

NEIGHBORS TO



The Peace Arch on the boundary between Blaine, Wash., and Douglas, B.C., celebrates the unguarded United States/Canadian border.

THE NORTH

BY RON FURLONG

It's time we gave our Canadian friends the respect they deserve

There is a faction out there (you know who you are) that believes the American flag is missing a star. This is the group that thinks of Canada as a vast, cold extension of the northern United States. Canada, for all of its significant achievements, still remains the Rodney Dangerfield of prominent world powers.

By now, you're asking yourself why I feel obligated to defend our northern neighbors. Well, my father was born in the coal-mining town of Glace Bay in Cape Breton, located on the shores of the cold Atlantic in the heart of Nova Scotia. I spent many a summer running wild along the rugged cliffs of Glace Bay. Does this sentimentality make me an expert on Canadian superintendents and their situation? Of course not, but it does make me cringe every time I hear Americans express a lack of respect for their neighbors.

So where does this lack of respect come from? Do the Canadians themselves have an inferiority complex, or is it just a few snobby Americans projecting their own provincial feelings? Do Canadian superintendents feel like they are living in the imposing shadow of the great United States?

In his book *The Canadians*, Andrew H. Malcom encapsulated the problem Canadians have in relations with their southern brother. He wrote, "Nearly eight of every 10 Canadians live within 100 miles of the United States, with its powerful media, its sprawling culture, and its immense economy and popula-

tion. As a result, the United States, although often seen as the land of *bilk* and *money*, looms larger than life in the Canadian mind."

In other words, we've basically been shoved down their throats. On the other hand, Canadian culture gets nary a peep in this country. Nowhere is that truer than when it comes to golf. What's the first thing that comes to mind when you think Canadian golf? Mike Wier? Banff Springs? Wearing a really warm jacket? An honest answer, of course, is, "Not much."

In truth, golf north of the border is as popular as it is in the states, with as long and as rich a tradition as we Yanks have. Although perhaps not boasting quite as many classic layouts as the United States, there is still a large share of excellent, traditional golf clubs in Canada. There are several renowned golf course architects that have beautified the Canadian landscape over the years, the most renowned of which is undoubtedly Stanley Thompson, whose crowning

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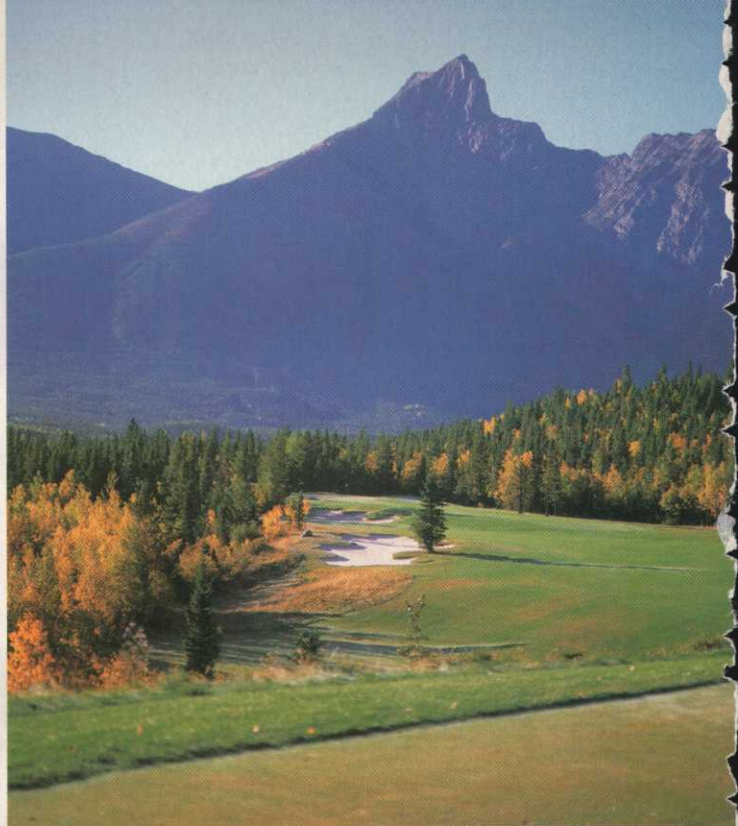
achievement may be Capilano Golf & CC in British Columbia, consistently ranked as one of the best tracks in the world. Other great Canadian architects include Geoffrey Cornish, C.E. Robinson and Howard Watson.

The actual roots of golf's history in Canada pre-date, according to some, those of the United States. While many agree the oldest established club — St. Andrew's in Yonkers, N.Y. — dates to 1888, the Royal Montreal GC was established about 15 years earlier in 1873. The Quebec GC dates to 1875, and a club in Toronto to 1876. With such a storied history, do Canadian superintendents really feel slighted? Or could they care less what a few Whopper-eating Yankees think?

Dean Morrison, superintendent at the Calgary GC in Alberta, who got his education in the states, doesn't feel slighted in the least. "We're all dealing with the same issues," he says.

I asked Walt Gooder, superintendent at Country Hills GC in Calgary (and a former president of the Canadian Golf Superintendent's Association), whether Canada is becoming too Americanized. Gooder shrugged.

"We are a free people — free to choose our own way of life," he says. "Although we are heavily influenced by your politics and your commerce — and some people resent that — in the end we are free to choose. That is our true culture."



Golf courses in Canada, such as Kananaskis Country GC in Alberta, have their share of history. Golf north of the border is as popular as it is in the United States.

As far as superintendents are concerned, it's interesting to compare their views on the Golf Course Superintendent's Association of America (GCSAA) vs. the Canadian Golf Superintendent's Association (CGSA). In general, the GCSAA is given high marks in the Great White North.

When asked to explain his membership in an organization outside of his own country, Paul Dermott, certified superintendent at Oakdale Golf & CC in Ontario, says of the GCSAA: "It has the resources to provide and develop quality educational opportunities and promote the superintendent's position within the golf community."

I went back to Morrison and Gooder for additional answers.

Morrison justifies his membership in the GCSAA as a no-brainer. "Education-wise, so much more is offered," he says. "Your GCSAA membership means exposure to what's happening. We're fortunate up here to have access to it. You *have* to be a member."

As far as the GCSAA conference, Morrison says he attends every year.

"I tell my members [that] if there is anything new in golf to be found, it will be at the American show," Morrison says. "Let's face it: It is *the* show. We joke that anything new at the American show will make it up here in three to five years. When you look at the numbers — 20,000 to 25,000 at the GCSAA show compared to 2,000 at the CGSA show — it's staggering."

Gooder agrees. "The GCSAA is a hub for knowledge and innovation. As a professional, I would not be living up to my obligations if I did not get out into the best possible environment for learning," he says.

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Gooder went on to explain why he feels it's important that he also belong to the CGSA. "We need a strong association in Canada to deal with certain issues such as pesticides, the environment and certification. We have a whole different set of environmental and labor laws."

Morrison does feel the Yanks might be slightly more intense about promoting themselves within the industry.

"The American public relations campaign is a little more aggressive," he says. "Canadians are, by nature, a little more reserved in their ways, but our goals are the same. We are constantly talking about better ways to promote ourselves and our image."

Gooder details just how pro-active the Canadians can be.

"We are currently developing, in conjunction with learning institutions and the government, a means of 'certification' that sets legal criteria for enjoying the title superintendent," Gooder says. "This would set education and standards, much like are in place for certified public accountants, lawyers, electricians and engineers. In the future, we anticipate golf courses will be legally required to hire 'certified' superintendents. This seems like a positive and pro-active move."

I asked Morrison if Canada was closing the gap at all as far as research, equipment and innovations.

"Financially, we can't do it," Morrison says. "The way we look at it is: Why reinvent the wheel? We don't have the Penn States and the Michigan States and the research facilities to compete. We don't try to compete."

So is there a lack of respect? Should the United States simply gobble up Canada, one province at a time? Should we get someone working on that 51st star? I'd have to say the answer to all of these questions is an emphatic, "No." Canada is its own wonderful country, with as much pride and individuality as the United States. We could no more claim Canada than we could China.

Following the horrific events that

The Sept. 11 attacks have brought us closer together than ever before.

struck the United States on Sept. 11, it was the Canadian superintendents who were the first to comfort us and aid us in our grief — a grief they felt as strongly as we did. Many messages were posted at the GCSAA Web site from representatives of Canadian associations or simply from individuals who needed to express their feelings.

Gooder's message perhaps says it best: "To all Americans. You are our best friends. You will always be our best friends. We ache with you. We get mad with you. We support you. Living in this world sometimes means we must deal

with cold-blooded insanity, but civilization is stronger and will triumph in the end."

I asked Morrison if he felt the attacks against the United States had the chance to bring Americans and Canadians closer together. "No doubt," he says. "Reading the papers and seeing the responses here in Canada, it has really brought us closer to Americans. As far as I'm concerned, no borders exist anymore. We're all in this together."

Perhaps we need to regard our neighbors to the North with just a little more reverence. They are, after all, battling the same issues and the same uphill struggles that we are and, in many cases, more successfully. As Gooder says, we are best friends, and we will always be best friends. ■

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