

STILL SUPER AT 60?

When pondering the long-term future of a career, most superintendents seem positive, despite the numbers.

BY SETH JONES

In the July 2012 issue of *Golfdom* we published perhaps our most controversial story of the year, “The 5.9%,” by former superintendent Jay Charnes. In that story, Charnes pondered why so few superintendents — only 5.9 percent, according to GCSAA statistics — are age 60 and over.

“Granted, people generally retire in their 60s. But statistically this looks like a good many superintendents disappear as they reach their golden years,” Charnes wrote in the article. “If they are not retired or playing golf at the Pearly Gates Golf Club, where are they?”

Despite the statistical data that showed otherwise, 52 percent of readers felt strongly that they would still be working superintendents at age 60.

“I have thought about it, and I think that story got a lot of people thinking about it, wondering if they need to start looking over their shoulder more once they hit 50,” says Bethpage State Park Golf Course superintendent Andy Wilson. “Would I like to be a superintendent at age 60? Yes. But maybe at a sleepier place... a 9-hole public, or an 18-hole public, where the demands aren’t so tough.”

Jackson Reiswig, superintendent at the Coral Creek Club in Placida, Fla., was doubtful about his chances of being a superintendent at age 60. He feels he’s destined to be in the landscaping industry by then.

“(Landscaping) seems to be where everyone falls off to,” Reiswig says. “Being a superintendent is pretty limited to branch off from, which is unfortunate,

because our skills are vast.”

Reiswig, speaking frankly, feels that in 10 years, maybe he’ll be burned out.

“We are continually put under pressure to do more with less,” he says. “As this cycle continues, it puts a strain on the psyche. Ten years from now, I may not be so keen on dealing with the challenges. Plus, there’s always going to be that younger guy, wanting the challenge, willing to put in the ridiculous hours.”

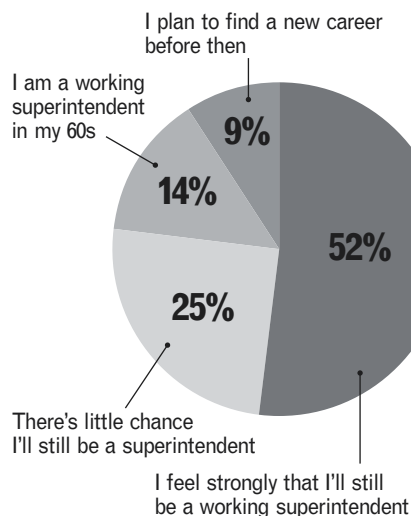
Reiswig says that the changing of the guard is happening before his eyes.

“We don’t think about it because we don’t want to,” he says. “Go to a chapter meeting and you see the changing of the guard. In 20, 30 years, that’s us.”

Steve Sarro, superintendent at Pinehurst Country Club in Denver, was conflicted when he first considered if he still wanted to be a superintendent for another 20-plus years.

“If I’m still a superintendent at age 60, that will mean I’m still outside, I’m still doing the things I like,” Sarro says. “The guys I know who are still superinten-

DO YOU THINK YOU’LL STILL BE A SUPERINTENDENT AT AGE 60?



dents at that age, they do a good job and have a good program. So if I can make it that far... then yes, I do hope I’m still a superintendent at age 60.”

One thing he doesn’t want to do: become a consultant.

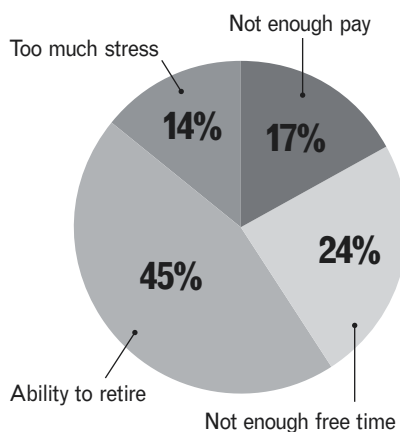
“I don’t know if I could be a consultant or sell turf equipment. Plus, who needs another consultant?” Sarro wonders. “If I’m not a superintendent, hopefully my butt is on a boat, sailing around the world.”

Wilson acknowledges that someday, someone younger will have his position at New York’s famed Bethpage Park. And he’s fine with that.

“Everyone who has come into this job, they have it in their bones. When you get to that age, you might want to get back to just cutting grass,” Wilson says. “At a place like Bethpage, I get bogged down with the administrative side of the job. I certainly want to be working at 60, but maybe let the young guns take over at a place like this. It would be ideal to be somewhere a little quieter, where I could ride my mower off into the sunset...”

“Or in our industry,” he laughs, “into the sunrise.”

WHAT IS YOUR BIGGEST PERSONAL CONCERN?



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