



# Remembering Dobber and The Days at Lake Shore

By Rob Schultz

The rear wheels of my lawnmower fell off before I had made one pass around my lawn. I looked at the mess of wheels, blades and broken bolts piled near the Norway pine growing majestically in my backyard and decided I needed help.

I called Scott Hagen. I figured if anybody could correct the problem, it was my 21-year-old nephew, who has spent much of his life tinkering with anything mechanical. About 30 minutes later he pulled up in front of my house in his little station wagon with the stereo pounding and a smile on his face. As he stumbled through the bolts, wheels and grease that I had moved to my front stoop, we talked about his summer job working on the grounds crew at Blackhawk Country Club.

Scott had a blast this summer. Monroe Miller made sure he gave him an honest day's work. Then his friends made sure he gave them an honest night's play. As he described his last summer before graduating from college and entering the world of suits and wingtips, my mind went back in time 18 years ago when I was doing the same thing.

At the time I thought it was a horrible summer because a girl broke my heart for the first time in my life and I worked a million hours as the "night water guy" at Lake Shore Municipal Golf Course in Oshkosh during a terrible drought year. And that was before the age of double-row irrigation systems. I watered greens and much of the fairways with those thick orange hoses. I ruined my back extending 30 of those 400-yard suckers each night over Lake Shore's front nine.

But looking back, I realize now it was one of the best summers of my life. The cast of characters that I encountered was long and colorful. There was Patty, Faith and Tam, who drove my mother nuts by writing love notes to me with stones on my driveway at home. There was Amy, the one who broke my heart. There was the Stoid, and Mike and all the other golfers/partiers who lived near the course and brought me a beer after they arrived home at bar time.

There was Lou Warobick, the crafty, legendary golf pro who finished his career at Lake Shore.

There were the men of the grounds crew, one of whom built a house near the course with the proceeds made from selling nightcrawlers, which he picked on the course every night.

There was my boss, the pudgy Greg Schuhart, who stood just 5-foot-8 but was stronger than Reggie White and Sean Jones combined. Greg had an attitude that turned off many golfers, but there was no question his heart was in his job. I admired Greg because he treated the golf course, and me, fairly.

We had an ongoing game that lasted throughout the three years I worked at Lake Shore. Greg kept trying to catch me doing something wrong; like when I held parties on the course at night when I was working. He'd drive that

goofy blue-and-orange Gremlin and hide it in the bushes on the far end of the course. Then he'd lurk into the dusk, scurrying behind trees trying to catch me in the act. He never did. I always held my parties after bar time when more of my friends were available and I knew Greg was asleep.

But the character who I will never forget, who will always keep a spot close to my heart, was my working buddy, Tim Dobish. We called him Dobber. We were complete opposites; Lake Shore's version of the odd couple.

I was the slob who drove around the course in anything that had a key in it. Dobber spent 30 minutes each night scrubbing out the same Cushman before he'd venture out to the course.

I was the partier who encouraged friends to venture out and find me in the dark with a few cold ones each night. Dobber would just smile, turn down every offer to join in and go on about his job.

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I showed up late for work every night. Dobber would show up early every night, find Greg and explain why I would be late.

But Dobber, who was one year younger than me, had his dark side, too. An incredible practical joker, he'd love to hide my tool box and then watch me go berserk after I'd find one of my hoses broken miles from the shed. He did this often. After one such occasion, I finally tracked him down on the part of the course where homes were located nearby. I let poor Dobber have it with a chorus of expletive deletives that would have made Buddy Ryan cringe. Unfortunately, one of the people who lived a nearby house was a former marine who heard every word as he sat on his front porch with his wife and shotgun.

Dobber enjoyed finding me about 10 minutes later and telling me I had a visitor who wanted to talk to me. These were his parting words: "Do you want me to phone your mother and have her meet you at the hospital?"

But what made Dobber so special is that he has a heart of gold and is a genuine human being; the kind I've rarely encountered since my days at Lake Shore.

One night I couldn't find Dobber anywhere. Finally, after searching the course for an hour, I found him in under a tree digging a hole with a shovel. There was a tear coming out of one of his eyes. He had run over a killdeer, one of those stupid birds who would rather run than fly and were constantly in the way as we drove down the fairways to do our jobs.

I howled with laughter because I had driven over dozens of those birds and had become comfortably numb about it. But Dobber never did. He buried every bird he drove over.

Dobber also put up with my desire to help him have more

fun in his life. I'd introduce him to my girlfriends and they'd immediately try to set him up with one of their friends. I'd demand he party with me. But Dobber didn't like to chase girls and he didn't like to hang out at bars. He was content to golf during the day, work at night and spend the rest of the time with his family. I thought that was downright sacrilegious at the time. Now I realize how strong he was to stick to his convictions.

I lost track of Dobber after I graduated from college and became a full-time newspaper guy. I learned he got married after graduating from college and moved to Washington, D.C.

During the past 18 years since working at Lake Shore I have met a myriad of interesting people ranging from superstar athletes to legendary coaches to members of the White House administration. When asked who have impressed me most, none of them come to mind. I always think of Dobber, the guy who stuck to his convictions, who never wavered under the pressure of his peers.

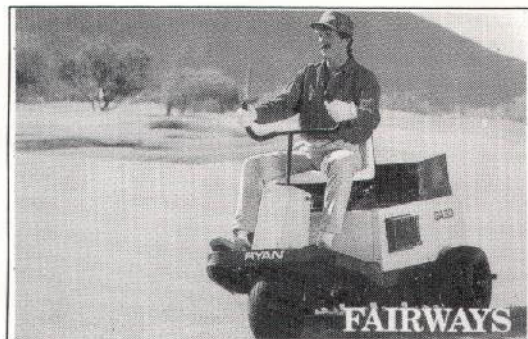
Scott finally gave up on my lawn mower and headed back to his car to find some friends with whom he could try to create a memorable Saturday night. As we stood by his car he told a few stories about his summer at Blackhawk. I smiled because I knew they would be stories he'd remember for the rest of his life.

He doesn't know it but he just had the best summer of his life.

After Scott drove away, I sat down on the stoop next to my broken mower and remembered my last summer working on a golf course. I thought of Dobber and wondered what he's doing now. Whatever is is, I'm sure he's content. It made me feel good knowing that. ♣

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