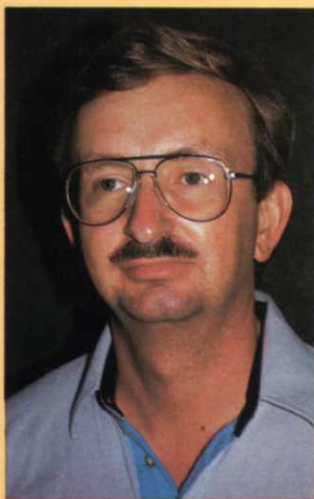


Not everybody can be the head superintendent



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Last year, one of my assistants quit, leaving me high and dry, because he realized he would not become the superintendent within the next year.

He wasn't satisfied with his "second-level" position.

Does every person entering the golf course maintenance career field need to become the superintendent?

What's wrong with becoming a career equipment manager, spray or irrigation technician or, for that matter, a *career assistant* superintendent?

Sadly, our society looks upon those jobs as "second level" and most golf courses give second-level pay and prestige to the people who fill them.

And that's a shame because those are the jobs that the industry desperately needs filled.

A golf course maintenance department might employ six people or 60, but in each case, only one of them is the superintendent. Yet each job is important.

Not everybody can become a superintendent or a doctor or a lawyer.

Clare Huxtable, who is a lawyer on television's "The Cosby Show," told son Theo that he didn't have to become a professional like his parents. Instead, she said, "Grow up and become as good as you can at whatever you choose. Just make sure you are the best at whatever you become."

But the message isn't getting through.

When I interview employees, I often ask, "Where do you want to be in two to five years?"

Usually, no matter what job they are applying for, they will say, "Sitting behind your desk as the golf course superintendent!"

Ridiculous!

In most cases, the applicant has little or no training in agronomy, no management skills, not a clue about budgeting, but he honestly thinks he deserves a shot at running the whole show.

On the other hand, it is understandable that a person who has just spent two to four years in college training to be a golf course superintendent should aspire to the job he

has trained for, but it isn't realistic.

There aren't that many superintendent jobs open. I'm sure we all know at least 10 good assistants who are qualified to move on, but the jobs just aren't there.

We have a glut of college-educated golf course managers on the job market right now while a number of other important golf course maintenance jobs are going unfilled because those highly-trained individuals find them "demeaning."

Who's at fault here?

Everybody and nobody.

But let's point some fingers, anyway, starting with the society which imbued my generation with the notion that everyone could — and therefore *should* — go to college. Jobs which don't require a college education became less desirable. . . or even *undesirable*.

And then there are the universities, which are currently painting a beautiful picture of the superintendent's post, pumping in those high aspirations.

Granted, the top graduates will make their way to the top of the ladder, but what about the others?

They will have acquired an education worth tens of thousands of dollars and will be capable of performing effectively as assistants and technicians but they won't be satisfied because they have been told since childhood to seek only the top job.

If our assistant were to leave today, I could screen dozens of qualified applicants tomorrow.

But what about the mechanic or spray technician?

I would love to find a college-educated person who would bring a professional approach to the position of equipment manager, pesticide manager or irrigation technician. And I am certain I could convince my employer to offer compensation and benefits commensurate with the qualifications — particularly if the applicant indicated a desire to stay in that position.

And those positions are available. Today. Everywhere.

At our professional meetings, a recurring question is, "Hey, do you know of a good mechanic or spray tech?"

Educators need to be aware of the positions that are actually open and students should be guided toward training for and seeking those jobs.

We have enough chiefs. What we need are some Indians with professional feathers in their caps.