



Editorial

A NIGHTMARE

By Monroe S. Miller

I had a bad dream last night. No, it was worse than a bad dream; it was a nightmare, and a very sad nightmare. Although my mind is filled with details, as so often happens with dreams, it seems strange the person centered in this dream is unknown to me. Unknown, yet familiar. It **could** have been me, or it **could** have been you. Morbid subjects don't make good essay topics, but this one had a deep, serious and long lasting lesson for me. It may have been a subconscious message. Maybe you will react the same way I have.

My sad dream was about death, the death of a good and kindly man. He was a man who worked hard and conscientiously and probably too much. He touched many lives and had many friends. He had a heart the size of a locomotive and if asked for help or almost anything else, he was right there. His work? Like most of us, he managed a golf course and managed it very well.

The quiet conversation at the funeral home seemed to center on how unbelievable it was that he should pass away at such a young age. He was only 52 and appeared to be in the pink of health. Most felt there was some special meaning in the fact that he died at the golf course, doing what he loved most. After all, wasn't he always at work?

The shock of his death got some to thinking why he had died. Healthy (or so he seemed), yet like me and too many others, he was 15 pounds overweight. And he was a worrier. He worried constantly, throughout the year, about the golf course. He worried about every

little and insignificant complaint he heard from the members of the Club. He worried about his employees and their personal problems. He worried about his irrigation system, although it was new, and even about whether or not machines would start on the first try. He worried needlessly about his job and if he would be able to keep it. He worried and worried and worried.

And he worked too hard, far more hard than was necessary or desirable. He worked 7 days a week from opening day to Thanksgiving. Only during the winter months did he slow down and go home at noon on Saturdays. He had made it impossible for anyone to ever fill his shoes. The members had come to expect to see him at any time they were at the Club. He readily came to help those whose cars wouldn't start at 1:00 A.M. in the winter. He plowed snow the same way he prepared for a golf tournament. He simply worked too hard at everything.

Everything, except living. He played golf once a month because he felt obligated. And he hated it and always tried to find some way to escape from it. After all, he had too much work to do. Three days into a vacation, his wife told me, he was ready to go home. "I've got work to do," he said. He had no hobbies or extracurricular activities. Work was what mattered most in his life. He didn't even take time for lunch, unless you count the 5 minutes spent gulping down the brown bag lunch he carried for as long as he had worked. "No time for lunch — there's work to do."

He was, in fact, a typical Type A personality. You've read about the Type A personality, the person who is a classic workaholic. Although the doctors said he died from a massive heart attack, his friends and acquaintances immediately knew he had worked himself to death.

His wife, although grief stricken, seemed less surprised than friends did that he had died. She knew all too well of his nervousness. She knew he was overweight. And, like other Type A personalities, she knew he worked too hard. Club members all said to

her, "We know you'll miss him terribly." She wanted to say that she already had missed him for too many years. His kids mirrored the feelings of their mother. A good father he was, and they loved him dearly, but they were wishing they had known him better. "He worked too much."

Maybe the saddest part of this dream for me was that already, at the funeral home, there were quiet discussions about replacing him. Oh, they were discreet and tasteful, for sure, but it was too soon for such talk. "How's his Assistant as a manager?", one member wondered to another. "Is he a hard worker?", asked another. Life goes on, we all know, but couldn't these practical and necessary matters wait a few days? It bothered me tremendously.

I awoke with a start. My hands were cold and clammy, and there were beads of sweat on my forehead. Although I was prayerfully grateful it was only a dream, I wondered who the person in this dream was. I didn't know, and the question still haunts me. It wasn't me, was it? It wasn't any of my friends that I could recognize. Granted, we are guilty of many of the characteristics of the deceased man, but can we not usually rationalize and justify the worst of them?

Was it you? Could **you** be the man who worked himself to death too early in life? The fact is, unfortunately, it could have been any one of quite a number of us.

There is a lesson for me in this bad dream. I absolutely must look carefully at my work style. The benefits of excessive hours of work at the golf course have to be measured against the potentially dreadful cost the person in my nightmare paid for his work habits. You may work hard (and smart), but when you are gone the memory of you and your work is short; the thoughts almost immediately move to "who will we replace him with?"

I feel for the subject of my dream. May he, finally, rest in peace.

Amen.