

I grew up with the notion that Mexicans were lazy people. I was led to believe that Mexicans were allergic to work. They would rather find a shady tree, crawl under it and take a nap than work.

What prompted my thinking? I believe it was a combination of matters. The media definitely helped spur the stereotype. I remember watching old Westerns and cartoons on television that depicted Mexicans as malingering types. Those portrayals prompted my juvenile teenage buddies and me to share disparaging jokes about them. But my friends and I, who grew up in the North, had little or no contact with Mexicans. We knew nothing about them.

Still, we were conditioned to believe that they were inferior to us.

How pitiful we were to be so shallow and make such terrible assumptions about people who are really no different from us. But that's racism for you. Hypothesis fosters its roots.

During my seven years in the golf industry, I've learned much more about Mexicans, especially the strong work ethic that many of them possess. I've visited numerous golf courses throughout the country where Mexicans are employed, and I can't tell you how many superintendents I've spoken to who rave about their solid work ethic and how efficiently they perform their jobs. And most of them are only earning seven, eight or nine bucks an hour.

Some Mexicans come to the United States to work on golf courses and in other agricultural positions because they can earn much more money doing the work here than they can in their native country.

Like me, many golf course superintendents are aware of the unfair stereotype placed on Mexicans regarding their work ethic. They, too, don't understand where or why the label originated. Many agricultural workers make less than \$1 an hour in Mexico.

Last year I visited the Chicago Golf Club in Wheaton, Ill., where certified superintendent Jon Jennings employs nearly 20 Mexicans on his crew during the golf season. "These guys work sunup to sundown, and they would keep working longer if I wanted them to," Jennings says.

Earlier this year I visited superintendent Ken Flisek, who employs about 11 Mexicans at

Time to Dispel an Ugly Stereotype

BY LARRY AYLWARD



MEXICANS SHOULD

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the Club at Nevillewood in Presto, Pa., during the season. "Their hard work and dedication have made my life easier," Flisek states.

It's not just about how hard some Mexicans work. It's also about how they've grasped the details associated with their work. If they didn't have a knack for detail, they wouldn't be employed at places like the Chicago Golf Club and the Club at Nevillewood, where members put a premium on having finely manicured courses.

Many superintendents complain that they can't find reliable help in their own backyards. Some potential employees, including home-for-the-summer college kids, cringe when told they must report to work at 6 a.m. daily and groan when told they must work on weekends.

But many superintendents say their Mexican workers never gripe about reporting to work so early and don't mind working Saturdays and Sundays. In fact, they like to work a lot of overtime so they can make more money, much of which is sent back home to their families who live in cities like Acapulco and Toluca.

It's good to hear Jennings, Flisek and other superintendents speak highly of their Mexican crews. They should be commended for helping to quash the demeaning stereotype.

Hopefully, the industry as a whole will do more to help Mexicans advance in the profession and earn more money. Hopefully, the deserving Mexicans who aim to grow in their careers will be provided opportunities to become irrigation techs, assistant superintendents and even superintendents.

Let's not let any more kids grow up with the racist notion that Mexicans are lazy. Let's do the opposite and wax superlatives about the hard-working Mexicans in this industry.

Let's speak the truth. And let's begin to right an ugly wrong in the process.

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