

# 'It's Not About Growing Grass'

VETERAN DOBIE REAFFIRMS THE IMPORTANCE OF EVERYTHING NOT ASSOCIATED WITH TENDING TURF

By Larry Aylward, Editor in Chief

**F**rank Dobie has been in the golf business for 49 years. So it's easily assumed that Dobie, general manager and superintendent of the Sharon Golf Club in Sharon Center, Ohio, knows a thing or two or three or five thousand about running a golf facility -- in addition to growing turfgrass.

That's why Dobie gave a presentation titled, "It's Not About Growing Grass," at the Ohio Turfgrass Foundation's annual conference and trade show in December in Columbus. Dobie talked about everything from dealing with others to dealing with a budget.

Dobie said his mentor -- the late su-

perintendent Bob Williams -- told him many years ago, "Ninety percent of what we need to know to be successful in this business is not about growing grass."

Dobie took Williams' advice to heart. And he told a packed room of superintendents who came to hear him speak that Williams' statement is just as true today as it was when Williams told him that in 1959.

Dobie reminded superintendents the importance of common courtesy and proper etiquette when dealing with others. We've heard these things many times before, but you can never be reminded of them enough.

Ironically, just as Dobie was waxing about common courtesy, a late attendee entered the meeting room and let the door slam with a crash. Dobie didn't bat an eyelash, but the late attendee's action was the epitome of bad manners.

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Dobie pointed out how important it is for superintendents to listen intently to their staff members and others, who can end up suggesting some good ideas on how to get things done.

"You need to listen to everyone," Dobie says. "Even a jerk has a good idea once in awhile."

Dobie also spoke about managing the golf course budget. Two of his rules are:

1. Spend what you need to get the job done right.
2. Don't spend what you don't have.

"We've always tried to control costs so we don't have to cut costs," Dobie says. ■

## The Adventures of Superintendent Steve Cook

**Why is Steve Cook smiling? Because he made it to Mount Rainier's summit!**

Steve Cook not only can tend turfgrass with the best of 'em, he can climb mountains with the best of 'em. Late last summer, Cook, the golf course manager for Oakland Hills Country Club near Detroit, which hosted the PGA Championship in 2008, took a vacation to the Seattle area in Washington. Yeah, Cook probably spent some downtime in one of Seattle's coffee shops, but he also spent some "up" time scaling the 14,411-foot Mount Rainier. We don't think Cook found any dollar spot on Mount Rainier's summit, though.

"Climbing Mount Rainier was a wonderful learning experience," Cook says. "I had done a lot of backpacking in the mountains, but this was my first attempt at 'Mountaineering 101.'"

"The whole experience was very exciting -- and physically very difficult. I was the oldest in our group to summit. So there's something to celebrate for a 50-year-old!" -- Larry Aylward

