



The author.

Ask the "Idiot" Part II

The Saga Continues

Inevitably, I have found myself compelled to share the hilarious stories I have heard from local superintendents. My request for superintendents' funniest moments elicited dozens of responses; now I relate these unforgettable moments in time to you, the reader. Without further delay, here is the second edition of "Ask the Idiot."

In last month's installment of "Ask the Idiot," we saw the "Ford tractor that could" break through the ice that actually couldn't . . . hold it. We learned about poor Enrique, who had a life-altering moment after being "framed" by a Toro 657 irrigation head. We observed beautiful trees erroneously transplanted on putting greens, and don't forget about our buddy Todd, who could still be stranded in the middle of that pond wearing his waterskiing gear.

I left you contemplating a superintendent who, after the stresses of Labor Day, is thinking of finally getting some relaxation by going south on a whitewater rafting trip. However, this relaxation abruptly comes to a halt when, after checking into the outfitters', he receives a phone message: "You better call work, something about a bomb threat."

Our story begins on a warm summer day in mid-September, after the Labor Day stresses and shortly after the 9/11 attacks. The day begins just like any other ordinary day at a golf club, code name River Forest. The crew is out finishing their daily morning duties of cutting greens, tees, fairways and collars, and changing cups and tee marker positions. At this point, it is approximately 9:00 a.m.; the crew members are heading in for their morning break and for reassignment.

A Hispanic crew member by the name of Alfredo, who liked to be called Junior, is cutting collars and approaches that morning. Junior is on his second hole, hole no. 11, when he notices a cylindrical metal object just ahead of his Lesco Tri-Plex mower. Baffled and bewildered, scratching his head, Junior gets off his mower and thinks of which way is the best to dispose of this awkward and out-of-place object. Picking up the object, Junior thinks and thinks and thinks of the next move. Finally Junior decides the best idea may not be to chuck this object into the bushes, or toss it in the garbage, but to take it inside to management for further analysis. After all, it may have some relevance to something, anything! Junior completes his work after stashing the cylinder-shaped object (with a little string coming out the top) in between the back of the Lesco Tri-Plex mower's seat and the

gas tank, which is located directly behind the seat. It is now time for Junior's morning break and he drives his mower in from the far end of the property. Nonchalantly, Junior parks his mower, walks into the shop and has his break.

Time passes and before too long the crew is reenergized and back on the course to complete their daily objectives. Of course, Junior continues to cut his designated areas as though it were any other ordinary day. However, for Junior this is already no ordinary day. Little does Junior realize, he is taking his life into his hands, cruising about the golf course with a pipe-bomb strapped to the Tri-Plex mower. Junior, the wiz he is, couldn't have offered a more potentially explosive location for the bomb, placing it next to the gas tank with the fuse right next to the hot engine.

It's almost lunch time and Junior is finished with his mowing. He washes his mower, parks it in the correct place in the storage area, and starts to mosey into the shop for lunch. "Oops!" Junior exclaims. "That thing-a-ma-jig, I better get it." Junior shows the object to the whole crew before slowly creeping into the office area and placing the unknown object on the desk in front of the assistant superintendent.

"Are you crazy?" shouts the assistant superintendent. "Where did you get that?" He immediately directs Junior and his newfound bomb outside. A phone call to the police is all it takes; within minutes the bomb squad makes an appearance. "Hut, hut, hut, hut, hut!" The bomb squad shoots onto the scene with several squad cars and a blazer hauling an explosion-containment vehicle. The 9/11 incidents freshly in mind, the bomb squad confiscates the object, surmises it is a bomb and begins a search for others. The police, however, do not go it alone, but involve the grounds crew in the search. By this time, the country club has been closed and everyone evacuated. The crew rakes over the course, rummaging around for suspicious objects. The superintendent is called at his vacation destination and left a message: "Joel, you gotta call work, something about a bomb scare." The superintendent is worried as to whether he should return. After hours of searching, no hard evidence of a second bomb is found, and River Forest is saved from total

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annihilation. The superintendent continues his vacation with an ulcer, fielding a call from a member who reassures him, "It's just a pipe-bomb and in Ireland that's just a free drop."

This story stands out as one of the most unusual golf experiences shared. To this day, Junior still doesn't have any idea what was going on and has received several phone calls since from police questioning his involvement. Meanwhile, the culprit has never been found and continues to be at large. For all we know, he could be walking amongst us, so keep an eye open for sabotage. In this next story, however, the guilty party had no chance of evading capture. The victim was painted, literally, with this nightmare for the rest of his days.

Amazingly, a Hispanic worker is involved again. This time the gentleman's name is Lalo. The time is early spring and the grounds department is working determinedly to prepare for the upcoming golf season. As spring objectives are being accomplished, one priority is staining a new lattice fence surrounding and camouflaging a transformer box located at the "Men's Grill" entrance, facing the main parking lot where most members enter the club. The idea is to stain the fence to blend it in with the club and some ivy that has been planted around the fence's base.

Unfortunately, the grounds department does not own the implements needed to paint the big fence, so a power painter is purchased. After collecting the power painter and materials, Lalo zips through an abbreviated training session. Soon he is sent on his way to stain the fence. Everything is working smoothly, or so Lalo thinks, until he is staining the inside of the fence. Little does Lalo realize that although the fence is turning out beautifully, the stain that does not hit the fence is spraying through the lattice openings. Sure enough, eventually a member struts by to enter the club. On this day, the member happens to be wearing a pair of very stylish, bright yellow slacks. Within moments the solid pair of pants is no longer solid! The member suddenly owns a pair of new pants, checkered yellow and brown.

One would predict that the grounds department would soon be attending Lalo's funeral. Astound-

ingly enough, the member does not take issue with the incident. He just walks on into the locker room to change, as though accepting that sometimes, "?! #@% happens." Yet, who knows—perhaps he simply likes the new fashion statement. Lalo never receives a "thank you," though, so I doubt this to be the case. Lalo's heart, meanwhile, is beating almost out of his chest!

Accidents do happen, and sometimes they are beyond our control. This wasn't the case for Lalo, who experienced a mental lapse. This also wasn't the case for Lidia, who once claimed that she was attacked by the "chupacabra" as she was driving a utility vehicle into a dump-area to dispose of some brush she had cleaned up from the course. The chupacabra is a Hispanic mythical beast that sucks the blood from goats. During this supposed chupacabra attack, Lidia lost control of her cart and totaled the vehicle into some trees, where it in turn flipped over. Lidia was ejected, injured and crying hysterically. "It was a beast from the trees with a long wingspan, and sharp long fangs!" Lidia claimed. One eyewitness to the accident, also a crew member, saw no sign of the legendary beast. Could it have been that Lidia, who had just moved from Mexico, was simply new to driving? In any event, the chupacabra never struck again.

Another similar incident once occurred at a public golf facility in Michigan. A mythical beast wasn't at fault this time; instead, an overconfident high-school attitude causes this catastrophe. Some of you may know the individual implicated, but I'll keep Erwin's name confidential for reputation issues.

This event takes place in the late 1980s, when the young man is working at a public golf facility in Michigan. It is a time when friends all work together and the rules are more lenient; you can work without shirts on, for instance. This is a summer job, and when the opportunity arises, the crew is known to goof off. One day, our subject is alone and driving a Ford tractor with an end-loader attached. The day is nearing its end and the proud, shirtless high school student is cruising in on the tractor. Cruising to say the least—he's driving fourth gear in high, and bouncing around like a stud, but this

isn't the problem. The problem occurs when he decides to drive that way with the bucket-loader three inches off the ground. He looks really cool standing up, speeding in until the front-loader catches a stump and stops the Ford tractor dead in its tracks. "Bang!" The impact echoes through the air and the tractor's rear tires come off the ground an easy two feet. Erwin almost flies over the machine, but is miraculously held back when the steering wheel punches into his stomach. After 30 minutes of catching his breath, he restarts the stalled tractor and continues into the shop for the day. No one is seriously injured, thank God, but the tractor didn't seem right for years after, and the bucket needed to be welded back together in several fractured areas.

The things we do in our youth! Sometimes, in reflecting, we may wonder how we are still alive. Some of us will acknowledge, though, that times really don't change that much, they just seem to. Even experienced superintendents note some of the oddest events taking place under their watch, and at some point decide just to chuckle, having developed immunity to ill effects from the never-ending cycle of chaos. On that note, I conclude with this last outrageous happening that took place at a golf course named after the French city, Cantigny.

On a perfectly sunny day in July 1996, the superintendent receives a call on the radio from the pro shop. They are requesting assistance to retrieve an "errant golf cart." After driving out to no. 6 on the Hillside course, the superintendent is surprised to find only a few feet of the errant golf cart visible, as the majority of the cart is submerged in water. Only the top portion of the canopy of this "Club Car" can be seen. The golfer, questioned as to what happened, replies, "I was looking for my ball, and then I ziggged when I should have zagged." Well, the zigster had ziggged right over a two-foot steel retaining wall into the lake. Inspection also reveals that many of the golfer's personal items are floating around in the lake. The rescue operation retrieves items such as potato chip bags, tees, a scorecard, a hat, wallet and a number of empty beer cans . . . hmmm. The next question is obvious;

sir, are you under the influence of alcohol? "No way!" the golfer explains. "I am sotally tober!"



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