

The Next Step

By Ken Schwark

I reached a major pivotal point in my life. A milestone as some people call it. I am finally turning forty. The event that for so many years I thought would never happen, is about to take place.

Turning forty has set off a chain reaction of events and thoughts. For instance reality has set in. I've learned that I'm not indestructible, that I have certain limitations that I'm aware of, which is good, because now my mind isn't writing checks my body can't cash. Thank God!

As forty approached, I found myself hosting a multitude of questions which for so long I've tried not asking because I was afraid of the answers that I might find. But, these questions were essential to measure who I was, what I've become and where I was going.

I didn't try to hide or run away from the fact that I was turning forty. In fact, I embraced it and viewed it as a special time. I didn't see forty as an age where you realize you didn't do things right and now you're too old to change things. I see 40 as an age where you can objectively look at your past, see what things you need to change, realize the things you can't and hopefully by now have the brains to know the difference. You're still young enough to direct your future.

I've reflected back over the past forty years and had to ask myself, "Could I

have done better? Should I own a bigger house? Should I be making twice as much money as I am right now?" Only we can answer those questions ourselves. I asked myself those very questions and I looked at the friendships I've made over the years, the relationships I've built over the years and I feel good about where I am.

But what about the future? Where do I want to be in 10 to 15 years from now? My focus in life at 40 is totally different than the focus I had when I was 25. At 25 I was trying to land my first superintendent's job. Now that I've made it and I've done that, what's next?

For me it was asking what is the next logical step up from a superintendent's job. It would have to be a management position. Either as a general manager at an independent complex or where the trend is definitely headed, with a management group. These management groups that are managing multiple golf courses are going to need people with good solid management skills, people skills and a good understanding about the business of golf, as well as the game of golf.

The next question that came to mind is how does a superintendent get the proper training and education to make the transition from superintendent to a manager of some kind. To find an answer to that question, I decided to do

some research in this area and I was surprised to find out some interesting facts. I called up the Country Club Managers of America (CCMA) to see what they had to offer in training. They offer quite a lot in the way of seminars and training information. They told me that they would extend their membership rates for seminars to any GCSAA member who wanted to attend. I asked them who could become members and was told only Country Club Managers were allowed to join. They excluded managers from resorts, daily fee and municipal golf courses from joining.

I then called GCSAA to see what they had to offer and found little to nothing, depending on the topic. After talking with a few people at GCSAA, I learned that the business side of golf management was an area they were starting to get involved in. They expressed a real concern for more training in the area of managing a golf complex, whether it be in managing a single complex or working within a management group that manages many golf courses. They admitted that there was a tremendous need for superintendents who understood the politics and had the people skills and who could also manage the restaurant and proshop at a facility. Unfortunately there aren't very many people who have all those skills in one package. It would be far



Pacific Sod

Family Farming Since . . . 1886

featuring
Medallion™ Varieties

Ray Freitas

1-800-692-8690

ROYAL
Turf Services, Inc.

Get The Royal Treatment
Custom Turf Care

Timothy L. King

(800) 505-TURF

Aerification

Fertilizing


Spray Apps.



asier to teach a superintendent the skills needed to work in a management position that it would be to train a manager to be a superintendent.

Many times I've heard war stories about superintendents losing their jobs because a general manager and the superintendent couldn't see eye to eye on how to go about getting a task done. That's because the manger didn't understand the importance of the task to be done to the overall condition of the course. We, as superintendents who would become managers, would understand the importance of the task and would be very accommodating to the superintendent in getting the task finished with as little disruption to the golfer as possible. I feel superintendents with the proper training would make the best managers in the golf business. That is of course if the superintendent feels that is what he wants to become.

In closing I just would like to say that I have taken this time now in my life to look down the road and took hard at where I'm headed. I see myself making that move at some point in the future and have taken steps on my own to prepare for that welcome change in my life. Management will not be for everyone, but for the people who wish to pursue that path, I want to do all I can to help my fellow superintendent get the tools needed to make that transition as

smooth and successful as possible. So I ask all who feel the same way as I do to call the GCSAA and tell them you are interested in having them put together a program to make that happen and that you encourage them to allow all of the golf course managers that are not wanted by the CCMA to join the GCSAA and to help up strengthen our position in the golf business. 

Quick Quote

"As an Association it should give us great courage and a measure of satisfaction to know that we are gaining in numbers and prestige after being organized for only nine months.

This is rightly so for our aim is not only to better conditions for ourselves, but for every individual that plays golf in this section."

— Will Rogers, President January 1933—

Naumann's NorCal News

Scott Szydloski has left Blackhawk CC in Danville to become the Superintendent/Director of Grounds for Western Resorts. Western Resorts owns Mission Hills CC (2 courses, North and South) which is located in Rancho Mirage, California. Mission Hills CC is operated by American Golf Corporation. Mike Barber will be staying on as Superintendent at Blackhawk until a new Director of Grounds is named . . . **John Flackman** at Bennet Valley GC in Santa Rosa continues to be busy with the reconstruction of two more greens with more on the horizon. **Ed Stocke** is helping John with the project that is being built in-house . . . What do **Mickey, Bill, Ed and Bogey** have in common? They are all Border Collies that are keeping their respective golf courses free from Canadian Geese and Coots. (Corral de Tierra CC; Shoreline GC; Spring Valley CC and Peacock Gap GC).

Rodent Control Specialists



Landscape Pest Control Services, Inc.

Allen Tunberg
Pest Control Advisor and Operator

P.O. Box 1166
Pleasanton, CA 94566

(510) 426-8461
State License No. 05647

R.V.



Thompson Golf Distributor
(800) 987-4002

- ◆ Plumbing
- ◆ Irrigation
- ◆ Waterworks

Don Allen, Manager
Member GCSANC



Animal Damage Management
Rodents, Birds & Other Nuisance Animals Controlled
1-800-292-9845