3rd-generation super’s concern: Has tradition gone way of chivalry?

BY TERRY BUCHEN

As a third-generation golf course superintendent, it has been fun over the past 26 years witnessing how the profession has grown and prospered. At the same time, some trends concern me.

On the positive side:
• The “barn” is now known as the maintenance center.
• Our daily attire has changed from t-shirts to golf shirts.
• Company vehicles are now more SUVs than pickup trucks.
• We are jack-of-all-trades, master of all.
• Instead of brown-bagging it, we now eat in the clubhouse.
• Formerly “greenkeepers,” we are now known as “golf course managers.”
• We attend green committee meetings and board of director meetings.
• Once thought of as farmers, we are considered turf managers and administrators.
• Once inaccessible, we are now quite conspicuous.
• Once loners, now we are a large part of the “Big 3.”
• Television tournament commentators explain why the course is in such good shape and who is responsible.
• Our images are enhanced by Certified Golf Course Superintendent status.
• And we are environmentally friendly and proud of it.

Since the boom of the 1980s, when it was discovered that people could actually make money in the golf business, our end of the industry has definitely changed. But some time-honored traditions of this “gentleman’s game” are taking a back seat to personal gain and sometimes outright selfishness.

There are many “new” people in superintendent positions. Some switched majors in college without any prior practical golf maintenance experience and, as a result, have been violating some professional ethics, time-honored unwritten rules and professional courtesies. Some examples:
• Making a formal application for a fellow superintendent’s position when, in fact, the position is not actually open. A true professional would telephone the superintendent and receive firsthand knowledge.
• When playing a peer’s golf course, a professional courtesy is to notify the superintendent of the intended round, hoping to visit with him/her out on the links, even if they did not know each other beforehand.
• Sending a thank-you card after playing a peer’s course has usually been done automatically without even thinking about it.
• After hearing some unfounded rumors from unscrupulous sources, spreading the rum-