



# Could We? Should We? Dare We? (Take A Vacation During The Season?)

By Monroe S. Miller

I've just returned from a too-short vacation, even though it was two weeks long. It seems I have never been on a vacation that wasn't too short, simply because I've enjoyed them all.

Nothing is worse than listening to or reading about someone else's trip, unless it is watching slides of someone else's vacation. So I'll spare you. Suffice to say the autumn color in the Adirondaks, the Catskills, the White Mountains, the Green Mountains, the Berkshires and the Poconos was as beautiful as I have seen it. So was the Maine coast, Boston, Martha's Vineyard and all points in between.

Honestly, I'm better for having been gone for those two weeks. I managed to reach that almost unremembered state — relaxation. When I unlocked my office the first day home, I was bubbling with excitement and enthusiasm again. And, unbelievably, the golf course was still here and in fine condition.

One of the disadvantages of our business is the difficulty in finding a chance to take a family vacation. For me, for far too many years, I wouldn't consider any time off, including weekends, during the golf season. Then, as soon as the opportunity to leave presented itself, kids were in school. It wasn't fair to them to be taken from school just because their dad's job precluded a "normal" vacation.

So for years, we would tear down South during Christmas vacation. That's fun, believe me. Warm weather feels incredibly good in the dead of winter. But after the sixth or seventh trip, it starts getting a little old.

Complicating the job factor was the fact that early in my career vacations didn't come easy for me. I've observed this combination in a lot of other golf course superintendents. The reluctance to leave the golf course is exacerbated by a disease too many of us have — workaholic. That's a loathsome phrase. We were taught that work — hard work — is a virtue. We are supposed to be industrious; it is ex-

pected from competent and successful people.

But if you work too hard and too long, you're labelled with that affliction — workaholic. It sounds so clinical when it is really such a simple matter.

As time has passed by, however, I've come to realize that society is right in using that clinical word. I've come to recognize that working seven days a week wears you down. It affects your attitude and outlook as well as your body. You do not have (or take) enough time for thinking or planning. That leaves even less time for contemplation. Suddenly your creativity suffers.

Unfortunately, this drive to work constantly during the golf season has been detrimental to relationships — family relationships — for too many of my colleagues. Nothing is more sad.

The academic world, which I read about a lot because of my proximity to the University, came up with an idea years ago that serves to emphasize my point. They call it a sabbatical. Every so often, profs are able to get a semester off. They spend it in any number of ways — travel, time at another institution, work on a book. This simple yet brilliant plan recognizes that time away from work is sometimes essential if you are to do good work.

Think about how much better this world might be if doctors and lawyers, carpenters and plumbers, engineers and social workers, accountants and politicians, journalists and golf course superintendents got time off to dream, to plan, to think. What an opportunity for readjusting attitudes and for finding oneself. Certainly job stress would be reduced.

Sabbaticals for everyone aren't going to happen. I know that. But a well timed vacation can happen. If you will let it. Even during the golf season. Especially, maybe, during the golf season.

We try to surround ourselves with quality people. I've been really successful at that. Time is spent in careful training and logical thinking. Con-

tinuing education is offered. Why not, when circumstances permit, take advantage of this? Allow your assistant and support staff the opportunity to develop even more. I've found most thrive on the responsibility. They know you'll be back — that adds to their confidence and comfort.

Only a fool would propose to vacation for two weeks during the Memorial Day to Labor Day period. Long weekends can suffice then. But there aren't any good reasons **not** to take a family trip before or after this period. That is the sum of my suggestion.

Time is a valuable commodity — you owe some of your time to yourself and your family. You cannot buy it, but you can take it, if you dare.

Can you take a vacation during the "season"? Definitely, if you make your plans carefully and thoughtfully.

Should you? Absolutely, especially when you are exhausted, physically or mentally, or demoralized or discouraged.

Dare you? My reply is "dare you not?"

Maybe these few lines from a book by Richard Jeffries entitled *Saint Guido* will help you decide:

*"... if your people do not gather the flowers now, and watch the swallows, and listen to the blackbird whistling, as you are listening now while I talk, then, Guido, my love, they will never pick any flowers, nor hear any bird's songs. They think they will, they think that when they have toiled, and worked a long time, almost all their lives, then they will come to the flowers and the birds and be joyful in the sunshine. But no, it will not be so, for then they will be old themselves and their ears dull, and their eyes dim, so that the birds will sound a great distance off, and the flowers will not seem bright."*

Give yourself and your family some time away, together, before "you are old and your ears dull and your eyes dim."