



"They were in a life or death situation, and they chose life. And not just the life of the red-legged frog, but the life of a golf course."

SETH JONES, *Editor-in-Chief*

The life of a golf course

The pro shop at Sharp Park Golf Course in San Francisco is about as big as my 6-year-old's bedroom. And there's a locked metal gate instead of a regular door.

As soon as I saw this, I started walking away. Pro shop's closed, no problem. But then a woman came hustling out of the bar and asked me if I needed something. "Not really," I said. I'm the kind of person who doesn't like to make extra work for people. If I was there at the wrong time to go inside the pro shop, that's OK.

But she insisted. Before I could protest, she was sliding open the gate and flipping on the lights, inviting me to take a look around.

If you want an \$80 golf shirt, you're at the wrong place. Their hat selection is kind of like the Ford Model T — any color you want, as long as it's white.

As I was paying for my Sharp Park hat (yeah, I chose white), the woman asked me, "Are you the writer from *Golfdom*?" I told her I was. "Thanks for coming out here," she said.

It's not unusual for me to get a warm welcome from

the guys in the maintenance facility. But at Sharp Park, I got the red carpet treatment from the bartender, the cook, the starter, the golfers. These people were genuinely happy to see a reporter out on the golf course with a keen interest in the work of their maintenance crew.

Good on you, Sharp Park.

We didn't choose Wayne Kappelman as the winner of our 2013 Herb Graffis Businessperson of the Year because his course is all organic. We didn't choose him because he's had environmentalists accusing him and his staff of everything from the Great Chicago Fire to Seattle losing the SuperSonics.

We chose Kappelman because he and his team believe

in the life of a golf course.

They believe that 50,000 golf rounds a year can't be wrong. They believe that employing some 60 people in Pacifica, Calif., is a good thing.

One of my favorite movie quotes comes from Tim Robbins in "The Shawshank Redemption" when he tells Morgan Freeman that you either "get busy living or get busy dying." At Sharp Park, despite their opposition, they've been busy living. They were in a life or death situation, and they chose life. And not just the life of the red-legged frog, but the life of a golf course.

When I first arrived at Sharp Park, I grabbed a seat at the bar and had a late break-

fast. The buzz was that one of the regulars got "the call." A 49ers season ticket holder, there were two tickets to the Super Bowl available if he wanted them.

I bought the regulars a round of drinks as I tabbed out, and was suddenly a friend of the gang. I chatted briefly before excusing myself in order to keep my meeting time with Wayne.

The next morning I was back in the bar, and the gang was back again too. It was quickly announced that the guy who bought a round of drinks yesterday was back, and hey, how are you today?

I couldn't have been any better. I was on a great assignment, and I was seeing firsthand what makes this game great — the people. People like Kappelman, like Lisa Wayne, like the regulars sitting at the bar, like the employee eager to open the pro shop doors (or gate) for a stranger.

I've been to some of the best pro shops in the nation. Sharp Park's pro shop would get eaten in one bite compared to some of these places. And yet it's one of the most memorable pro shops I've seen.

Just like this was a memorable trip. I want to thank the people at Sharp Park for being so welcoming, and I want to congratulate Wayne Kappelman for his hard work, and for being named the 2013 Herb Graffis Businessperson of the Year.

Email Jones at:
sjones@northcoastmedia.net