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DON'T OVERLOOK THESE LESSONS

While sorting through old family papers recently, I came across a reprint of a book entitled "Don't", a guide to manners first published in the 1800s. The reprint was from the 1960s and included annotations by Eric Sloane, a Colonial Era historian. Sloane compared the manners and courtesies of days long gone with those of his day, noting that there had been a retreat from tradition and customs. He wrote that, "a social rebellion that accepts teen-age revolt, junk art, pornography and hallucinatory drugs appears to have little need for the niceties of etiquette. In fact, the practice of doing the exact opposite of what grandfather used to do in now considered fashionable."

That was nearly 50 years ago: Things have only gotten worse. We are witnessing the decline of basic rules of etiquette in society and our profession. Is a lack of good manners hurting you? Are simple courtesies keeping you from getting a better job, making more money, moving up the ladder?

Just as the game of golf is steeped in history and tradition, I suggest a quick review of the following traditional, yet simple, rules of social decency and consideration for others from 200 years ago. Yes, some of them are pretty funny, but they are timeless suggestions that will serve us all both on and off the golf course. With a new year upon us, they also might serve as fodder for resolutions.

APPEARANCE. The adage "you never get a second chance to make a good first impression" still holds true. The comments from the 19th century remain relevant today:

- "Don't neglect personal cleanliness — which is more neglected than careless observers suppose." Do you have a set of clean clothes in your

office? You never know when you'll be called upon to represent your club.

- "Don't be untidy in anything. Neatness is one of the most important of the minor morals." How neat is your office? I don't just mean your desk, but your bunkers, rough, greens, tee boxes, etc. What does your "office" say about you and your work ethic?

- My personal favorite. "Don't neglect the small hairs that project from the nostrils and grow about the

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apertures of the ears." Enough said!

CONVERSATION. The way we speak says all anyone needs to know about our intelligence and knowledge. The original points were made at a time when writing and speaking were the only methods of communication. We may communicate in many new ways — phone, texts, e-mails and so on — but the lessons haven't changed.

- "Don't speak ungrammatically.

Study books of grammar and the writings of only the best authors." A great man once told me "readers are leaders." That includes reading and knowing the rules of grammar.

- "Don't use slang, profane language anywhere. Moderate your transports." As a boss or employee you are a representative of your club, so choose your words carefully and resist the temptation to become too loud or profane. Furthermore, speak clearly and slowly so you can be both heard and understood.

- "Don't use extravagant adjectives. Extravagance in any form is never in

good taste." Speak and write plainly. Big words don't impress and are often used incorrectly. Also, don't think you have to write or say a lot: There is no need to state your case in 100 words when 20 will do.

- "Don't pronounce incorrectly. Listen carefully to the conversation of cultivated people." No one is expecting you to make speeches, but be sure you know what you are talking about before you open your mouth, and that includes pronunciation as well as speaking clearly and concisely.

COMMON COURTESY. I'm amazed how many phone calls, e-mails, and voice mails go unanswered. I can't think of anything so rude as not getting back to someone who has reached out to you. Is it that difficult to pick up the phone or send back an e-mail? I'd rather be told no or to get lost than hear nothing at all.

- "Don't fail to apologize if you tread upon or cause inconvenience in any way." Return those phone calls, letters, and e-mails. And if you're slow doing so, apologize for your tardiness.

- "Don't fail to acknowledge, by note, all invitations, requests, and questions, whether accepted or not." Again, return those calls.

- "Don't write notes on rules paper or inferior paper." When writing back to someone, use proper business stationery or invest in quality, tasteful note cards.

- "Don't talk about yourself and don't talk about your affairs. If you wish to be popular, talk to people about what interests them and not what interests you." Let others talk, learn to listen, and not only will you learn some things, you'll become very popular.

- "Don't, as an invited guest, be late for the appointment." Being late is being rude. It's that simple. **GC!**