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YOU CAN FIX STUPID

I adore Ron White. The former “Blue Collar Comedy” standout lives life however the @#%! he wants and says whatever the #@&! he wants. And people are willing to pay \$100 a seat to go laugh at him.

He riffs on all sorts of stuff and I steal lines from him all the time. I’ll randomly throw, “They call me Tater Salad,” into a speech sometimes just to wake everyone up. His funniest stuff was definitely the “blue” part of Blue Collar Comedy and can’t be reprinted here, but there’s a billion hours of YouTube clips of him if you want to check him out raw and uncut.

His most famous catchphrase comes from a bit on plastic surgery and the other miracles that allow medical science to repair your parts as you age: “If your eyesight starts to go bad, you can get Lasik surgery and they can give you 20/20 vision at any age. If your hearing starts to fail, they’ll put a little device in your ear that makes you hear as good as when you were born. But let me tell you something folks- **you can’t fix stupid**. There’s not a pill you can take. There’s not a class you can go to. Stupid is fo-evah.”

You see examples of “you can’t fix stupid” every day. Morons texting while driving 80 mph. People in front of you in a checkout line arguing with clerks about a 25 cent coupon that expired months ago. The list is endless.

And the stupid list contains plenty of examples from our happy little business. Stupidity was condoned – even encouraged – for decades during the churn-and-burn days when people were lined up to join clubs or getting up at 4:30 a.m. to snag a tee time at someplace decent in the burbs. One would think that the days of stupid would be over... yet we still find things like:

- Overinvesting in lavish clubhouse improvements (or, god forbid, adding the dreaded “Spa”) while shortchanging the golf course capital improvement budget. Is someone more likely to join or play regularly at a particular facility because they have new window treatments or because the irrigation system works well enough to keep the giant green money-maker outside that window alive?

- Daily-fee facilities that still treat customers like dog doo when they walk into the pro shop. I do a lot of “secret shopper” visits to courses and I’m still more likely to get a suspicious

continue. It’s the single most common, pervasive example of massive dumbness that hangs like a giant dead albatross around the necks of too many otherwise good facilities.

Ladies and gentlemen (stupid drum roll please!), I give you... the kitchen. Ah yes, the infamous F&B operation. The thing that loses money at 75 percent of U.S. clubs by my educated estimate. It’s the massive black hole that never closes, happily sucking dollars away from the large turf-covered ATM machine out front. It’s the one element of most facilities that’s still operated like it’s 19-friggin-52 and

Ladies and gentlemen (stupid drumroll please!), I give you... **the kitchen.**

stare-down from the pimply-faced wannabe pro or craggy old ranger reject behind the counter than, “Hi, welcome to Shady Acres. What can we do for you today?” Why the hell can’t we routinely provide the same customer service ethic you find at the average Kwik Shop?

- Presenting a good product poorly. I’ve seen lots of fine golf courses that just look seedy around the edges. Peeling paint, overflowing trash cans, crappy carts, dirty bathrooms, cigarette butts all over the place: all little things that you remember instead of the quality greens and fairways. Seem picky? Guess who it matters to? Female players. Guess where the growth of the game is coming from? Get it now?

Yes, there are plenty of stupid little things we do to impede our success. I’d have to kill a lot more trees to give you my complete list. But, instead, allow me to present the one, ginormous, *el grande stupido* thing that I am constantly amazed is allowed to

Ward and June Cleaver are still dining at the club four nights a week.

Well, here’s what you’re gonna do if you’re tired of it and you want to actually try to fix stupid: change it. Einstein famously said that the definition of insanity is repeating the same action over and over and expecting a different result. Running a money-losing F&B operation the same way year after year fits that definition neatly.

Outsource it, downsize it, eliminate it or do it right. Make it a unique and spectacular profit center. Forget the chateaubriand and 5,000-bottle wine cellar and convert to wood-fired pizzas or really awesome hot dogs. Just do something, for god’s sake. It’s stupid... and you can fix it.

The future of golf ain’t in the tater salad you’re serving to an indifferent bunch of members who are only reluctantly coming into the clubhouse a couple of nights a month to eat up their minimums. The future of golf is golf. **GCI**