



# SHOPBLINDNESS

By Monroe S. Miller

During the oil crisis of the early 1970s, a lot of effort went into forging an energy consciousness in this country. Citizens turned thermostats down, automakers started to build something other than gas guzzlers and energy efficient furnaces came into the marketplace. They all worked.

There were a lot of gimmicks, too. Few worked. In an effort to get people to turn lights off when they left a room, I think 90% of the light switches in Wisconsin had a yellow "TURN LIGHTS OFF" sticker on or beneath them.

After a while nobody, and I mean nobody, saw the message. The stickers merely became part of the "landscape".

That principle, I am sad to say, follows into too many of our golf course shops and shop yards.

I call it shopblindness.

Shopblindness is a syndrome that causes the guilty to become blind to messes, clutter and disarray in the shop and shop yard.

The principal rule of shopblindness is that few things are ever put in their rightful place. Trash, broken equipment, parts and hundreds of other things stay where they were last used. Within weeks, they are never noticed again. They become part of the scenery. And the scenery is ugly.

It is always amazing to observe that some of those with the most serious cases are yet able to find almost anything they need, due apparently to a photographic memory. However, sending a rookie into such massive disorganization is committing him to a hopeless search.

What is saddest is that if the superintendent has shopblindness, it doesn't take long before the entire crew catches it. The office is in disarray and so is the lunchroom. Usually the restrooms are gross and the work bays are barely navigable.

The situation commonly spreads outside, creating a miserable sight of unmaintained weeds growing up around

and through old equipment, lumber, brush, wood chips, irrigation pipes and fittings, and course construction materials.

Although it isn't always true, sometimes shopblindness sneaks out onto the golf course. Projects are not quite finished off, tree stumps rot before they are cut, stump holes may be filled but never seeded, and the pothole in the cart path isn't fixed. The shortcomings also become part of the golf course scene.

Shopblindness, I think, infects every golf course superintendent at one time or another. Sometimes, during the heat of the summer battle, shop conditions get ahead of all of us on occasion.

It is also more difficult to keep order when there are twenty employees than when there are less than half that. And as any parent of a teenager will testify, kids that age are almost universally sloppy. We employ a lot of teenagers!

I know that shopblindness had me in its grasp in the early years. We simply invested every spare minute on the golf course itself. That is understandable, even somewhat justifiable.

What's not, however, is year in and year out, inside and outside, the chaos we see too often. Unfortunately, the same thing is seen in farmsteads. Some are neat and clean and fresh looking, some are not. Obviously our business is not the only one with such problems.

There are lots of reasons for working to overcome the seemingly hopeless situations in some of our golf course shops. Well organized operations are inherently more efficient. Daily operations run more smoothly. Employees are certainly more comfortable and probably happier in a neat environment than in the midst of a mess. Good shop habits, in terms of organization and neatness, are also used on the golf course itself.

The most persuasive reason for cleaning up and overcoming shopblindness may be the old principle of "first impression". The value of a favor-

able impression—first or otherwise—on owners, members, players and everybody else has been well proven.

I also believe that your shop and shop surrounds speak loudly to your personal pride. It takes very little pride to work in, around and through an embarrassing mess.

It's been a long winter; many of us are well along with winter equipment work. This just may be the winter that presents a perfect opportunity to face up to shopblindness and do something about it.

That would go a long way toward making it the freshest start to a season ever.

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