


Off The Fringe

It's Mine!



IT'S OK. YOU CAN REFER TO THE
COURSE WHERE YOU WORK AS YOURS

By Ron Furlong

Did you ever hear a fellow superintendent say something like, "Well, at my course we..." Or, "I've been at my course for more than..."

I'm referring to this "ownership" thing many of us tend to do when talking to someone about the golf courses where we work. As if we owned the darn thing. My course. Uggh! Used to drive me nuts. I say "used to." It doesn't any more, and I'd like to explain why.

Last year I attended a seminar at the Golf Industry Show that was by far and away the best I've ever attended, and I think the 30 guys who were there with me would say the same thing. It was titled "Conflict Resolution — Dealing with Member Conflict." The speaker was Robert Sexton. Incredible experience. Attendees were rewarded with some terrific and useful information. But I mention the seminar only to illustrate

one of my fellow attendees who stood up at one point and addressed the "my course" issue. At first his point made perfect sense to me, because I've felt the same way for years. His beef was that whenever he heard a superintendent refer to the golf course he was employed as at "my course," it drove him nuts. What right did he have to say it was his course? Did he own it? Was he a stockholder? A member? No. Taking ownership of something that isn't yours is a crucial mistake many of us make. If we think of it as our course we're headed for certain disaster. This was the point he made, in a nutshell.

It wasn't until a few weeks later that I sat back and considered the "my course" issue. I stopped to consider it because I had recently caught myself saying it a few times. "We spoon-feed the greens at my course." Whoops! "I mean at the course where I work." Or, "We've done a lot of drainage at my course

and..." Dohhh! "Sorry, I mean at the course for which I work."

It slowly began to dawn on me how stupid I sounded for correcting myself. And what a mouthful! "The golf course I work for?" Sounds like a programmed robot. What really was the harm in saying, "My golf course?"

Did I think I owned the course? No. Did I think everyone else, golfers and workers and all the cute little squirrels running about were trespassing on my sacred property? Of course not.

So why did I say it? What made me mouth the terrible words, "My golf course?"

Maybe because I actually felt some pride in working for it. I was expressing a certain level of respect for the course and the job I do here. I do work at the course. That is a fact. I don't work at the course down the street. Kind of like the bank where I have my checking account. I say "My bank," don't I? Don't you?

Saying "my golf course," it was becoming clear to me,

was a simple and effective way of stating my place of employment and at the same time showing pride in that place. I am lucky to be the superintendent at Avalon Golf Club. It is where I work. It is my golf course. It will be my golf course until the day I am no longer employed here. When that day comes it will cease to be my golf course. It's also the golf pro's course and the irrigation technician's course. If it isn't your golf course, maybe you're at the wrong golf course.

To the fellow at the seminar who stated how he cringed every time a superintendent said, "My golf course," I'd ask him this: If a superintendent went out next week and accidentally sprayed a nonselective herbicide on all his greens (sorry, I mean the greens on the golf course where he works), what do you think the powers-that-be at that golf course would do? Do you think the green committee would think they weren't the superintendent's greens? Do you think the superintendent could tell the green chairman or the owner, "Yeah, but they're not my greens. I just work here."

Somehow, I don't think that would fly. They are his greens, and it's his golf course. We all need to feel that way. We all need to look in the mirror and say, "My golf course."

It's OK. We're in this together. Let's take the first step.

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