

I've worked on golf courses for 24 years and been a golf course superintendent for the past 20. Other than genetic arthritis, I have no serious health problems. I have had the same spray technician for 12 years and

A darker shade of green

twice-yearly cholinesterase testing shows no signs of pesticide exposure problems. My gut feeling — which means nothing — is that superintendents as a whole are healthier than the population at large. I'd be willing to bet that I could take a group of Florida superintendents to

the offices of the NRDC, Sierra Club, or Greenpeace, challenge them to a game of softball, basketball, or touch football, and kick their butts. I will be shocked and amazed if the GCSAA-sponsored superintendent mortality study currently under way shows a higher incidence of cancer among superintendents than the population at large.

I have lived beside the second green at Palm Beach National for over 14 years. Last night I had to help my cat defend his supper dish from a raccoon who had pushed through the screen to get onto the back porch for an easy meal. During my course inspection run the next

morning, I noted the squirrel population explosion and searched the trees for the hawk that has been hunting the property for the past month or so. The ponds had their usual sentinels of anhingas, herons, and egrets, posted in numbers and territories designated by the Supreme Commander in Chief. Ibis and cowbirds scoured the fairways in search of insects, periodically glancing my way to make certain I maintained the proper distance. As I listened to the songbirds and watched the sun come up over the water, I thought that the only thing that could improve this lovely day would have been an appearance by one of our occasional visitors like the gray fox, pileated woodpecker, or great horned owl.

Returning to my office, my stomach began to churn as I noticed the huge stack of articles on environmental issues piled up beside my computer as reference material for this article. Reading some of this garbage would have given one the impression that my recently completed morning tour was as hazardous as nude sunbathing at Chernobyl.

Consider such recently published remarks as these: "If you scraped a golf green and tested it, you'd have to carry it away to a hazardous waste facility." "...some of us who enjoy golf despair that the game's high priests will ever get beyond their well-deserved reputation for causing environmental havoc." "It's not uncommon for golfers and golf course workers to have adverse reactions to the array of chemicals used

Mark My Words



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to maintain their turfgrass.”

These quotes are significant, and especially disturbing, because they were made by golfers (one out of six members of the Sierra Club is a golfer). You can imagine the poison spewing from the mouths of those who associate golf with wealth, greed, power, and Dan Quayle. To say that our fight has only begun and it is an uphill battle is a gross understatement.

For many years I've had trouble understanding the huge disparity between what I know of the golf industry and what those calling themselves “environmentalists” claim about us. I naively thought, at first, that maybe there was a lot of truth to what was being said — it didn't seem logical, but no science was available for corroboration or rebuttal. Then I began to think it was just the old “squeaky wheel gets the grease” tactic — loud, repeated exaggerations, lies, and half-truths were necessary to nudge the slow-moving bureaucracy in the direction you wanted it to go. I also assumed (and still believe) that a lot of golf course criticism was rooted in the eternal conflict between “haves” and “have nots.” Golf is perceived as a rich man's game. It was only after research showing golf's positive environmental record began appearing and was attacked and totally rejected by many of these so-called “environmentalists,” that I began to get a clue as to what was really going on. Recent extensive reading and a seminar by Dr. Michael Coffman has been most enlightening.

To begin understanding why good science is rejected, why lies and distortions are standard operating procedure, and why common sense and logic aren't applied to environmental issues, just take a look in the mirror!

Has your value system changed from that of your parents and grandparents? Do you believe in all the same principles upon which this country was founded and made great? Would you say your religious views are traditional Judeo-Christian, or have you adopted other beliefs? did the counterculture movement of the 60s have any influence on you, or did you just hide under a rock and ignore it all?

Few of us described as “Baby

Boomers,” who are now the core of the American workforce, could honestly answer that our value systems have not evolved over our lifetimes. With a majority of us changing individually, society as a whole has been transformed, bringing with it both welcome and unwelcome changes.

Few would disagree that concern for preserving and protecting the environment has been a good change. The American people place great importance on this. What most of us don't realize is that this concern has been seized upon by people who have radically different beliefs from mainstream America, and they have inserted themselves into positions of leadership within many of the environmental organizations.

This is the reason for the lies, distortions, and lack of common sense and logic: By telling only part of the story, the majority of us who care about the environment are being manipulated into supporting actions we wouldn't if all the facts were known. According to surveys, 25% to 30% of us are concerned citizens who deeply care about what is happening to the environment; another 20% of us are very active environmentalists; and probably less than 5% of us are the radical minority of the environmental movement.

Among the radicals and actives are the ones with hidden agendas and ulterior motives. They have permeated the leadership of many environmental organizations, often taking over and shifting focus of some of the older, more conservative organizations. Their belief systems are their religion and, as in any religious war, the end justifies the means.

Listing and describing these organizations and their belief systems is too lengthy for the purpose of this article (buy Dr. Michael Coffman's book, *Environmentalism: The Dawn of Aquarius or the Twilight of a New Dark Age* for detailed information). There are many similarities, subtle differences, variations, and even major differences in the philosophies of these radical environmental organizations. Few generalizations can be made that would be accurate and all-encompassing.

Most of them, however, reject the tra-

ditional conservation strategies and “wise use” philosophies. They believe there is no such thing as being a good steward of the land. Humans do not have dominion over the earth, according to their view, but share it with other species having equal value. Nature is good and man is evil; or, man is god, nature is god. Golf courses don’t even exist in their new world order.

The above statements are simplistic and don’t cover the full range of environmental radicalism, but are representative of key points. Whether they believe in animism, pantheism, biocentrism, eco feminism, gnosticism, eastern mysticism, neopaganism, occultism, planetization, sustainable development, maintenance of biodiversity, the Gaia theory, The Plan, or New Age, they share the common belief that a radical transformation of society must take place, and that using a sympathetic environmental agenda to attain their goals is their best opportunity for success. As far as I know, few of them offer any details for the construction and operation of this brave new world, just sketchy outlines of how wonderful everything is going to be.

Simple minds like mine always try to

simplify things so I can understand them. As I see it, the conflict boils down to: Do your needs as a human always, usually, sometimes, rarely or never come ahead of other species? My guess is that a poll would reveal a bell-shaped curve, closer to how an easy schoolteacher would have graded a class with more A’s than F’s. The problem is that this kind of a poll has not been taken; that people will lie and distort the truth to achieve their goals; and that active minorities will achieve political success over silent or misinformed majorities.

As one who cares about the environment, it greatly disturbs me that a noble cause is being subverted by groups with hidden agendas, individuals seeking personal gain, hypocrites who ask others to make sacrifices they won’t make themselves, and religious fanatics trying to impose their values on others. America is a democracy, and people cannot be denied their choice of beliefs, but they must be given factual information upon which to vote their choices.

I happen to believe that wise-use strategies based on good science are the mechanisms to satisfy the desires of a majority of our population, but I may be outnum-

bered. Most Americans who believe in protecting the environment are middle to upper class who are far removed from the natural resources they depend on for their high standard of living. Those who know the least about managing natural resources are those most critical of natural resource industries, and support environmental legislation no matter what the issue or the cost. They believe “environmentalists” over scientists by about 5 to 1.

It is estimated that we now spend about \$1.7 trillion annually for all environmental regulation, with costs continuing to escalate.

Can we afford to continue passing legislation on the basis that it might be good for the environment? I wonder how many of us really understand the economic implications of environmental legislation, or the precarious position our country will be in if we continue down this path?

I urge all superintendents to dig deeper into the environmental issues, learn what lies below the surface, and help educate your members. It is much more than your job that is at stake.



If you think I'm going to tell you that you need to plant a lot of exotic vegetation on a golf course to make it more playable, beautiful, or profitable you're barking up the wrong tree. Golf does quite well in its birthplace, Scotland, and the last tree I saw on those seaside links was knee-high to a sheep dog.

Now, I could beat around the bush and talk about the trend of manicured garden-type golf courses, but someone else probably already did it better elsewhere in this issue. I will, however, try to get to the root of many superintendents' concerns when the Greens

Committee wants to add a

flower bed on every tee and plant a grove of trees in every rough.

It may come as a big surprise to everyone, but when a golf course is designed by a reasonably competent architect whether it was in 1910 or 1993, he was allowing for sunlight, air circulation, irrigation coverage, drainage, traffic patterns, shot values, etc. Remember, the architect never promised you a rose garden, just a golf course.

When a club starts adding "extra" features they need to be prepared to pay for more than just the plant material. If the maintenance staff is already working to full capacity, somebody else is going to have to fertilize, prune, weed, spray, and edge the "new beds." That may mean hiring additional staff. Some clubs

do have successful programs where the members themselves care for the "extra beds." Let me hedge a little here and note that type of program works best at a private club with a dedicated and involved membership.

Remember, when you plant that tree, mighty oaks from little acorns grow. So, don't get too close to the greens, tees, and fairways. It seems that tree shade and tree roots are in direct, and usually victorious, competition with grass plants. They will rob the turf of its vigor and playability. Flower beds that get too close to tee tops rob equipment of turning room and cause more wear to the turf. Sometimes, the staff then has to revert to using smaller-sized mowing equipment which is more labor intensive. "Labor intensive" is a synonym in finance jargon for "expensive!" Often, the water and fertilizer requirements of the "pretty flowers" are also in conflict with the needs of the surrounding turf.

Now, you'd think I was a blooming idiot if I didn't admit that there are some very beautifully landscaped courses around the world. But, you'd be looking through rose colored glasses if you didn't admit that they pay for what they get!

Let me go out on a limb here and suggest you look strongly at using native vegetation to accent your course. It will give you a lot of choices for color and texture and yet help conserve water resources and keep maintenance costs down.

I'd better close now or the editor will be pruning this columbine.

Mulch Ado About Nothing

Green Side Up



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