughest job on the baseball field. Compared to any other defensive player on the field he has the responsibility and awareness of many things at same time. It's fair to say that this year's recipient, a former catcher learned those behind the plate skills during his younger days and applies that orientation of total awareness to his professional and personal life.

Ladies and Gentlemen, it is my honor and pleasure to present the 2008 Superintendent of the Year, Mr. Christian Mauro



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A WIN IS STILL A WIN!

On March 2-5th the 2009 New England Regional Turfgrass Conference and Show was held successfully in Providence. The four day schedule was chock full of informational events including 8 Monday seminars that were attended by more than 300 turfgrass professionals even as a late season snow tried its best to disrupt the schedule. The seminars went on as scheduled and by mid-morning most attendees were able to safely make their way to Providence. Bill Morton, CGCS of The Misquamicut Club in Westerly, RI welcomed everyone to the opening session Tuesday morning as president of the NERTF. Tuesday, was a fact-filled day with many associated with the USGA Golf House and USGA Turf Advisory Service conveying to attendees the importance of working together especially during less than desirable economic times. URI friends and Alumni lunch was hosted in the Rotunda. Several interested sports turf managers attended a seminar by Dr. Jason Henderson titled, "Making Sense of Soil Tests." Keynote speaker Greg Gumbel added enduring substance to overcoming challenges as he refreshed everyone's memories of Olympic triumphs by individuals who had to defeat great personal challenges in order to succeed. The trade show opened that afternoon to an energetic buzz, as commercial exhibitors introduced interested participants to new products and programs.

The annual UMass Alumni and Friends Breakfast was held Wednesday morning and provides a great way to start the day catching up with fellow grads and university personnel including Dean Steve Goodwin. Wednesday's educational sessions were met with approval to attendees for their content by notable professors and professionals. In 2009, we introduced a new morning session titled, "Turf and Ornamentals" to provide additional credit opportunities and topics that are in and around the turfgrass managers area of responsibility, but may not be directly a turfgrass topic exclusively. It was a new offering to try and interest some of the fringe turfgrass management individuals and companies. With a topic like the Asian Longhorned Beetle infecting local forests, all would agree it was timely addition. Wednesday's trade show experience was notably lively as a very good walk-in registration increased crowds to as high of levels as we have experienced on any other Wednesday's before. An over-packed room in the mechanic's session learned many new tricks of the trade dealing with small engines and electrical troubleshooting.

Additional activities included our successful Live Auction Wednesday on the trade show floor which raised nearly \$20,000 for turfgrass research. The auction was guided again by the Master Family Auction Team of Manny Mihailides and Danny Calaise to help raise increasingly crucial research funds from donated products of exhibitors and attendees. Jack Nugnes, CGCS of the Oyster Harbors Club was the largest contributor to the auction's

success and will receive a free 3-day conference and show pass in 2010!

The second event was the inaugural NERTF Turf Bowl team competition, and was competed on between students from UMass, URI and UConn. Conducted by immediate past-president Robert Ruzala and representatives of all three schools, students were mixed into teams of three and proctored during a 60 question 5-section test and an additional 25 identification specimens of turfgrass plants, diseases, insects, weeds and seeds. The teams had 1½ hour running clock to finish their requirements and then the scores were tallied to determine which team won the competition. The results were that UMass Team #2 (Alex Brooks, Scott St. Pierre, Shawn Wynn all of UMass) scored the highest. They received personal plaques and a Turf Bowl Plaque will include their names for posterity! Congratulations to all competitors!

Thursday morning began with our 2nd annual Research Breakfast with participants presenting overviews of what is going on at their schools concerning turfgrass research. A subdued crowd shared the trade show floor and education sessions that morning, not nearly the numbers of Wednesday, but still actively interacting with exhibitors. Education session attendees showed interest in topics that included Lyme disease among other turfgrass disease concerns. Before people knew it, the overhead door flew open at 1pm and exhibitors scurried to pack their items and the show floor was empty and a sea of waste by 5pm.

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It was still a solid show though attendance numbers have been better in other years. The reality is economics have hurt or impeded just about all facets of our industry. We look forward optimistically and focus on continuing support of turfgrass research and education in New England. Will Rodgers once said, "A Farmer has to be optimist or he wouldn't still be Farmer." Our industry as well must move ahead the best it can looking forward to better days! We would like to thank all of our exhibitors for supporting the efforts of the New England Regional Turfgrass Foundation and for marketing your products with us during this trying economy. Especially to our sponsors: Andersons Golf Products, Bayer Environmental Science, Floratine, Harrell's, Lebanon Turf, Syngenta, Tom Irwin, Turf Products Corporation, and Winding Brook Turf Farm thank you for your support and help to us with our receptions, refreshments, programs and lanyards and making the New England Regional Show the "best" regional show! Many thanks to all the auction donors that have helped the foundation expand research through the NERTRT. BIG thanks to all attendees and presenters for supporting the industry through your efforts of becoming better turfgrass professionals through networking, education and purchasing the best products on turf! Everyone involved together have made the 12th Annual New England Regional Turfgrass Conference and Show a continued success and yes..... another WIN!

Gary Sykes, Executive Director, New England Regional Turfgrass Foundation, Inc.

WHY AERATE?



It's a perfect, sunny morning and you've just reached the first green in regulation. You feel great and you know you're within birdie range. Then, you see them, those little holes in the green. Arrggh! They've just aerified the course, and it's going to ruin your round, right?

Well, maybe not. Consider the fact that PGA TOUR legend Tom Watson shot a sizzling record 58 at his then-home course, Kansas City Country Club, just days after the greens had been aerified. Consider also that aerification is merely a short-term disruption that has long-term benefits for the course. When you see them, remember that without those little holes, the greens would eventually die.

Preventative maintenance is an integral part of successful golf course management. Golfers view aerification as an inconvenience that takes the greens out of play for a day, pulling cores from the greens and leaving holes that can affect putting for many days before healing. To add insult to injury, aerification is best done in many part of the country during mid-summer, at the height of the playing season and when most greens are in prime condition. But a golfer needs to understand how important aerification is to producing healthy turf.

Aerification achieves three important objectives. It relieves soil compaction, it provides a method to improve the soil mixture around the highest part of a green's roots and it reduces or prevents the accumulation of excess thatch.

Like so many things, the quality of a good putting green is more than skin deep. In fact, the condition of a green has a lot to do with what goes on below the surface. In order for grass to grow at 3/16-inch, it must have deep, healthy roots. Good roots demand oxygen. In good soil, they get the oxygen from tiny pockets of air trapped between soil and sand particles.

Over time, the traffic from golfers' feet (as well as mowing equipment) tends to compact the soil under the putting green and particularly when the soil contains a lot of clay. When soil becomes compacted, the air pockets on which the roots depend are crushed, and the roots are essentially left gasping for air. Without oxygen, the grass plants become weaker and will eventually wither and die. Aerification is a mechanical process that creates more air space in the soil and promotes deeper rooting, thus helping the grass plants stay healthy. In most cases, it's done by removing 1/2-inch cores (those plugs you sometimes see near a green or in fairways) from the compacted soil, allowing for an infusion of air and water that brings a resurgence of growth. The spaces are then filled with sand 'topdressing' that helps the soil retain air space and makes it easier for roots to grow downward.

Older greens often are constructed of soils with significant amounts of silt, clay and fine organic particles that are prone to compaction. Filling aerification holes with sand improves drainage and resists compaction. The periodic introduction of sand to a green's top layer can over time, avoid or postpone expensive rebuilding or renovation of greens.

Finally, growing of turf adds to a layer of organic matter on the surface. This layer, called thatch, is an accumulation of dead stems, leaves and roots. A little organic matters makes for a resilient green, but too much invites diseases and insects. Topdressing with sand can prevent thatch buildup, and aerification is one of the best ways to reduce an existing layer and prevent an excess of thatch from becoming established.

Other aerification techniques use machines with 'tines' or knives that simply poke holes through the soil profile. A new technique even uses ultra high-pressure water that's injected through the soil profile to create small holes that relieve some compaction but heal quickly.

There are many types of aerifying machines with different attachments that address different problems in the various stages of the life of a green. So the next time you're ready to scream when the aerifiers are brought on the course, remember that a little preventative maintenance produces the best greens over the long haul.

The bottom line is that aerification is a necessary practice. But before you curse the superintendent for ruining your day, just think of Tom Watson.

For more information regarding golf course management practices, contact your local superintendent or the GCSAA at (800) 472-7878 or www.gcsaa.org.



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Scott Zwiers, Class SM
The Milbrook Club

Congratulations to Steve Curry, formerly at Berkshire Hills CC is now Golf Course Superintendent at Shuttle Meadow CC in Kensington

Congratulations on Retirement

Fred Bachand with 40 plus years at Wethersfield CC

Dave Vibber with 14 Years at The Orchards and 29 years at Ellington Ridge CC

Ed Zenisky with 25 Years at Tashua Knolls

Congratulations to Neil Lajeunesse who was elected as the Class C Representative to the Board at The Winter Seminar. *Pictured below...*



Congratulations

Donnie & Marjorie Beck were married on March 7, 2009. Wishing them all the best!

Maggie & Steve Winiarski on the birth of their 1st child – Nicholas John. He was born on December 13, 2008 and weighted in a healthy 7lbs and 4ozs.

Winding Brook Turf on their 50th Anniversary! *Below from left to right Mike Krudwig, Scott McLeod, Jack Morgan, Jane Morgan, Scott Wheeler*



Dick Tice, Executive Director, Environmental Industry Council. *Pictured below...*



Condolences

To Mike Cornicelli and family on the passing of Mike's mother Phyllis Cornecelli on February 27, 2009.

Jon Eric "Butch" Mattson, 68, of Elm Street, Plantsville, died Sunday, March 22, 2009 at his home following a courageous three year battle with pancreatic cancer. He was a member of CAGCS from 1985 to 1991 and was the national sales manager for SALSCO, Inc during that time.

To Greg, Pandora Wojick and family on the passing of Pandora's mother on Thursday, April 9, 2009.

Feedback

Please let us know. How is the economy affecting your operation?

PLEASE NOTE!!!

SCHOLAR AND RESEARCH TOURNAMENT venue and date has been changed to: Watertown Golf Club Monday, May 18, 2009



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Neil Lajeunesse, Mike Pieri, Gary Burns, Ben Goosen



Phil Matts, Ed Clark, Scott Lund, Matt Quinn

Participated in the Class C Tournament held at Indian Hill CC last Fall. Congratulations to the winner Neil Lajeunesse

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Retired Wethersfield Superintendents left to right Bill Dest and Fred Bachand with current Superintendent Allen Woodward

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CHAIN SAW SAFETY

Ron Smith, MBA, CPSI

We are currently in the time of the golf maintenance season where chain saws are used on a much more frequent basis than other times of the year. Collectively, more than 40,000 people are injured by chain saws each year.

When a chain saw is at full speed, more than 600 teeth pass a given point per second. A muffler on a chain saw can reach as much as 900 degrees F. Frequently chain saw work involved trees standing 50 feet or tall and weighing several tons. When you combine all these factors, it is not surprising so many people are involved with chain saw accidents.

The average chain saw injury requires 110 stitches and cost \$5,600 in medical costs. The two most common places for injuries are the front left thigh and the back of the left hand. The most common cause of chain saw accidents is kickback. One in 5 chain saw injuries are from kickback.

With a basic understanding of your chain saw and how it is intended to be used, you can reduce the chance of experiencing

a chain saw accident and eliminate the element of surprise from kickback or other unexpected reactions. You will also be able to maximize the life and utility of the saw and its cutting attachments.

GENERAL SAFETY PRECAUTIONS FOR USE OF CHAIN SAWS

1. Before using any chain saw, thoroughly read the manufacturer's operating and safety instructions.
2. Do not operate a chain saw when you are fatigued, if you have been drinking alcoholic beverages, or if you have been taking prescription medication or non-prescription drugs.
3. Use safety footwear, snug-fitting clothing, protective gloves, and eye, hearing, and head protection.
4. When cutting, hold the saw firmly with both hands, with thumbs and fingers encircling both chain saw handles. Grip the saw with the right hand on the rear (throttle) handle and the left hand on the front handle, even if you are left handed. A firm grip will help you maintain control of the saw in the event of a kickback or other unexpected reaction. Keep the chain saw handles dry, clean and free of oil or fuel mixture to avoid slipping and to aid in control of the saw.

5. Chain saws are designed to be run at full speed. To maximize your productivity and to reduce the fatigue you experience maintain a full throttle setting while cutting.

6. Cut while standing slightly to the side, out of the plane of the cutting chain and guide bar to reduce the risk of injury in the event you lose control of the saw.

7. Carry the chain saw with the engine stopped, the guide bar and cutting chain to the rear, and the muffler away from your body. When transporting your chain saw, always use the appropriate guide bar scabbard.

8. Do not overreach or cut above shoulder height. It is very difficult to control the saw in awkward positions.

9. Do not operate a chain saw in a tree or from a ladder unless you have been specifically trained and are equipped to do so. There is a risk that you can lose your balance because of cutting forces on the saw or movement of the material being cut.

10. Some cutting tasks require special training and skills. Remember, there is no substitute for good judgment. If you are in doubt, contact a professional.



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11. To avoid the risk of kickback, make sure that the area in which you are cutting is free from obstructions. Do not let the nose of the guide bar contact a log, branch or any other obstruction while you are operating the saw. Do not cut near chain link fences, wire fences, or in areas where there is loose or scrap wire.

12. Do not start cutting trees until you have a clear work area, secure footing, and a planned retreat path from the falling tree.

13. Be careful in the event the wood closes in and pinches the saw. The 'push' force which is exerted when the top chain is pinched can add unexpectedly to any 'pull' force you may use when attempting to pull the saw free. You may pull the moving chain into yourself.

14. Use extreme caution with cutting small-size brush and saplings because slender material may catch the cutting chain and be whipped toward you or pull you off balance.

15. When cutting a limb or sapling that is under tension (called a spring pole), be alert for spring back so that you will not be struck by the limb or chain saw when the tension in the limb is released.

16. Do not allow other persons to be near the chain saw when starting the saw or cutting with it. Keep by-standers and animals out of the work area.

17. Keep all parts of your body away from the cutting chain when the engine is running.

18. Do not operate a chain saw that is damaged, improperly adjusted or not completely assembled. Be sure that the cutting chain stops moving when the throttle control trigger is released. If you are in doubt regarding the mechanical condition of your saw, consult your servicing dealer.

19. Follow the manufacturer's sharpening and maintenance instructions for the chain saw. Sharpening cutting chain requires two steps: sharpening of the cutting edge and adjustment of the depth gauge setting. When in doubt, see your servicing dealer for advice or repairs.

20. Use only replacement bars and cutting chains specified by the manufacturer, or the equivalent. Guide bars and cutting chains affect not only performance, but kickback safety as well.

21. Maintain proper chain saw tension. A loose chain can come off the guide bar and can strike the operator.

22. All chain saw service other than the items mentioned in the owner's maintenance instructions should be performed by competent chain saw service personnel. Improperly performed maintenance may damage the saw and present a hazard to the operator. For example, if improper tools are used to remove the flywheel or if an improper tool is used to hold the flywheel in order to remove the

clutch, structural damage to the flywheel could occur and could subsequently cause the flywheel to break.

23. Use caution when handling fuel. Move the chain saw at least 10 feet away from the fueling point before starting the engine. Do not smoke while refueling your saw. Use gasoline powered chain saws only in well ventilated areas.

SOME GOOD CHAIN SAW ADVICE

A) Chain saws are made to cut only one thing: wood. Do not use chain saws to cut other materials, and never let your chain contact rocks or dirt during operation. Remember, your chain saw is moving in excess of 50 miles per hour. In just one second of contact with a rock or with the ground, each cutter will be impacted more than ten times.

B) Never force a dull chain to cut. When it is sharp, chain saws are designed to feed itself into the wood, and needs only light pressure to cut efficiently. Dull chains produce fine wood dust, a sure sign that maintenance is required.

C) To maximize the life of your guide bar and chain, maintain proper chain tension and use high-quality lubricants.

D) Use only a low kickback chain saw unless you have skills and are trained for dealing with kickback.

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THE RIGHT OF REPLY

By Michael Picken in Golf on 22nd Jan 2009

Imagine one minute everything is fine and then the next you are called into the club's board room and told you're out of a job. That situation has befallen a number of golf course superintendents in recent times and as it always does sends shockwaves throughout the industry.

Not only does the industry lose the experience and knowledge of that practitioner, in many cases for good, it also makes those who still have a job question their own situation and whether they are doing all they can to protect themselves, particularly at a time when job security is paramount in the face of global uncertainty.

Former VGCSA president Michael Picken was one such casualty in late 2008 and here he ruminates about his dismissal and asks whether 12 years in the one position is too long in this day and age.

With a spate of similar stories to mine taking place around the country, I'm drawn to a conversation I had with a well-known turf identity many years ago where he relayed the words of the legendary Claude Crockford who apparently said his major frustration in the job was the lack of the right of reply. By no means considering myself in the esteemed category of Mr. Crockford, this is my attempt to describe my recent demise at a club I was thoroughly committed to.

Before I begin, let me qualify this by stating that my former employer gave me over 12 years of generous remuneration, ever-improving working conditions, and in the most part, all the necessary means to bring the course forward to a level I am proud of. Granted this

article has a cathartic element to it, but hopefully it will provide many new or happily unaware superintendents with an example of where it can go horribly wrong if you're not on the ball.

A brief history of the club in question is of an old established course built on former orchard that features considerable undulations on clay soils, with tight tree lined fairways, tees and greens. I was appointed in 1996 after spending 14 years being successfully involved in the development of a well-known Mornington Peninsula golf project. It was apparent from the outset that that my new job offered many problems ranging from greens inconsistencies, reticulation deficiencies and an unsustainable reliance on town water for irrigation needs.

To rectify these issues a greens replacement programme was implemented and completed over an eight year period. The reticulation system was upgraded and the independent water source problem was overcome through developing a lake system to the narrow creek that meanders through the lowest part of the property. This gave the club a substantial storage of water to draw from in times of need. During this period the antiquated maintenance facility also went through a major upgrade in order to create suitable working conditions for staff and machinery upkeep.

With the major course issues laid to rest the club administration believed it was responsible to drive on with other pressing needs. This meant the workload continued in the form of a par 5 realignment to rectify a boundary problem, reconstructing the bowling green, the addition of a 19th hole, 2.2km of concrete paths to be installed over a period of 3-4 years and a phased-in upgrade to the ageing irrigation plumbing. Again to be completed over a three year period.

It must be noted that most of this work was carried out by contractors or sub-contractors, but that did not discount from the fact that the groundstaff were always heavily involved with all projects, providing the finish that enabled the different areas to come back into play as soon as possible. The final outcomes of these projects have always been well received by the members but it must be said there have been times when the extensive works have stretched their patience.

The Slide

For the first seven or eight years of my employment I believed I had the full support of both the manager and committee. This was confirmed by the fact that when my dismissal became known, many of the captains and presidents from that period contacted me as I was about to leave with generous offers of references and endorsements.

As time moved on and faces on the committee changed, cracks started to appear. This came in guise of mixed enthusiasm to projects I put forward or work in progress. I also noted that information coming from above was slowing down and in the last year it could only be described as on a need-to-know basis. I have always maintained that a superintendent/manager relationship was the key to the job, so in a way I must take some responsibility for allowing that to decline.

Also, in fairness to the management of the club it would be reasonable to say I can be headstrong and quite intolerant when I believe in the merit of a project that will benefit the course. I also find criticism hard to take, a flaw many passionate superintendents could relate to.

As 2008 unfolded I witnessed a relatively new, and in the most part, inexperienced board take the reins, which coincided



with a very supportive and involved captain moving aside. It also lined up with a restructuring of personnel in the office which appeared to create issues.

The year also marked a personal decision to have long overdue hip-replacement surgery and then after some time back at work, a six-week holiday with my wife in Europe.

Major works were again being planned but I believed 12 years of service warranted these necessary periods of time off. I also had the utmost faith in the ability of the maintenance staff.

Two weeks after returning from my holiday, an impromptu meeting was called by two members of the four-man board along with the manager. The board relayed concerns that they were getting complaints from members about the speed and standard of the clean-up that was taking place by groundstaff following the installation of phase one of the new irrigation system.

The actual installation work was being carried out by one of the state's leading irrigation contractors, who was sympathetic to the difficulties of reinstating trenches in clay during winter. It was agreed at this impromptu meeting that a priority would be placed on speeding up the process. During this meeting I protested that an enormous amount of unplanned work had been implemented while I had been away, and that staff had been left thin on the ground.

Two weeks later another meeting was called, this time with three members of the board. The tone was much more serious and it was agreed that it was time to add extra manpower to the already overstretched 11-man crew, so

an extra groundsman was employed. It now appears on reflection that I had been given a second warning of my impending dismissal, even though at no time had this been mentioned.

For the next month we pushed on preparing the course for the biannual visit of a sister club. Another unscheduled 80m concrete path was installed and a new tee complex was built. The sister club visit received an endorsement from the visiting captain but nothing from my committee. An ominous sign it now seems. During this whole period it must be stated that the manager gave me no reasons for concern.

Three days after completing the draft 2009 budget, which had been called for a month early, the manager called to say he'd been requested to have me in the boardroom in two hours. His comment was, "It doesn't sound good."

On completion of that five minute meeting I was out of a job with a thank you for the 12 years but a decision had been made to move in a different direction. On requesting a reason, or reasons, the reply was given that there was no point, followed by the comments, "Twelve years is a long time in today's industrial climate". I had two days to clean up my belongings.

I left the boardroom and dropped the bombshell to a shocked grounds crew who were very respectful and supportive on my last two days. The manager also appeared sympathetic claiming he had no idea the decision was coming and mentioned he had dissuaded the board from emailing me the news.

He then informed me of my legal entitlements as I didn't have a contract in place.

After I appealed that position with him, he let me know soon after the board had agreed to increase the entitled five weeks payout figure (plus long-service and annual leave) to eight weeks.

On Reflection

As I review my time at my former place of employment and superintendent positions anywhere in this country, I can't help but worry. Many of our colleagues around the states, who were kind enough to contact me following my departure, echoed these same concerns.

To start, I would implore all superintendents to have a contract and make sure it has been approved by a legal specialist. The AGCSA has a service that can provide that. Also be aware of the dangers that the old school general manager situation can create. Many American clubs have moved away from that format, to a situation where the superintendent works, and is answerable to, heavily involved committee members such as a greens chairman or captain. Some of the better clubs around the country have also followed that model.

The best periods of my professional life were when the people in control had the time, the interest and had served an extended period as a regular committee person before getting into a position of power. It would also be advisable to record your own minutes of any meeting undertaken. This at least creates some record of past conversations.

Finally, maybe it is true to say that in this day and age 12 years is a long time in the one job. Certainly the culture of the club I have just left indicates that as the last four supers prior to me, dating back into the 1960's, have all met the same fate.

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Connecticut Association of Golf Course Superintendents, Golf Course Superintendents of Cape Cod, Golf Course Superintendents of New England, Maine Golf Course Superintendents Association, Metropolitan Golf Course Superintendents Association, New Hampshire Golf Course Superintendents, Rhode Island Association of Golf Course Superintendents & Vermont Golf Course Superintendents Association

Tuesday, April 14, 2009	Amherst Country Club		New Hampshire GCSA
Monday, April 27, 2009	Willow Brook Golf Course		Connecticut Assoc. GCS
Monday, April 27, 2009	Whitinsville Golf Course		GCSA of New England
Monday, April 27, 2009	Siwanoy Country Club	Dave Mahoney 2-ball	Metropolitan GCSA
Tuesday, April 28, 2009	Agawam Hunt	RI Turfgrass Foundation Tournament	RI GCSA
Monday, May 4, 2009	Portsmouth Country Club	Joint meeting with Maine	New Hampshire GCSA
Monday, May 11, 2009	Franklin Country Club	Joint meeting with Cape	GCSA of New England
Tuesday, May 12, 2009	Crestwood Country Club		RI GCSA
Monday, May 18, 2009	Watertown Golf Club	Scholarship & Research	Connecticut Assoc. GCS
Tuesday, May 26, 2009	Willowbend	Scholarship & Research	GCSA of Cape Cod
Tuesday, May, 19, 2009	Highland Golf Club	Joint meeting with Northeast Assoc.	Vermont GCSA
Wednesday, June 3, 2009	Brae Burn Country Club	Super/Manager or guest	Metropolitan GCSA
Monday, June 8, 2009	Chemawa Country Club		Rhode Island GCSA
Tuesday, June 16, 2009	York Golf & Tennis	Superintendent/Vendor	Maine GCSA
Tuesday, June 16, 2009	Equinox Golf Course		Vermont GCSA
Wednesday, June 17, 2009	Country Club of New Hampshire	Gold Ball Scramble	New Hampshire GCSA
Wednesday, June 24, 2009	Shennecossett Golf Club		Connecticut Assoc. GCS
Wednesday, June 24, 2009	Segregansett Country Club	Member/Guest	GCSA of New England
Thursday, June 25, 2009	Stanwich Club	MetGCSA Invitational	Metropolitan GCSA
Tuesday, July 7, 2009	Vineyard Golf Club		GCSA of Cape Cod
Tuesday, July 7, 2009	Warwick Country Club	RHO-COD Cup	Rhode Island GCSA
Tuesday, July 21, 2009	Wintonbury Hills Golf Course	NE Team Championship Qualifier	Connecticut Assoc. GCS
TBA July, 2009			GCSA of New England
Tuesday, July 14, 2009	Cedar Knoll Golf Course		Vermont GCSA
Tuesday, August 11, 2009	The Back Nine Club	Stress Buster Day	Rhode Island GCSA
Tuesday, August 11, 2009	Stowe Mountain Club		Vermont GCSA
Monday, August 17, 2009	Golf Club of New England	Scholarship & Research	New Hampshire GCSA
Tuesday, August 18, 2009	Marlboro	Individual Championship	GCSA of New England
Thursday, August 20, 2009	Holly Ridge Golf Club		GCSA of Cape Cod
Tuesday, September 15, 2009	Glastonbury Hills Country Club	CAGCS Invitational	Connecticut Assoc. GCS
Tuesday, September 15, 2009	Natanis Golf Course	Scholarship & Research	Maine GCSA
Thursday, September 17, 2009	Mink Meadows Golf Course		GCSA of Cape Cod
Monday, September 21, 2009	Triggs Memorial Golf Course		Rhode Island GCSA
Tuesday, September 22, 2009	Okemo; Trade Show		Vermont GCSA
Monday, September 28, 2009	Brae Burn Country Club	S & B	GCSA of New England
Tuesday, September 29, 2009	Meadow Brook Club	Met Championship	Metropolitan GCSA
Tuesday, September 29, 2009	Metacomet Country Club	Scholarship & Research	Rhode Island GCSA
Thursday, October 8, 2009	The Ranch Golf Club	UMASS Troll Fundraiser	GCSA of New England
Tuesday, October 13, 2009	Topstone Golf Course	Superintendent/Assistant	Connecticut Assoc. GCS
Wednesday, October 14, 2009	Spring Meadow Golf Course	Educational Meeting	Maine GCSA
Thursday, October 15, 2009	Hatherly Country Club		GCSA of New England
Monday, October 19, 2009	Sleepy Hollow Country Club	Superintendent/Assistant	Metropolitan GCSA
Thursday, October 22, 2009	Plymouth Country Club		GCSA of Cape Cod
Thursday, October 22, 2009	Indian Hill Country Club	Class C Tournament	Connecticut Assoc. GCS
TBA, October, 2009	Quechee	Annual Meeting	Vermont GCSA
Tuesday, November 3, 2009	Wannamoissett Country Club	Superintendent/Assistant	Rhode Island GCSA
Wednesday, November 4, 2009	Sharon Country Club		GCSA of Cape Cod
Thursday, November 5, 2009	Highland Golf Club	Annual Meeting	Connecticut Assoc. GCS
TBA, November, 2009	Milton-Hoosic Club		GCSA of New England
Tuesday, December 1, 2009	Holiday Inn	Annual Meeting/Education Day	New Hampshire GCSA
Tuesday, December 8, 2009	Portland Country Club	Annual Meeting	Maine GCSA
Thursday, December 10, 2009	White Cliffs Country Club	Annual Meeting	GCSA of Cape Cod
TBA December, 2009			GCSA of New England
TBA December, 2009			Rhode Island GCSA