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# MODESTO ENGINEERS CLUB FIELD NOTES

Volume 2010, Issue 2

[www.modestoengineersclub.com](http://www.modestoengineersclub.com)

February 2, 2010

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## Featured Speaker:

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### Join Us On February 2<sup>nd</sup> for Stanislaus County Sheriff Adam Christianson

Sheriff Christianson will be visiting the Modesto Engineers Club as a special guest speaker.



## Save the Date:

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**Formal Lunch Meetings:** First Tuesday of each month. Upcoming meetings: March 2, April 6, May 4, and June 1. 11:30am – 1pm at SOS Club, Mellis Room, 819 Sunset Avenue

Lunch features a buffet style meal. The main courses will vary each week. Please sign in and pay the treasurer. The beverage, tax, tip and energy surcharge are included.

### Informal Meetings:

Members regularly meet on Tuesdays, 11:30 am to 1pm at the Old Mill Café corner of 9<sup>th</sup> & F St. in Modesto for camaraderie. No formal program is presented.

**Attendance at Last Month's Meeting:** 22 members, 1 guest and 1 speaker

## Presidents Message:

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Thank you to all of you who have paid their dues on time. If you haven't, you still have time...our Secretary/Treasurer will be hounding you if you don't!

Now for the news...do you want the good or the bad first? I'll start with the bad news so I can end on a positive note.

For the past few years the February's message from the President was all about the upcoming Engineer's Day at the Mall. This year was to be no different. Things started off good – we got a list of volunteers, all of our normal tables and games for the event and were ready to roll. All we needed was to final the paperwork for the normal venue at the mall. If you missed last month's luncheon, I had announced that I was having difficulty in getting the same commitment from the mall as we had in the past, which was free use of the center court area and use of tables, chairs, and linens. Unfortunately, it seems the mall is falling under the same pressures as everybody else and can no longer hold community events for free and the new fee would be at least \$500. The board made a quick decision that the cost of the event was too hefty of a fee to take on with such little notice. So it is not my pleasure to tell you that this year's Engineer's Day at the Mall has been cancelled.

The good news is that we have not given up on the event. The board will discuss funding for such events in the future and look at potential opportunities where we might fill in the gap for this year at a location that the club can afford at this time. Please stay tuned and feel free to send the board an email if you have any thoughts or ideas on the matter.

Other news to look forward to for the month is the Annual Valentine's Day luncheon. Please sign up at

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the next meeting or email Dan Machado and let him know that you wish to attend. This newsletter has all the information regarding the event.

Another great piece of news that I have the honor of sharing (if you haven't heard already) is that our club member Tom DeLaMare will be receiving the Engineer of the Year award from the San Joaquin Engineers Council! Congratulations Tom! Tom and I have spent many hours on the phone over the years (yes I have been working for years) and I have had the great opportunity to hear many of his stories and experiences as an engineer...along with a few hiking and fishing stories! I know Tom is well deserving of this award. The SJEC has invited the Modesto Engineer's Club to attend the awards ceremony to be held February 18<sup>th</sup>. I know I will be in attendance! I hope to see you there.

### **Secretary's Editorial: Bermuda Grass and Fruitless Mulberry Trees**

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Enough of this engineering stuff. Let's talk landscape stuff for change. Two of the biggest scourges in the Central Valley are Bermuda Grass and Fruitless Mulberry trees. Ever see a landscape where anyone has DELIBERATELY planted Bermuda Grass or a Fruitless

Mulberry tree? You gotta be out of your mind. I can see someone down at Scenic Nursery browsing the selections: "I'm looking for a tree that will grow like thunder, lift my house, shade out all living things, and requires an annual chainsaw and wood chipper rental to maintain. I appreciate the stark minimalistic character of the huge stump-like branches...." And then there is Bermuda Grass. Bermuda Grass is so named because it is really only one plant and it all radiates from Bermuda. It's all attached to the Mother Plant. Kill it? Forget that. The only thing that displaces Bermuda Grass is Crabgrass, which is another nightmare in itself. It's all one plant too and radiates from my mother-in-laws house....JUST KIDDING, just kidding!

Oh, have you ever seen a *Fruiting Mulberry*? It has all the attributes of the fruitless kind with the added

effect of millions of ink jars dropped on the ground. The fruit mess itself looks like an explosion in a Smucker's factory.

Somewhere in our warped understanding of tree care is the notion to take a chainsaw each year to the Fruitless Mulberry. Well, *no duh*....It's is a huge tree planted in small spaces. It needs the space of something like, oh say....Connecticut. Anything less is insanity. If you will take the time you can see the potential of the Fruitless Mulberry at CSU Stanislaus. The trees are planted about 60' apart and allowed to GROW without trimming them. They turn into a large canopy shade tree with arching branches. When a tree is heavily cut back it sends out many more shoots in a desperate attempt to produce leaves to produce food. Which makes more wood to prune, which makes more chainsaw work, etc. It's a needless cycle.

But wait, I really like Bermuda Grass and Fruitless Mulberry's. So why am I a true fan of these rogues? That's easy. Although I appreciate fine landscape and garden design as much as anyone else I was raised here in Modesto where 80% of the surface area is covered in Bermuda Grass or shaded by a Mulberry. The other 20% is paint splashed on asphalt, which is another nightmare in itself.

Bermuda Grass is incredibly resilient. Which is good for school grounds. Way back during my days at El Vista Elementary they would flood irrigate the play fields. Turn on the gates in the summertime and let it flow. That was fun to play tackle football on. Any divots will be healed in 24 hours from aggressive spreading tentacles. Looking for Jimmy Hoffa? Check under some fresh Bermuda Grass. That stuff is great for covering playing fields quickly. No bare spots.

But when the days turn really hot in Modesto and you still want to be outside, there is nothing like being under the deep cool shade of a Mulberry tree and a Bermuda Grass lawn. It's not the most elegant garden but it's satisfying and it is Modesto. Now, where did I put that chainsaw?