



"SETTING PRIORITIES"

By Steven M. Cook
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EDITOR'S NOTE: This issue's feature might better be titled "From Around The World" and the article itself called "Ne Vous Inquiétez Pas, Soyez Heureus". Steven Cook writes here about his experience as a golf course superintendent in France, and compares it with what he has known here in America. Steven worked in the Chicago area golf course industry.

This excellent piece appeared in the December 1991 (Volume 45, No. 7) issue of THE BULL SHEET, official publication of the Midwest Association of Golf Course Superintendents of the Greater Chicago Metropolitan Area, and is reprinted here with permission from THE BULL SHEET's long time and very personable editor, Fred Opperman.

Fred told me of a call he received from Steven about the article. The call was from France and Fred was travelling one of Chicago's freeways (tollway, more likely!). He took the call on his cellular phone. Now that's high technology!

Read and enjoy Steven's experiences of "Que sera sera" in France. And remember, if you give that approach a try here in the U.S., you'll be searching for employment in France in less than a month's time!

Thanks to AJM for translations:

1. Don't worry, be happy, and
2. Whatever will be, will be.

After reading articles by GCSAA director Bruce Williams and GCSAA president Stephen Cadenelli concerning the utilization of our spare time, I couldn't help but compare the French attitude with our own concerning family and personal time.

It seems this advice always surfaces in mid-summer when stress peaks for

most golf course superintendents. But not for the French. This advice will surface at any time day or night, summer or winter, wet or dry. They put family, friends and the enjoyment of life ahead of all other priorities. In fact, there is no other priority.

If you ask a French "Intendant de Parcours" whether he will be at the golf course on the coming weekend or in the country with his family, no doubt about it... he will not be on the first tee. Even those who are single and without a wife and children will be with their parents and friends every chance they get.

The point is: they make their chances. None of this "I've got to be at the course today or something will go wrong."

Think about it. There are courses here in Europe older than the United States, and they are still here, after all these years, after all those superintendents, they're still here. Time off or long hours at the course, they're still there.

And who knows the difference? Their families and friends know. Oh, yes, there are those of us who will say, "we are more dedicated than they, more professional, harder working, and American members demand higher quality."

This may be true. But after all those years the courses are still there! Still being played. Still being maintained. Still being watered.

You won't find too many French su-

perintendents with a stress problem, unless he's trying to choose a good wine. I'm not saying this outlook is right or wrong, good or bad. But it works for them and after all these years their courses are still there!

Most people can't believe it when they discover the hours an American superintendent works. In France if you work extra long hours, you are allowed by law to recuperate those same hours in the off season, which means you may be looking at somewhere around two months of rest and relaxation before the next season starts! When they get back, that's right, the golf course is still there.

I think that most of us will always be working those incredible hours. Our drive toward excellence demands it. It is one of the things that makes our country so unique and strong, along with giving us the greatest golf courses in the world.

But there must be a middle ground between these two philosophies. There must be a way to find the time. While I personally don't hold to the French idea of "it can wait 'til tomorrow", I have learned one thing here. That is that life is short, spare time important, and the weekends spent travelling are much more memorable than those spent at the golf course.

And when I come back Monday morning... the course is still there!

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