



WINTER OF MY CONTENT

By Tony Rzadzki

"Boy do I look good!" I can't get over how many times that I heard those exact words during the GCSAA Convention in Orlando. Throughout the week I would run into my old cronies from Illinois and everyone of them would blurt out how great I looked. It got to be rather embarrassing especially when my project manager and I were touring the trade show. At one point he said that he is going to have to work me harder this coming season...great.

The one thing that baffles me the most is that constructing and preparing to open a new golf course is very stressful work. Developing budgets, hiring new employees, and creating a new maintenance facility, added to growing in a new course, make for some long and tiresome days. Yet to all outward appearances, "I look great!"

I have yet to take a Stress Management course; maybe after this season I will need one, but somehow I manage my stress well and am able to portray a "great looking" image. I have been trying to figure out what I have been doing this past season, and I have come up with a few explanations.

A long time ago when I was a teenager, I had an occasion to run over to the factory where my father worked. It was a manufacturing plant that made paper drinking cups. Each time that I visited there I marveled at the complexity of turning a two ton roll of paper into thousands of drinking cups. I also wondered how any one could work in such a stifling, noisy environment; for my dad it was thirty-five years.

It was at this time in my life that I made an important decision. I decided that whatever profession that I decide to undertake for my life's endeavor, I was going to work outside, and I was really going to enjoy whatever I do. Most normal people work eight hours a day, five days a week. Our profession demands much, much more. It's a love affair, a second wife. I have found this profession to be challenging, reward-

ing, exciting, and most of all fun. That is very important to me. I thank God for those events in my past that caused me to visit my dad's factory. Long ago He knew my future path and led me to that goal today.

Another thing that I have learned is that each day has its own set of problems, especially when working with Mother Nature. I have learned to take things in stride, to act according to the task at hand, and to resolve problems in a professional manner. Over reaction to given circumstances often leads to foolish decisions. These things have happened to me in the past, and often end with unpleasant results. Like water off of a duck's back, you have to face life's adversities, absorb what is needed and essential, and let the rest roll away.

I also honestly believe that my stress has been reduced because of Wisconsin. The transition has been super. There is something to be said about living here. Being born and raised in Chicago for the first twenty-five years of my life toughened me for my mission in life. My career began in 1980 and I was weaned on a private north shore course in Skokie, The Evanston Golf Club. I worked there for seven years. The foundation of my attitudes and commitments were strengthened there, and through some very trying personal times I prevailed. My work continued through the construction, opening, and further development of Cantigny Golf for eight years. Keeping a 'country club' atmosphere and maintenance regime is a very demanding proposition on a Chicago area public course.

I have been groomed for success at some very demanding clubs, but for some reason the 'pressure cooker' is off up here or at least turned down a bit. I have found that the pace is a notch or two lower than Chicago. In Wisconsin the 'political' aspects between 'competing' golf courses is non-existent and the rat race of competition seems to be void. I am not

saying that Wisconsin is paved with easy streets. Yet the atmosphere is clearer, less jaded with the petty comparisons of green speeds and paddle ball courts. Keeping up with the Jones' seems to be the order of things south of the border.

My past experiences have taught and prepared me for last season's challenges and the events to come this year. I feel that once again I have been fortunate enough to have faced past challenges and expectations, and now have the confidence to carry these expectations to another level. I have begun to learn that pressure is what you create within yourself. I am now beginning to understand why this 'pressure' has been relieved to some extent this past season. I think that my inner drive, the force that makes us all strive for perfection, and my past experiences have become so much a part of me that I no longer appear stressed.

Maturity also has had an effect. I turned forty this year and some times I really feel my age, especially at the monthly meetings. Looking at all those young bucks chomping at the bit reminds me of where I was not so many years ago. Couple this with the grand atmosphere of Wisconsin and voila!... "Boy do I look great!" 🌲

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