



"TWENTY AND FORTY-FIVE" AND STILL ANXIOUS TO GET TO WORK

By Monroe S. Miller

I'm in the first class (first crop, if you prefer) of the baby boomers. I turned forty-five last year. Our mothers and fathers wasted little time in getting their families started right after World War II ended.

I wouldn't be so interested in my 45th year if it hadn't come on my twentieth employment anniversary at Blackhawk Country Club. After all, it is the Four O birthday that sends most into a tailspin. By the time one reaches 45, middle age is reality.

I learned that forty isn't fatal and have pretty much accepted the aging process. I can now clearly understand what Jack Benny meant when he said "age is a matter of mind—if you don't mind, it doesn't matter."

Shortly after forty, one realizes that eating habits have to change. Most of us boomers now eat less, eat differently and eat a lot better. Some take a look at me and question that!

Fruit and vegetables take precedence over mashed potatoes, gravy and meat. Seconds are verboten; so are desserts. The food in our diets is actually healthful for a lot of us.

Ten or fifteen years ago I had a very casual attitude about exercise and fitness. My creed, unfortunately, was somewhat like Mark Twain's from generations previous: "I have never taken any exercise except for sleeping and resting, and I never intend to take any. Exercise is loathsome."

I'm not so cavalier at forty-five. Often, during summer months, I get to the course at daylight, get myself organized and insure the irrigation for the night went well. That way, when the crew arrives, I can cut a few putting greens. We use the low technology equipment—walking mowers. A brisk trip across several greens behind a mower is excellent exercise!

I also find myself going for a long walk most nights after dinner in the winter months. Ten years ago I'd have declared such a habit "pure foolishness."

Like many other aging baby boomers, I've given up killer habits. I never did

drink, but I used to greatly enjoy Winstons. No more. Drinking and smoking, just like eating, require major moderation at forty-five.

The point health brings clearly into focus is that well being is absolutely critical to job execution and enjoyment. At my age, good health cannot be taken for granted; it requires a conscious effort.

One of the great lessons age has taught me is the value of pacing oneself. Vincent has always amazed me by being able to work at the same speed at day's end as he was when he began the day. Even today, at 77, he'll produce more than most 17 year olds. He has known the value of pacing for a long time.

These days, I do too. I recognize that sometimes the pace must change, just like the seasons will change. But the value of steadiness is always there. It makes life and work on the golf course both better and easier.

Finally, there's that word—"work". How can it be that, at forty-five, I can still hardly wait to get to work every morning? How is it possible to be so excited, each morning, about heading off to the same place I have headed to for twenty years now?

I've reflected on that question a lot lately. Reflection, by the way, is something that comes along with being "over forty".

When so many others in our society express frustration about their work, why am I so satisfied by it?

At a time when there is widespread discontent about the workplace, I am happier than ever.

While others decry the decline of the work ethic and a lessening of job expectations, I see the opposite in my career world.

I hear of the frustration and futility expressed by some in quest of their "dream" job. I found my dream job, luckily, twenty years ago.

Some friends of mine grow weary of the decreasing challenge they find in their profession. "Too much routine," they say. For me, each succeeding year is better than the last. Each new year is more difficult and more challenging.

Others grumble that work "isn't fun anymore." They should have my career at my workplace. I cannot imagine that it won't always be fun.

Each morning still finds me anxious to get to work; some mornings I can hardly wait to get the building unlocked.

I firmly believe there are three things that impact on the degree of career satisfaction one gets at my age after twenty years at the same place.

First is one's attitude about work. I'm from the old school (I guess) that says work is import, that it is a central feature

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in one's life. It is part of my "identity"; I've invested heavily in it. It is important, if for no other reason, because it consumes most of my waking hours. It is obvious that for people like me, work is more than just a means of survival.

Second is the career work you choose. If you are going to spend so much of your life "at work", you'd better like what you do. Generally, that means your work should be more than just a job. It needs to be something enjoyable and challenging and rewarding in a very personal way.

Frankly, I am convinced that golf course management is the most continuously interesting occupation I know of or have heard about.

Golf course management offers the things I need for career sanity. It gives work for the body when you want; it gives work for the mind always. It takes place in a natural world, satisfying the values from my rural upbringing. And it presents a workplace in a social world, among players and members, colleagues and employees.

Golf course management is a wonderful mix of sport and science, art and agriculture. It involves lots of people and lots of equipment and lots of management to put them together in a sensible fashion.

It follows the seasons.

Each day requires really good problem solving skills, a requirement that all interesting careers have.

And the variety of the work each day brings is added frosting to the cake.

Thirdly, the place I work is a tremendously important aspect in my upbeat and happy attitude. I absolutely love this golf course.

I could be doing the same work in a thousand, nay ten thousand, other places and it wouldn't be the same.

Here we have Lake Mendota and the Indian effigy mounds. The property is guarded by stately and mature oak and hickory trees. The view from the clubhouse and its surroundings is unsurpassed, easily one of the most beautiful looks in all of North America.

There is thrill and comfort from our proximity to my alma mater. Wisconsin is one of the most exciting universities in the world.

But most of all, I draw great inspiration and enjoyment from the people who employ me. They are all golfers. We have no swimming pools or tennis courts here. Only golf. For a golf course superintendent, that's an enviable situation.

Some of the most successful people in our community belong to our club; many have become my friends.

For twenty years, we have held to a steady course of improvement. Each year has seen some infrastructure problem solved—shop, pumping station, irrigation system, et. al. Most years see another feature from our Golf Course Master Plan implemented. In fact, this year we revised and updated our master plan because we have done so well on the original.

We are always moving forward, always working to get better. Each season marks progress. Certainly some years see more than others. But, always, we push ahead.

I feel most fortunate to be able to say, after twenty years on the same golf course, "I can hardly wait to get to work in the morning."

The people, the profession and the attitude make that possible. Often I have wondered how many others, with similar time in service at the same place and who are my age, are able to express the same emotions of satisfaction I feel. Can you? Or will you be able to?

And, as I think ahead to the next twenty years, there is no doubt—none—that the same anticipation and the same thrill I feel today when I head off to work will be there.

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