



In Bounds: Serenity Now!
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Company was coming and I was in charge of grilling shrimp on the "barbi" and getting bait for a bit of fishing from the pontoon as we ate our ice cream bar dessert. Little did I know that entering the corner gas station/convenient store/DVD rental/liquor establishment/bait shop on a mission for one dozen suckers would be like entering into a bee's nest! A surprise with a sting awaited me.

Walking to the back of the store I came upon the clerk, a young man I had had visits with on prior occasions and whom I had always considered a pleasant individual with wit and charm, cleaning the bait wells. Indeed the task was messy and all I could add after my request for bait was a comment about the chore he was doing as being a candidate for the Dirtiest Job television program.

"Well you know what? It really sucks, it isn't in my job description and I am not paid enough to do it with a smile on my face. The manager won't buy the right filters and this job is only a fill-in during the summer as I am normally a teacher to fifth grade students. Nobody else will clean the tanks and if they don't get cleaned the fish die and I have an even worse mess to deal with. This job ... sucks," he said without a smile tossing my helpless minnows into their temporary home. "And another thing, it stinks; my hand will smell like fish crap for the next week. I hate this job."

With nary another comment he sold me the fish. I paid for my purchase, walked away from the situation, smiled a crooked grin and thanked my lucky stars I didn't have that kind of an anger issue. Oh but there have been times.

Once in my early days as superintendent, I had the opportunity to watch a prominent young attorney drive his cart upon a 'tee to green cart-pathed' par three off the trail, right up the middle of the miniature fairway, deposit his guest who proceeded to remove a divot the size I could have rolled up and used as sod, and then continue on directly to the collar of the green where he hopped off his vehicle and played his next shot. Two others in the group, walkers, observed me stopping, pulling the "Keep Carts On Path" signage from alongside the cart path and placing it in a more visible location. Questioned as to what I was doing I replied, "Helping our illiterate friend utilize the proper means of conveyance in the future by placing a physical reminder in front of his path."

"But Jack, you don't have to be able to read to pass the bar exam!" was the response. I retorted with a harsh comment that he would be the first to cry objection if I countered inappropriately in the court room. And then I drove away.

But not too far, I soon paused to reflect upon my actions. What I had done was blow up about a violation of cart etiquette, something I see regularly every day and which typically never

elicits a response, an action I had learned to shrug off. So what really pissed me off about this situation? Well, on the previous tee somebody from my staff had line-trimmed the paint off the bottom of the water cooler post leaving behind a damaged timber and grass clippings and paint chips EVERYWHERE. That is what I was so very, very angry about, but my emotions squirted out as frustration with one of my members.

My 30-day internship in a spin dry program for alcoholics came to my mind as I sorted out my feelings. In class I had learned amongst many other important concepts that anger is often a reflection of guilt, whether readily apparent or subconscious. Contemplating while sitting on my cart I realized my bitter verbiage had little to do with the traffic infraction and more to do with my inability to teach my young staff to be more considerate when line trimming. The evidence of my poor training techniques was obvious on the several denuded posts I saw that day and I was reminded that just because I have been on a course for over 30 years the 'new bees' have not and need a little extra knowledge to do their jobs up to my expectations.

I was guilty of poor management and vented my anger over the unacceptable results by damning a member for driving his cart without thinking. Oh he was thinking, not about the turf or my job or my expectations, but rather about the tee shot he had hit that ended up a fraction of an inch from the edge of the cup.

A stiff breeze would have dunked it for a hole-in-one.

Appreciating my mistake and realizing a correction in my grace had to be made, I turned around and approached the player upon the next tee box. Standing straight, extending my right hand, chin out and with sincerity I apologized for my rude behavior. With a smile he told me it was his mistake. "Jack, I know better than to drive where I did. With a wish and a prayer I had hoped I could have watched my ball drop in the cup for my first

hole-in-one. I apologize to you for my bad cart behavior."

End of story? Not really for the member and I are today better friends for my second reaction, my apology for being such a dope. We had complimented each other's contrition and moved on. Ah yes, the power of forgiveness!

My management style changed to be a little more instructive on the results I was expecting. Also I was re-reminded that evaluating my "real" anger would have limited a potentially very ugly situation. The old rule of counting to ten before blowing up is tried and true for had I done so I would have discovered my actual frustration and vented accordingly.

Anger is defined as a strong feeling of displeasure, wrath, ire, rage, fury or indignation. Just writing and thinking about these energetic synonyms causes some twisting in my stomach and elicits contemplation. Imagine if a person were to direct the energy caused by the emotion of anger to something constructive such as good will, prayer or dare I say love?

Soon I will again be in need of some bait. Perhaps I will get the typically content clerk however I hope I don't get the angry one. In the mean time I will be thankful for the patience I seem to pray for on a daily basis. But should things heat up in my life, I can always clap my hands above my head and scream, "SERENITY NOW!"