

Sleeping Habits of Superintendents

By Jim Walker

Last week at the Poa, I was sitting under a chickee hut overlooking the pool and world-famous Tiki Bar, having my morning decaf when a member of the state board was finishing a 10-mile run. We chatted for a few minutes about man's desire



Jim Walker

to torture himself with such brutal exercise and he told me he had run a marathon once and was thinking of doing it again.

Having run some decent times in 10K races myself back in the early 80's I asked him what it was like. He replied that you think you are going to die. He told me he had asked his wife if she minded if he began training to run a marathon again and she told him in no uncertain terms that she did. When he asked why, she replied that watching him fall asleep on the sofa at 9 p.m. was bad enough that she was not going to watch him fall asleep at 8 p.m. or before.

This got me thinking about the unusual sleeping habits of superintendents who get up early and for the most part go to bed early as well. I myself am chased from the sofa

to the bedroom occasionally before a show that we enjoy watching is completed.

This topic worked its way into dinner conversation after our local chapter meeting recently and, as I sat listening and probing for more information on the subject, I decided that the sleeping habits of our occupation may make for interesting research and reading. Ground rules are no names, no reference to their clubs, cars, dogs, wives, initials, nicknames, or pesticide license numbers.

Subject one is a night owl. He stays up until 11 p.m. or later on a regular basis. I've got to take a two-hour nap to make it that late even if I'm not going in the next day. He is up by 5 a.m. each morning and takes a nap very seldom. This guy doesn't need or get much sleep.

Subject two is the complete opposite. A man after my own heart, he often takes naps in the afternoon, and no one is allowed to phone his house after 8 p.m., unless they want to suffer his wrath the next day. You won't get to speak to him if you call after 8, but his wife will take a message and you had better change your phone number PDQ.

Subject three is a total mess. He lies in bed trying to fall asleep, but all he can think of is work. Are the greens too slow or too fast? Did the greens committee chairman play today and if so, how did he shoot? Is the irrigation system running properly or are the local kids going to dig holes in one of his greens like they did a month ago? This guy is now taking medication.

Subject four goes to bed when he

feels like it, gets up when he wants, and doesn't put the toilet seat down when he is finished. He plays golf almost every day after work and comes home when he is good and ready. He drives a new sports car, owns a motorcycle, a boat and goes fishing whenever he wants. Does this guy have the greatest wife in the world, or is he single? I'm not telling, but he told me in confidence that he has the perfect woman. Who could ask for more? She is deaf and dumb, good looking, and owns a liquor store. Hey fellas! Let's drive that old Chrysler to Mexico.

Subject five is your stereotypical superintendent: mid-30's, starting to go grey above the ears, slathers himself in SP 45 sun block, has two kids, and drives a pickup truck. He parties hardy only on odd occasions and is in bed around 10 p.m. He is up between 4:30 and 5 a.m. each day, usually without the aid of an alarm clock though he sets one just the same. He works until 3 or 4 p.m. and comes home to yard work, kids' soccer, or painting a bedroom.

Here are some quick stats: 80 percent of us go to bed around 10 and seldom have trouble falling asleep. I prefer the 30-minute timer on the bedroom TV, which I seldom see or hear go off.

10 percent of us go to bed at 9 or before and 75 percent of them take regular naps. Fewer than 5 percent of us go to bed past 11, and the other 5 percent get less than 5 hours' sleep a night for one reason or another.

P.S. If you send me \$5, I'll provide you with Subject 4's girlfriend's name and phone number. She owns a bait and tackle store, marina, and motel on Lake Okeechobee.

Making Memories

My wife has a saying whenever we experience something good or bad: she'll say we're making a memory. It takes a little of the sting out of a bad situations and it enhances the good ones. One can't go through life working around the game of golf without making memories. Here are a few of mine.

Apollo Beach Golf Club

- As a high school student walking the freshly

GREEN SIDE UP



Joel Jackson, CGCS

and then walking shoulder to shoulder with a dozen men shaking the sprigs onto the ground by hand. Hand mowing, hand raking, manual irrigation everything by hand.

- Becoming friends and fishing buddies with

tilled fairways chucking limestone rocks into the dump truck that drove slowly ahead of us.

- Hand dragging chicken manure into the green surface as a preplant mix. Shredding bermudagrass sod squares into sprigs, bagging them in burlap bags

William "Bill" Dietsch, Jr. who was the construction supervisor on the job for Robert Trent Jones. Bill gave me a job as his assistant 10 years later that started me in the business.

Tamiami Golf Club

- A Czechoslovakian bulldozer operator telling me, "Nothing in life is easy."
- Digging lakes with dynamite

Pembroke Pines

- Eight to ten employees lined up across the back of the first tee during grow in and began hand-pulling weeds from tee to green down the first hole. When we got to the dogleg of the second hole a few days later, that's when the superintendent was fired.



Flocks of turkey and herds of deer were common sights on my rides through the Magnolia Golf Course. Photos by Joel Jackson

- Being shown how to mix a pint of 2,4,D and a quart of MSMA in 100 gallons of water and spray fairways. Not being told to avoid the bahiagrass in the roughs.
- Hoof prints in the newly sprigged greens.
- Sprinkling Aldrin granules down a mole cricket burrow. Being told that the best control for mole crickets was a ball peen hammer and a flashlight.

Lake Buena Vista

- Making repairs one night by Cushman headlight to the irrigation pipe that crossed over the canal on the 13th hole and stepping back only to look up and see a young bobcat curiously watching me from the bridge overhead.
- Testing the dryness of our sand topdressing on the 15th green while my boss John McKenzie sat in the helicopter that was hovering overhead. A late Friday afternoon rain had halted our clean up of the greens and we had an 8 a.m. shotgun tournament the next day. John got permission to hire the helicopter that gave tours from International Drive to come over and help dry the last four greens so I could drag them in.
- One afternoon I had been running extra irrigation on dry spots on the 5th hole by bleeding off the brass valves controlling the two-head stations down the mainline of the fairway. A storm was coming and I began shutting down the valves. A bolt of lightning hit a pine tree on the 3rd hole and gave me a small jolt. It also caught a pine tree on fire and I had to call Disney Control to dispatch the fire department.
- Giving Bob Hope a ride from the parking lot in my golf cart one day when he was playing Lake Buena Vista. Later on, we got ahead of his group and teed up a golf ball with a big smile cut into it and labeled it "Bob's Ball." We waited around the corner and could hear him laugh when he saw it. Hey! I made Bob Hope laugh!

Preparing for the Disney Classic each October.

- Going to the Masters in 1985 with Bay Hill's Jim Ellison and his assistant.
- Going to the Masters in 1988 with half a dozen Central Florida superintendents. Sneaking under the ropes late Wednesday and checking out the stimpmeter marks on the green. Really fast.

Isleworth

- Interviewing for the superintendent's job at Isleworth in Mr. Palmer's office at Bay Hill. I had purchased a new sport coat with coordinating shirt, tie, slacks – the works. We lived nearby and when I got home I nearly passed out. On the outside of the right sleeve was the Hart, Schafner and Marx – Jack Nicklaus – Golden Bear Logo.
- Watching Mr. Palmer make a two on the par-5, 7th hole. Driver – 3 iron and shoot a 28 on the front side.
- Feeling how great a bentgrass green putted in the mornings as I walked the greens. They were great from November to May.

Osprey Ridge and Eagle Pines

- Growing in Osprey Ridge and being part of the opening team of the Bonnet Creek Club.
- Meeting Tom Fazio and working daily with the irrepressible Steve Maziak. Meeting the legendary Pete Dye. Meeting John Denver at Bryant Gumbel's Pro-Am pairings party.
- Watching the lakes get stocked with bass, bream and catfish in 1991 and a few years later catching and releasing bass in the lake on No. 16 Osprey.

Magnolia and Palm Courses

- Seeing herds of deer and flocks of wild turkey nearly every day.
- The excitement and the fatigue of hosting the Oldsmobile Scramble and the Disney Classic back to back
- Watching Tiger Woods bounce his second shots off the back of the Magnolia's par-5 holes.
- One foggy morning as I walked off No. 9 green, I hear a bagpipe. I drive toward No. 10, but can't see much. I follow the sound. Halfway down the fairway on the cart path is this guy playing the bagpipe. He wasn't bothering anyone. I knew Disney had pipers for special golf events, so I asked if he was a cast member just practicing. No, he was just a guest staying at the Grand Floridian across the street and he didn't think the other guests would appreciate his early morning piping, so he came over to the course. Did I mind? "No," I said. I'm just making a memory.