



THE FORGOTTEN HOLIDAYS: *Labor Day*

By Monroe S. Miller

Finally! Labor Day is almost here. We are close to the time when Golf Course Superintendents can begin living a more normal life and do some relaxing as others have done all summer long. The days are shorter, the nights are cooler and the countryside is full of signs of an abundant fall harvest. Labor Day lifts the spirits of all of us, I'm certain.

Although we cannot observe this holiday as most others in our society—celebrating the glory of our work by not working—it is a time when we should take some time to sit back and reflect on how lucky we really are. Our profession is one of those that offers very visible evidence of one's efforts and hard work. I think that is one of the most powerful appeals of golf course management as a career.

One of the finest tributes to those like us who labor for their daily bread can be found in Henry Wadsworth Longfellow's poem, "The Village Blacksmith". Most everyone has read these wonderful verses sometime during his school years. The tribute reads:

*"His brow is wet with honest sweat,
He earns what e'er he can,
He looks the whole world in the face,
For he owes not any man."*

My guess is that the last line may not be quite true for most of us (who owns their house, free and clear?!) and we surely are indebted in many ways to those around us. But this old New England poet was right on the mark in expressing how important it is to do the most with our opportunities. Labor Day is a time for us to remind ourselves of this.

Americans probably have a more positive attitude toward work than those in most other countries. Our "Protestant work ethic" (a misnomer because Catholics, Jews and other religious groups have the same attitude) has made work a virtue as well as a necessity for the entire

history of our country. We are indeed a nation of workers. We do not have a significant leisure class nor do we have any nobility. Those who govern our country are chosen from our midst and are expected to put forth the same efforts the rest of us do. In our country it is not so much who has the most important job, but rather how one faces the responsibility, opportunity and discouragement in his chosen work. We feel that work is good for us, that it is more important than entertainment and that able-bodied people should spend most of their time performing some kind of constructive task. John Burroughs, another wise old New Englander, probably said it best when he wrote, "An idle man is a wretched man." A recent survey reported that 70% of us believe it would be a bad thing to "decrease the importance of work in our lives". Most of us seem to agree with Mr. Burroughs.

I sincerely believe that Golf Courses Managers exemplify the American work ethic as well, if not better, than any group in our country. Most of us come from the working middle class, born to parents who subscribe to the lessons that we should give an honest day of labor for an honest day of pay. I know of not one of my colleagues who had his needs handed to him on a silver tray. It seems to me that our profession itself is a perfect one to show the visible fruits of physical and mental labor. Accomplishments can be seen and enjoyed, as are the results of mediocre and half-hearted efforts. We are known for our hard work and innovativeness, and we can count among our own some outstanding entrepreneurs. Our work has most certainly been an important contribution to our society, not only by providing beautiful "patches of green" for citizen enjoyment, but for the lessons taught to new and young employees. Our summertime staffs are most frequently filled with high school and college age people. My experience has been that many arrive at our golf course with something less than a committed work ethic. Most never had the opportunity to learn the lessons of hard labor. Others came from families of considerable means where all of their needs were provided, usually to an excess. Still more were simply too young to have had time to develop a need for the satisfaction hard work gives one. The rewarding feature of surrounding myself with employees like these has been watching them acquire the kind of attitude toward work that we celebrate on Labor Day. It is a pleasure to have them come back, as they've gone down so many different paths of life, and express gratitude for what they learned in an environment that demanded long hours of hard work. They are testimony that



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labor is important for what it does for those who invest their lives in it.

Although people involved in the labor movement in our country would take exception, I strongly believe that Labor Day is a generic celebration of work. I would argue that free trade unions have made important contributions to our society, but they have passed their zenith and are in need of new attitudes and goals. They also need a commitment from the rank and file to free themselves of corruption and racketeering. For them to claim this holiday as theirs is selfish. I cannot hear them.

I've a friend who, surprisingly, says that Labor Day is his favorite holiday. He likes it because it is the only national holiday that doesn't expect anything from him. It's a three day weekend where he can goof off without feeling guilty or offering apologies. He likes it because he doesn't have to be with relatives. He doesn't have to spend any extra money. There are no presents to buy. He doesn't have to get dressed up. It is magnificent to him because of its simplicity—a day that he doesn't have to go to work. I understand where he's coming from, but I still think we should make a little more of it than that!

I'm going to try to enjoy this Labor Day more than I have in the past, doing some snoozing and thinking about autumn. At the same time I'll express thanks that I'm in this profession. I am a happy person who is happy with his work.

How about you?

Wisconsin GCSA Seeks 1988 Monthly Meeting Sites

The Wisconsin Golf Course Superintendents Association, through its Golf and Arrangements Committee, is in the process of establishing a tentative monthly meeting schedule for the next year, 1988. It is, once again, our goal to arrange a geographically balanced schedule with a variety of golf courses for all WGCSA members to enjoy. If you are interested in offering your time and your club or facility for such an event; complete, clip and return the form below to:

Michael Semler
Cherokee Country Club
5000 N. Sherman Avenue
Madison, WI 53704

I am interested in hosting a 1988 WGCSA monthly meeting:

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ADDRESS _____

CITY _____

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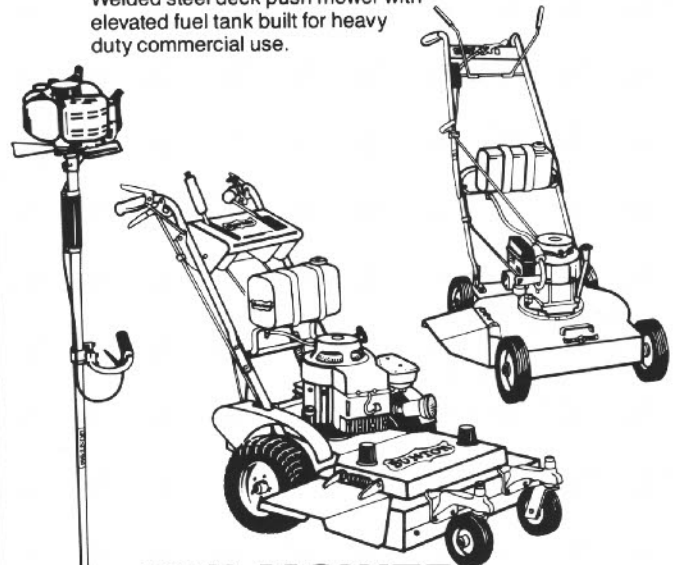
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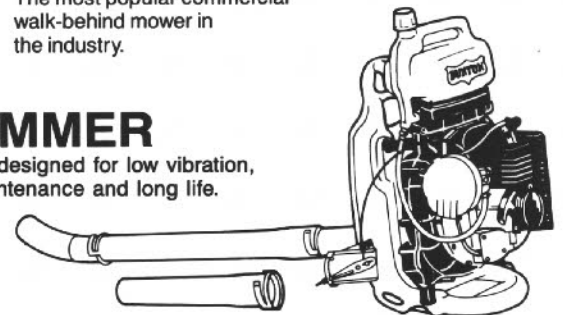
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