

It occurs to me that I've been hanging around this industry for 15 years. I guess that makes me a veteran by some standards ... or a rookie by others. But assuming that a decade and a half of listening to and commiserating with superintendents gives me some perspective, allow me to make the following observation:

Most of you live in a nearly constant state of fear.

Wait — Before you fire off a nasty letter telling me how stable your job is and how confident you are in your abilities, honestly ask yourself whether you ever lay awake at night and ponder any of these questions:

- Will my greens crash two days before the Member/Guest?
- Is my new chairman or club president out to get me?
- Did I get my fungicide down at the right time?
- Will Joe (or José or Joanna) be high as a kite tomorrow at work?
- What if my mechanic gets a better offer?
- Did the irrigation system actually come on?
- How fast is too fast?
- Will I hit my budget numbers?
- Can my assistant handle things if I leave for two hours?

Do any of those questions send a tingle up your spine? Do they make you flinch involuntarily? If so, that makes you a typical worry-about-everything-all-the-time superintendent.

I've heard some people argue that this collective sense of fear that pervades the profession is unwarranted paranoia. They argue that a superintendent's job is no more stressful or unpredictable than any other.

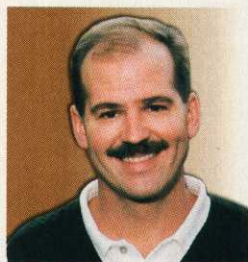
Those people are wrong.

Accountants do not toss and turn in bed worrying about some minor math error ruining their reputation — they can fix it in the morning. One minor error at a course — an accidental herbicide contamination in a tank mix, for example — can end a career for a superintendent.

Bankers, like superintendents, have hundreds of customers to keep happy. But one

Nothing to Fear But Fear Itself

BY PAT JONES



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disgruntled customer can't successfully demand that the banker be canned because the customer doesn't like the looks of the lobby.

Veteran lawyers lose no sleep over the idea that the firm will dump them for an inexperienced new attorney because "things are going OK and we can save a few bucks on salaries."

This inherent stress — apprehension, fear, whatever you wish to call it — is real and intense.

As our cover story this month notes, there are no industry statistics on divorce (or alcoholism, depression or other problems), but it's clear the demands of the job take a toll on spouses and families. Few accountants, lawyers or bankers live their jobs 24/7/365 the way superintendents do.

Yet, it's not brain surgery. Lives are not at stake. You are the caretaker of a playing field for a *game*, not an air-traffic controller responsible for hundreds of hurtling steel objects, in a crowded sky, that are stuffed with human beings.

But you are also the caretaker of your life. When the grinding stress of your job begins to have an impact on your health or erode family relationships, it's time to step back and remember what *really* matters.

I should know. I went through a "career-first" stage years ago, and it damn near killed me. Now, I believe in the old line that says, "Nobody ever had 'I should have spent more time on the office' engraved on their tombstone."

Growing grass is important. Growing a healthy attitude about the profession and where it fits in the greater scheme of your life is more important.

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