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What Gives a Superintendent Gray Hair

by Ed Fischer, Old Elm Club

When I was Dudley Smith's Assistant at Silver Lake, my hair was dark brown, I was good looking and 22, I'm now 38 gray and distinguished. I started getting gray hair in June of 1969, when I became Superintendent at the York Golf Club, and continued getting grayer through my years at York, through construction and Western Opens at Butler National, and continues through my present days at Old Elm.

Gray hair seems to come with the problems that my crew, Mother Nature, and/or my members and their guests come up with. Remember the new greensmower that ended up in the lake, and the excuses that the crew came up with; the grass was too wet, I was almost hit by a golf ball, even though no members were on the golf course, or too much goose sh-t. That's the best one. Of course we all have the old guy who has been driving a tractor for years, yet he manages to drive right into a ditch. Or the fellow who overturns the dump truck while filling old stump holes.

Irrigation is always worth a few gray hairs. Something went wrong and the greens didn't get watered, or the night man fell asleep, and instead of 30 minutes of water 2 hours were put on the greens. Leaks are not common, but always worth a gray hair or two. It always seems like a leak comes at the worst times, like 6 p.m. when the only ones there to fix it are you and your kids, or how about 10 p.m., but right in the middle of an event, and the club President and his guest get wet.

Chemicals are some of our best tools, however what about the sand trap that we all have sprayed for weeds. The only bad thing was that we were not told that no one should blast out of the trap, or that the person that was spraying should not walk where you don't want the tracks from the material that was left on his shoes. Also always make sure that your spraying equipment is working right, or your gray hair will increase because there seems to be that area of rough or fairway that dies for some strange reason. Oil leaks are also one of those times when gray hair seems to come in abundance. I remember my first oil leak, I tried to pull out all my gray hair that day.

Old Ma Nature, she is always doing it to us, one way or another. Either it's too much water, or not enough, too cold, or too hot. Remember a couple of years ago in Chicago when we had all that snow, and a building or two came down, another gray hair.

Those nice Blue Spruce that were planted next to the ninth green, they are about ten years old now, and just right for someone to take half the tree for their Christmas tree. Those missing trees, or I should say missing half trees are worth as much as the clubhouse fire last week, four new gray hair.

Not only does the crew give me gray hair, along with Mother Nature, but what about the membership. It always seems that they are there too early, or maybe they were at the club too late, having one too many martinis, and you end up pulling their car out of the creek after they missed the bridge. The green-chairman who carries a Stimp Meter, and Soil Probe in his golf bag. Golfers who do not follow the rules or aren't courteous, they are worth some gray hair too. There are always the players who try and see if they can throw the flag stick on each green, and if it sticks all the better. How many ball marks never get fixed, or how many players play from the newly seeded area,

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(Gray Hair cont'd.)

or what about all those divots that seem never to get replaced.

Driving a golf cart to some of these guys, is like driving in the Baja 1000. Signs are meant to disobey not obey, they have to get close to the ball to see if it is theirs or not, though it might be in a trap. They are tired and need to get next to the tee markers, how about the area where a tow truck was needed to pull the cart out. How many carts have you pulled out of lakes or streams, they just seem to get in the way, and how many clubs has your Pro fixed because a bag fell out of the cart while driving over the bank of a tee or green. Worth a few gray hair!!

I try to prepare the golf course every day so that the rules of golf can be followed, so that the members can enjoy the game of golf. Greens are cut so that ball rolls smooth and true, but there is always someone who missed that short putt, and takes a divot out of the green, or maybe buries his putter into the green, or you may be asked to retrieve that club, that accidently was thrown into the tall tree or into the middle of the lake on three.

Sand traps are being worked on everyday, so that a fair play can be made. I see the players who have that difficult lie, so what if he moves it a little, or better yet just smooths out the area, no one will know the difference. That same guy, who after he hits his shot walks right through the trap without raking, so that next player can also have a fair play. Who gets the complaint from the player who just happened to hit his ball into a foot print.

I spend a lot of time marking the golf course, does it irk me when I see someone who disregards what I've spent a lot of time doing. I have seen golfers hit their shot into a water hazard, go to the drop area, but that shot is too difficult, it's easier over there, oh well, no one is looking so he throws the ball, not dropping it where it belongs. We line the O.B. area so that there is not doubt whether you may be out of bounds or not, but I have seen so many shots played from out of bounds. It was only a little out of bounds, what does it hurt.

Yes, Gray Hair I have, at least its HAIR, but to me it is all worth it. I am so lucky in that I am doing something that I truely love. There aren't many of us in the world that can say that. I'll put up with being gray and distinguished, rather than dark and good looking!!!

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