

# Character-building experience for people who work with nature

## Green Side Up



*Joel D. Jackson*

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South Florida got a rude wake-up call this past September from Hurricane Andrew. We have been told every year that it could happen, but we have been spared a major storm for several decades.

It finally happened, and with such devastation that it boggles the mind. Entire neighborhoods just vanished in truckloads of debris. Indeed, it was a grim reminder of the sheer power and magnitude of force that nature can unleash. Recovery and restoration has been a slow process as people who have never witnessed such destruction painfully learned that what man has joined together nature can easily put asunder.

Of course the true measure of people is how they respond to difficulties and challenges. I don't doubt for a minute that the people of South Florida will rebound with determination and tenacity and rebuild their homes and businesses. Among them will be our brother superintendents who have had to put their courses back together from the chaos and damage generated by the hurricane.

While the magnitude of this clean-up and restoration back to normal is way off the scale from what many have ever faced before, the patience and perseverance that superintendents have come to practice when dealing with the vagaries of nature will stand them in good stead. Superintendents are used to managing turf during times of severe drought, waiting out day after day of thunderstorms that prohibit routine

mowing and grooming, days and weeks of overcast skies which weaken and discolor their greens, unseasonable cold snaps that shock the turf, and likewise surprise warm spells in the fall that threaten newly overseeded greens.

While some of these dealings with nature seem trivial in comparison with the aftermath of the hurricane, they are the character-building experiences that make up cloth from which people who work with nature are cut. They are tough and resilient. They don't try to "fool mother nature," but rather apply their skills and knowledge to offset the conditions presented by nature.

It has been said that the disaster has brought many people together as they work for the common goal of rebuilding their homes and neighborhoods. I hope that likewise the members of the affected golf courses in the area will gain a better appreciation for the hard work, dedication, knowledge and ingenuity of their respective superintendents as they restore playable conditions to the courses.

Hopefully, they will work closer together in the future to minimize the damage and negative effects of storms, floods, and drought by investing the infrastructure at the club and participating in the regulatory process of our natural resources.

A parting thought from John Milton's, *Paradise Lost*:

*"Accuse not Nature!  
She hath done her part;  
Do thou but thine!"*