

# 3rd-generation super's concern: Has tradition gone way of chivalry?

By TERRY BUCHEN

As a third-generation golf course superintendent, it has been fun over the past 26 years witnessing how the profession has grown and prospered. At the same time, some trends concern me.

On the positive side:

- The "barn" is now known as the maintenance center.
- Our daily attire has changed from t-shirts to golf shirts.
- Company vehicles are now more SUVs than pickup trucks.
- We are jack-of-all-trades, master of all.
- Instead of brown-bagging it, we now eat in the clubhouse.
- Formerly "greenkeepers," we are now known as "golf course managers."
- We attend green committee meetings and board of director meetings.
- Once thought of as farmers, we are considered turf managers and administrators.
- Once inaccessible, we are now quite conspicuous.
- Once loners, now we are a large part of the "Big 3."
- Television tournament commentators explain why the course is in such good shape and who is responsible.
- Our images are enhanced by Certified Golf Course Superintendent status.
- And we are environmentally friendly and proud of it.

Since the boom of the 1980s, when it was discovered that people could actually make money in the golf business, our end of the industry has definitely changed. But some time-honored traditions of this "gentleman's game" are taking a back seat to personal gain and sometimes outright selfishness.

There are many "new" people in superintendent positions. Some switched majors in college without any prior practical golf maintenance experience and, as a result, have been violating some professional ethics, time-honored unwritten rules and professional courtesies. Some examples:

- Making a formal application for a fellow superintendent's position when, in fact, the position is not actually open. A true professional would telephone the superintendent and receive first-hand knowledge.
- When playing a peer's golf course, a professional courtesy is to notify the superintendent of the intended round, hoping to visit with him/her out on the links, even if they did not know each other beforehand.
- Sending a thank-you card after playing a peer's course has usually been done automatically without even thinking about it.
- After hearing some unfounded rumors from unscrupulous sources, spreading the ru-

mors further to peers. This does no one any good and drags down superintendents' professional image.

• Some purveyors are giving out gifts to superintendents that are personal in nature, such as clothing, gift certificates, free trips, etc. that are not



directly beneficial to the employers and are viewed by many as dressed-over kick-backs. Most superintendents were never allowed to receive any gifts and many feel they would hate to see employers lose trust in them for allowing such a practice

by "selling themselves out."

• Supers once were never afraid to ask a peer for help on a variety of subjects, but now some don't want to lose an edge, or risk being downgraded by that same group of peers.

Superintendents have been making tremendous gains in salaries, fringe benefits, respect

in the industry and with the golfing public, as they well should. But they should not lose sight with time-honored unwritten rules, ethics and professional courtesies for which they have worked so hard. Maintaining common courtesies, like the Golden Rule, would keep and preserve supers' reputations forever.

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