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**B**eating plowshares into swords. You may have heard this expression, but what does it mean? As I interpret it, it refers to transforming a tool into a weapon. We have all seen demonstrations of this in our careers. Probably the best example is the stimpmeter. Originally developed as a tool to assist professionals in evaluating the quality of a small portion of their putting surfaces, the stimpmeter has often been used as a weapon to castigate the golf course superintendent's performance and castrate his positive attitude. It is an important quality control tool, but it should not be the only gauge by which quality is judged, and it certainly does not measure a green's health. Using only the stimpmeter to gauge the health of the greens would be like a doctor using only a thermometer to diagnose his patient. Just because a person has a normal temperature does not mean that the bullet that just passed through his heart will not kill him.

I am not really sure when the stimpmeter's transition from tool to weapon occurred, but it is obvious that without a major shift in mindset, the pendulum will not swing back. For those people maintaining diversified bent/poa mixtures on

older, classic push-up greens, it is becoming increasingly difficult to compete with the golf courses that have the advantages of modern construction and improved bent-grass varieties.

I do have one suggestion. I would love to see the USGA host a U.S. Open championship where the greens stimped 8.5. The USGA has been very supportive of golf course superintendents, and has repeatedly through its regional agronomists supported the notion that speed is not the only factor to consider in determining green quality. In fact, pursuit of green speed above all else can be a detriment to the game by increasing maintenance costs and reducing usable green space. Moreover, fast greens increase the time for the average golfer to play. It would be refreshing to see this assertion that speed is not everything in practice under a global spotlight. I am not holding out much hope, however, because I realize our national championship should be a severe test of golf skills. I also do not think that any of us would want to be the first golf course superintendent to host a U.S. Open on "slow" greens. However, more could be done to educate the public during the U.S. Open telecast on why greens cannot be maintained in this fashion for extended periods of time.

Another example of a tool turning into a weapon, in some people's estimation, is the assistant superintendent's position. While it may be crass to refer to an assistant as a tool, assistants can in fact be one of the most effective tools we use as managers. If properly trained and motivated, they can relieve many of our day-to-day burdens and allow us to concentrate on the activities that have become increasingly important to our professional survival, such as taking the time to interact with members or patrons,

dealing with regulatory issues, and project planning and implementation. Managed improperly though, assistants have the potential to signal our demise.

I have often heard grumbling about assistants who have undermined the authority of the golf course superintendents for whom they work, ultimately resulting in a superintendent being replaced by an assistant. More commonly, the complaint is that an assistant took a superintendent's job for less money than what the area's average salary is.


There is no defense for a person who would aggressively campaign for another superintendent's job. This is clearly a violation of our code of ethics, and should be dealt with accordingly. On the other hand, someone who takes a job for less money than what we may think it is worth is not necessarily doing anything unethical. In fact, what may need to be examined here is the way that facilities take advantage of their assistants. I remember when I was hired as an assistant and it was explained to me that in an assistant's position, I should expect to get "dumped on." Difficult tasks, long hours and low pay are commonplace. It was understood that this was a standard practice in the industry, and that it would ultimately prepare me for the next step up to a superintendent's position. That was fine 20 years ago when there was a legitimate possibility that within three to four years I could have a superintendent's job. That is no longer the case. Because of the intense competition for every position, recent college graduates are often forced to take irrigation technician, spray technician or second assistant positions for months or years prior to their first assistant's position. The quest for a superintendent's position can take many years.

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### On Course With The President

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While the search continues, assistants are forced to live on wages that are often one-third or even one-fourth of the compensation of their facilities' superintendents. It is not surprising that an assistant would take a superintendent's position for one-half the compensation of the previous superintendent because this still represents a huge increase in pay for that assistant. More important, it gives that assistant the opportunity to prove himself in his ultimate career goal.

I would never suggest that golf course superintendents should make less money to close the gap. I still believe that superintendents on average are underpaid. However, it may be time for individuals and associations to begin an education program for employers on the importance of the assistant's position and the rationale for increasing assistants' wages or offering them more benefits, such as expenses to go to the national conference. The same can be said for the mechanic's and foreman's positions. We must be willing to assist those who assist us. These people are critical to our success and they deserve our respect, appreciation and support. If we do not demonstrate the proper appreciation, our assistants could ultimately be the swords that sever us from our highly sought after positions. 

### My Friend Walter


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always took the time to stop and visit me. After my father passed away in 1986, no one else in this world could come close to filling my dad's shoes, except Walter. I believe that during these latter years of Walt's life, his influence over me was more formative than during the few short years that we worked together. You see, under Walter's gruff demeanor and leathered skin was a soft heart of gold. As Walter (and I) grew older, I began to realize how deeply he trusted in God. One of his most-used phrases, "the good Lord willing," really began to sink in.

Walter left a wonderful legacy behind. He knew that rewards come to those who are true to their word, honest in their abilities and trustworthy of their God. His fine family is a reflection of the character that Walter lived everyday.

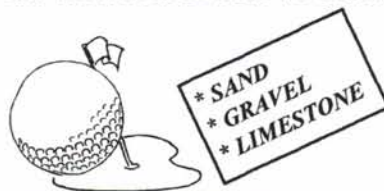
Walter taught me courage and confidence. The ability to accept any challenge (a trait that later in

my life I would need desperately) developed within me for a reason. The reason being: I am the last one—the last greenkeeper Walter trained. In God's wonderful, providential plan, that handshake 19 years ago led me down a path that I am deeply thankful for. All because one man cared enough to take me under his wing and teach me the values necessary for success in life. What a grand distinction!

Walter affected and influenced countless lives all across this country. I may have been the last one, but I am proud to be part of the expansive list of great greenkeepers, long-time friends, and warm and loving family members for whom Walter cared so much. I hope that you, like me, will always remember that marvelous, genuine smile, and the warm, sparkling spirit Walter embodied his entire life. Here was a man to be truly proud of—a man that I was blessed to call my friend. 

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