



It's usually better to laugh at a situation than to cry...

# A Funny Thing Happened On the Way to the Clubhouse

BY DOUG ABBUHL, GCS

*Seminole Golf Course & Club,  
Tallahassee*

**O**ne of the best stress relievers is laughter. Granted its hard to laugh when you have algae on your greens, a tournament around the corner, or your only greens mower just went to that big shop in the sky.

Being responsible for large areas of highly maintained turfgrass can be very stressful for superintendents. Nature can at times be less than cooperative, and golfers may not always be understanding. That being said, it is very important to keep a sense of humor as you approach each day. For example:

## Follow that duck

It is crucial when training new employees to cover all of the important points. While training an employee in the art of walk-mowing greens with straight lines, I mentioned picking out an object and heading toward it. However, I failed to mention that the object should be a stationary one. It seems the person picked out a swimming duck on the lake as his object, and needless to say, the mowing stripes weren't straight that day!

## Disappearing pond

Then there was the time my fairway

mower came back to the shop to advise that the pond on our number-six hole was "gone!"

Hmmm, how can a pond disappear? Turns out a sinkhole developed under the half-acre pond and emptied in about five minutes.

That was one the EPA couldn't blame me for the dead fish.

## High-flying turtle

How about the world's highest flying turtle? We had a backup pump for our irrigation pond, where water could be pumped from a lower-level lake up to the holding pond. It seems that the suction pipe was damaged at the lower lake and water was backfilling down the stand pipe.

After making the needed repairs and the lake level down eight feet, it was time to turn on the pump and recharge the holding pond. Unaware that a very large turtle had been sucked down the stand pipe, we started the pump.

Water came out of the pipe for about five seconds and then stopped. I rowed over in a boat to take a peek down the stand pipe, when all of a sudden this large turtle shot out of the pipe about 50 feet into the air!

I wasn't injured, but wondered afterwards how the accident report would have read: High speed turtle impacts worker in face!

## For every action...

Once an employee was working with a spring-loaded cup cutter that would supposedly cut a cup with the pull of a trigger. It seems he tried it on frozen ground. Not a good idea. He pulled the trigger and the handle hit him in the chin. Ouch!

## Not really a morning person

Interviewing potential employees can also be a source of entertainment. Once you put them at ease, you never know what they might tell you. After stressing to the interviewee the importance of an early start to get the course in shape for golfers, this guy looked me right in the eye and said, "You know, I'm really not a morning person." Well, thanks for coming in.

## A mind of her own

Then there's the old Buckner satellite controller that has been hit so many times by lightning that it looks like an R2D2 unit in a Star Wars battle. It's hard to get parts for the old girl and she acts possessed.

My irrigation man calls her "Christine," the possessed car in the Stephen King novel, because she jumps through the stations with time on them and stops at the ones zeroed out. Sometimes all the lights come on at once and then go dead. That's one scary controller.

## Emergency landing

Last fall, a pilot in a Cessna 172 was close to landing at the nearby airport when he lost power. He couldn't make it to the airport, so he put it down on the driving range. Imagine the look of terror in the ball picker's eyes as he saw the plane heading straight for him.

My assistant called me on the radio, "Doug, we've got a plane on the range." Yeah, right. Just then about 20 vehicles pulled into the parking lot – police, fire, FAA, TV, radio. Talk about a circus.

So like I said, its important to keep a sense of humor because you never what the next day might bring. Ah, the life of a golf course superintendent is never boring.