

# EDITORIAL

## A SUPER LIFE

*The superintendent should be paid well and be asked to perform, but should also be treated with compassion and respect.*

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A career as a golf course superintendent is rewarding. The working environment is nice, and one gets a real feeling of accomplishment trying to provide the turf quality and aesthetic surroundings the members can afford. It really sounds like a super job, and it can be so. Too often the demands put on the superintendent are so great that his/her family life suffers.

## OVER WORKED?

Greens Committees need to remember that golf course superintendents are people too. They have needs, wants and feelings just like everyone else. Most superintendents feel a strong attachment to their course. This is because they sincerely enjoy what they are doing, and there is always the feeling that their job is on the line, and they better not "mess up." Thus, many hours are spent on the course, often six to seven days a week. This is great for the membership, but such a schedule can wreck a family.

Superintendents get married and have children like the rest of us. The family is an important part of our society. (At least, I hope people still feel that way. The high divorce rate and the ease with which children are shuffled off to day care centers does make one wonder about society's current feelings about the family.) My family is very important to me, and I am sure many superintendents feel the same way. Twelve to fifteen hour days, six or seven days a week doesn't leave much family time. Such strain on the home can lead to divorce which is not uncommon among superintendents.

## ANSWERS

It doesn't need to be that way. The golf course members need to be more compassionate when dealing with their superintendent. It is great to have a dedicated superintendent, but like anyone else, they need some time to themselves and for their families. The membership should

allow the superintendent to build an organization (ex: good assistant superintendent, foreman, etc.) so that he can get away from the course without constantly worrying about the way the course is being maintained. Building such an organization requires a financial commitment to salaries.

Besides the time restraints on family life, job security is another weakness of golf course superintendency. In Florida, good superintendents are paid good salaries. This is only fair. The membership does have a right to demand performance if they are paying \$30,000-\$70,000. (The salary range for an established graduate of Lake City Community College.) Although the annual dollars look good, sometimes the time and performance demands are unrealistic. The golf course superintendent often evolves into the resident horticulturist in charge of all landscape development and interior plants as well as 18-holes or more of golf. If effluent is used, he may be assigned sewage treatment plant responsibilities. All these duties can be handled if the superintendent becomes the Director of Grounds Management and is able to hire a golf course superintendent, landscape superintendent, etc. If not able to delegate some of the extra responsibilities, the superintendent will probably not be able to keep up with everything. Some tasks may slip, and the greens committee wrongfully concludes that it must be time for a new superintendent.

Sometimes superintendents change just because there is a new greens committee. Another dubious personnel policy. It costs money every time any trained people leave. It would make more sense for the new committee members to work with the superintendent rather than assume someone else is better. (In defense of greens committees, it must be said that some superintendents do lack the necessary public relations skills to work with constantly changing management.)

## EXCITING AND CHALLENGING

A golf course superintendent has a very exciting and challenging position. It is fun to work outside developing programs for the golf course so that the course plays well and the membership is treated to an aesthetically pleasing experience. The superintendency has evolved into a position that requires practical experience, formal technical training and good communications and management skills. People with such credentials demand respectable salaries. Greens committees should be reasonable in what they ask the superintendent to do. Just managing the golf course produces enough job stress. The superintendent should be paid well and be asked to perform, but he/she should also be treated with compassion and respect. Such treatment makes any position a super job. ■

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