

As we approach the 20th anniversary of the movie *Caddyshack*, it's time I pay homage to the film that changed my professional life. I know some of my blue-blooded, but-toned-down cohorts still cringe when the movie is mentioned in conversation. But they should realize that there's always a danger in taking oneself too seriously.

Me? I'm a proud owner of a *Caddyshack* videotape. I requested the movie as a Christmas present a few years ago. I had taped the film from a television broadcast several years ago, but I found it difficult to watch closely because of TV's many distracting commercial breaks, not to mention the TV editing.

Through my many viewings of the film, I've discovered that beneath his mumbling, disheveled exterior, Carl Spackler, the character portrayed magnificently by Bill Murray, was a wise assistant superintendent. He taught me some valuable lessons from his unusual School of Greenkeeping. They follow:

Lesson #1: Chrysanthemums are overrated – As Cinderella Carl whacking chrysanthemum blooms into make-believe golfing glory filled the screen, I began to see the folly of formal landscaping around the golf course.

I was reborn a naturalist on the spot and endeavored to stamp out chrysanthemums forever in favor of native plants. I purchased a sling blade the next day.

Lesson #2: Be happy in your work – While some superintendents bemoan Murray's character as an insidious caricature of a superintendent, keep in mind that the golf pro didn't even get a cameo part. Carl's work ethic is certainly worth noting as he spent nights stalking the vandalizing gopher.

Ted Knight did a great job as the pompous, meddling club president, Judge Smails, who like many club officers never really understood golf course maintenance. Carl did not live for the judge's approval, but by the old adage: "We must be happy in our work!"

Even if it meant simply sculpting gopher figurines out of plastique explosive.

Caddyshack Clicks, 20 Years Later

BY JOEL JACKSON



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Lesson #3: There's more than one way to kill a mole cricket – Carl's problem wasn't mole crickets, but gophers tunneling to the beat of Kenny Loggins' music. What I learned from Carl was the determination to somehow find solutions to problems on the course.

For instance, even if the EPA bans all pesticides, we still have dynamite. You, too, can march to a different drummer.

Lesson #4: Baby Ruth bars are bound to fall into the pool of life – Perhaps the pivotal scene in the movie is when the loyal, down-to-earth, unappreciated Carl comes to the rescue of the club members panicked by a candy bar in the swimming pool. Carl uses his devotion to duty and common sense to recognize the reality of the situation and gets a sweet reward, while the rest of the people cower in fear and ignorance, trapped by their perceptions.

Hey, candy happens!

Lesson #5: The importance of networking – Carl told Chevy Chase's character, Ty Webb, that he once met the dalai lama and felt he had secured a chance for immortality. Likewise, I once worked for Arnold Palmer, a recognizable golf deity. So if I ever need to update my resume, I've got that going for me . . . which is nice.

The moral to this column – Lighten up folks. Remember that you only get to go through life once. And if you do it right, once is enough. Also, don't be ashamed to dream, like Spackler . . . the Cinderella boy, outta nowhere, a former greenskeeper now about to become the Masters champion.

Joel Jackson, CGCS and director of communications for the Florida GCSA, predicted that Caddyshack would become a cult classic when it was released in 1980. For the record, he has seen the film 53 times, not including tonight.