

Chris Covington grew up on Quarry Hills Country Club. As a kid, he learned the ropes of golf course maintenance there, working under his father, Joe, who walked the course's hilly grounds as its golf course superintendent for 37 years before retiring about a year ago.

At that time, Chris was appointed to succeed his father as superintendent at the Graham, N.C.-based club. With Chris literally following in Joe's footsteps, there was jubilation in the Covington family. While Joe had helped build Quarry Hills, Chris was hired to modernize it with new greens and bunkers. "We're pleased as a club that we'll have a Covington here, hopefully, for another 37 years," a long-time course official said of Chris' hiring.

When I visited with Joe and Chris last year, they couldn't have been happier with the way things turned out. At the time, Joe had just returned from a fishing trip and was enjoying his retirement. Chris was busting his hump and getting ready to begin the renovation.

Joe was beaming with pride that Chris had succeeded him. Chris was honored to take over for someone who had spent so long at one course. The fact that it was his father, Chris' mentor and best friend, made the situation even more special.

I was excited to tell the Covingtons' story in *Golfdom*. I wrote the story and slated it for the December issue. But shortly before the issue was to go to print, I received a call from Joe, who informed me the renovation had been called off and that Chris had been let go as superintendent.

Cold, harsh economic reality had ruined what was supposed to be a happy story. While the club's brass planned to sell housing lots to help fund the renovation, they hadn't counted on the nation's housing crisis impeding their strategy. With money tight and plans up in the air, Chris says he and his salary were asked to go.

Darn right Chris was bitter when told of the news. He had, after all, left a good job

A Lost Job, But A Gained Perspective

BY LARRY AYLWARD



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at the Challenge at Hideaway Farm to succeed his father. On top of that, he left that position for the proverbial dream job.

It didn't take long for Chris' bitterness to turn to sheer anger and resentment. But Chris grew tired of waking up in bad moods. He discovered he was only hurting himself by maintaining his anger. So Chris convinced himself — for his own good — that it was time to let go and move on.

Chris also stepped out of his own world to gain some perspective on the rest of the world. He realized quickly he wasn't the first person to lose his job, and he surely wouldn't be the last.

And then Chris began to realize how fortunate he really was. What if he had been 50 years old with three kids to feed when this happened? At 32 and single, Chris realized his sky was not falling.

The experience has humbled him, though. When Chris watches the news and hears that an auto plant has laid off 300 workers, he feels for them more now than ever because he can empathize with them. And he respects them for having to accept their fate, for he knows how difficult that can be.

Losing his job has also made Chris appreciate the gift of work. He tells himself that he will never say, "I have to go to work." Rather, he will say, "I get to go to work."

Chris Covington wouldn't wish what happened to him on his worst enemy. That said, he took it upon himself to take away something positive from such a dreadful experience.

We can all take something away from Chris' approach in handling the crisis.

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