



THE COPS

By Monroe S. Miller

"Assume the position!" hollered Thumbs Walker with a hose gun gripped with both hands. His legs were apart, firmly planted, and both arms were fully extended parallel to the ground. He sounded like an FBI agent, and everybody on Shady Dell Country Club's crew looked to see what the commotion was all about.

And once they saw the two cops who had come into the shop this early morning, they went back to getting ready for work. It was, after all, before six in the morning. And this episode was almost a daily occurrence.

The two big bruisers in blue uniforms cornered Thumbs, carried him over to the steps to the upper level of the shop, and handcuffed him to the railing. "Let me go! Let me go! Police brutality!" screamed Thumbs. The cops were grinning ear to ear; so were most of the guys on the crew.

"You guys better let me go or you'll be late for your freebie donuts and coffee at Craig's Drug Store." Thumbs pleaded to no avail.

"Be quiet, Thumbs," the bigger officer said. "I'm trying to read the paper."

Just then Digger O'Dell walked in, barely in time for work. "Why don't you two bums get out there in the world of crime and arrest somebody?"

The cops looked at each other, walked over to Digger and before he could get away, grabbed him and dragged him over to the stairs and cuffed him next to Thumbs.

"You guys couldn't find horse manure in a stable. Go have another jelly donut."

Both Digger and Thumbs knew the cops; knew them well, in fact. Both cops—Steve Ball and Tom Hill—had worked at the golf course with them for the years they were in college studying criminal justice. For as long as Bogey Calhoun had known them, they both had wanted to be police officers in their hometown.

Seeing them this morning remind-

ed him, as it did most mornings, of what excellent golf course employees they had been. Not only were they physically strong and capable of enormous amounts of work, both were smart and conscientious and a little old fashioned. They smiled easily, were easy going and consummate gentlemen. Each had a perfect personality for law enforcement. And they looked the part, too: crewcuts with white sidewalls.

Bogey got to thinking back to the lunch hours when Tom and Steve were on the crew. Invariably, after they'd eaten, one would pass the other and knock his hat off or give him a push. Then the battle was on—a wrestling match ensued and the two young bulls would finish lunch break rolling around and wrestling on the shop floor. Bogey would have to end it with a "knock it off you guys. One of you will get hurt and we have too much work to do."

New employees on Calhoun's crew were easy marks for the cops. Sometime in early summer it seemed each experienced some confrontation with the cops. It might be on the way to work when one of them was a little late for a 5:00 a.m. start. Then it would happen—the full brace of flashing red and blue lights, siren screaming and a cop barking orders over a bullhorn. The unsuspecting kid took days to recover. One time Bogey

chewed on them—"You are scaring the hell out of the new guys"—only to have one of the cops remind Calhoun of his more famous practical jokes.

Every summer there was a set up. Sometime before 6:00 a.m. but after most of the crew had assembled, the cops would roll in to the shop yard and drive the squad directly into the shop. The new employees would stare, wondering what was going on. Steve and Tom would pile out of the car, asking for the subject of the set up. When the kid quietly raised his hand, the cops would say something like "we've got a warrant for your arrest for selling drugs."

Usually, the kid would be shocked. Until someone on the crew—or one of the cops—would give it up with a giggle. Then they would all double over with laughter, watching the kid's face as he would sheepishly grin at being had.

Bogey never said anything to the cops; he knew it was all in good fun. Plus, he had taught the cops half of the practical jokes they pulled! He was in no position to comment, other than to say, "nice going!"

Bogey felt secure knowing the cops were at home on the golf course and in the shop. Their years on the crew had exposed them to the aggravation and expense and senselessness of vandalism. One year Steve

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had spent half a day pulling tee and green equipment from the pond; he cursed the kids who had done the deed. Both cops had knitted greens that had been damaged, and sodded fairways torn up by vehicles trespassing in the middle of the night. They had seen the stark crime of new trees snapped off waist high, and the sad sight of where a beautiful spruce had been stolen for Christmas. Nowadays the cops kept an especially watchful eye on the golf course at night. As a result, vandalism had nearly disappeared as one of Bogey's problems.

If they liked pulling tricks on the golf course crew at Shady Dell, they loved doing it to each other. Calhoun would meet them while they were on patrol, and the driver would have his head out the window. Usually the other would be laughing like crazy from the passenger's side. Calhoun knew the driver was suffering from what the other one had eaten for supper. It was really funny in the dead of winter!

Even funnier was when the driver smelled bad. In a cop car, the driver controls the windows!

Bogey was proud of the two cops. They worked hard at being good

police officers, and Calhoun enjoyed knowing that at least some of their work habits had been acquired during their youth on the course. It was a very satisfying feeling to know that the times they spent at Shady Dell had left them with an attachment and feeling they still had and likely would have for years to come.

But in his reflective moments, Bogey also knew they were only two of hundreds of kids who had worked at Shady Dell Country Club and who had gone on to bigger and better things and, in some cases, great things.

Many of them had confessed to him (or even returned to offer thanks) they had learned their work ethic during summers working on Shady Dells' golf course. They learned to appreciate early mornings—some saw their first sunrise as a crew member. Some recounted, in retrospect, the joys of the daily drama on a golf course—mowing greens, moving cups, cutting fairways and roughs and surrounds, and getting the play areas ready for another day. The lessons of working with such a variety of people—age and background and personality—

were powerful. Lots of them confessed that as they grew older they missed the vigorous physical labor required on a golf course, and they no longer experienced sensitive outdoor observations—bluebirds, yellow jackets, green grass, red sumac and everything inbetween. Their memories of Shady Dell were sweet.

Like every golf course superintendent who still depended on high school and college kids during the summer season, Bogey enjoyed all the activity and variety and occasional turmoil they brought to the shop. He knew the aggravation and immaturity of their youth was a small price to pay for such wonderful rewards.

He was pleased so many turf students had gone on to successful careers and had experienced the same satisfaction he had from his career. But those who were teachers and businessmen pleased him, too. And there was a lawyer, a M.D., a state senator, a prof, a club general manager and even a golf pro. He was proud of all of them and all they had done with their lives.

But he was especially proud of the cops. ♣



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