



"By his actions, my grandfather taught me to have an intense respect for the game of golf, the golf industry and my fellow superintendents."

MARK WOODWARD, *Contributing Editor*

I'm one of the lucky ones

Most everything I learned about golf I learned from my grandfather, Jay. Well at least the important stuff. Jay started in the golf business in 1938. He was a golf course superintendent for many years, from the 1940s all the way through the late 1970s. I worked for my grandfather for six summers while I was going to school.

During those six seasons, I never once saw or heard him raise his voice, no matter how important or tough the situation was. Once, a fellow worker was mowing roughs, pulling a gang mower. He lost control, and the tractor slid into the lake. When I say "slid into the lake," I mean it was completely submerged.

When my grandfather found out about it, he didn't get mad or raise his voice. The employee was so shocked at my grandfather's calm reaction he asked him, "Why aren't you yelling at me?" My grandfather calmly said, "Will yelling at you get the tractor out of the lake?" He instinctively

knew that the employee felt bad enough as it was and there was no sense in piling it on.

As an impressionable teenager, it was a turning point in how I viewed my grandfather. By his actions, without even knowing it, he taught me to have an intense respect for the game of golf, the golf industry and my fellow superintendents.

Respect for others seemed to come easily to him. It didn't matter if he was dealing with the club president, a club member or an entry-level employee — he made everyone feel important. He made me truly understand the meaning of integrity and honesty and doing the right thing.

He also inspired in me a strong work ethic. He taught me no matter what the setback, you can rise above it. He showed me firsthand the value of getting up early, working hard and then doing it again the next day — and the next.

Family was very important to my grandfather. He loved being around all of us. We celebrated many holidays at my grandparents' house when I was growing up, and many of my most cherished memories are from those occasions.

One of my biggest concerns about our society today is that we seem to have lost the close connection with family — a

connection wherein you made every effort to eat dinner together every night, regardless of what was happening in your life.

For the most part, dinner was at 6 p.m., no questions asked. You ate with the family, and you ate what was served, with no complaints. Today, meanwhile, we are constantly bombarded with things that somehow far too easily conflict with spending dedicated time with our families. It's a shame.

I was one of the lucky ones — I not only had a grandfather who was around and who lived a very honorable life, but I also had a father who lived by exactly the same tenants.

Telling you everything my dad taught me would take too long. Perhaps that's a story for another day.

For now I'll just say that I've been fortunate enough to have had two incredible mentors and heroes.

Yes, I learned everything about golf from my father and grandfather. But even more so, I learned everything about life from them.

The golf industry, too, is known for teaching some valuable lessons, and the lessons of the game run parallel to those we learn off the course. That's one of the cool things about golf.

As an industry we are blessed.

Mark Woodward is president of **Mark Woodward and Associates**, principal of **DaMarCo Golf**, CEO of **MasterStep Golf Group** and a contributing editor for **Golfdom**.