

# HOLE NOTES

Official Publication  
of the  
Minnesota Golf Course  
Superintendents' Association

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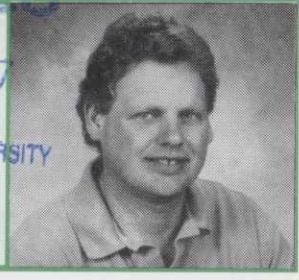
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FROM YOUR PRESIDENT'S DESK MAY 15 1997

## Waxing Philosophical

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For most of us, when we think of a philosopher, we think of the ancient Greeks like Aristotle and Plato. Possibly, we visualize a frumpy, long-haired, bearded curmudgeon seated in a book-laden study, smoking a meerschaum pipe, pondering the true meaning of life. But it may be that we are all philosophers of a sort. Maybe not in the classic sense of the word, but at least in our everyday actions.

There are three areas which lend themselves to philosophical study that are relevant to golf course superintendents. First, the way in which we conduct ourselves, or as Webster's puts it "the system of values by which one lives." It's about figuring out what *really* is important, what takes priority in our lives. From religion to joke telling, your personal philosophy plays a part in nearly every action and deed that you do. We all have a set of fundamental beliefs that have been developing from our youth, but analyzing and defining these beliefs can help us deal with adversity, and prepare us to make decisions.

**Scott Austin, CGCS**, uttered a brief but poignant piece of philosophy a few years ago that has stuck with me like a Waffle House breakfast: "Know the difference between right and wrong," he said, "Then do what's right." How many of us have known in our heart what the "right" thing was, and then, possibly because of a lack of conviction towards our fundamental beliefs or philosophy, did the "wrong" thing? Take some time before the heavy stress season and define your beliefs — then write them down. Consider areas such as religion, family, friends, money and of course, your job. Then, when anxiety hits you and the stress is relentless, you can help yourself do the "right thing" by reaffirming your beliefs and principles.

**As managers**, we also have a stake in the lives of our employees, and developing an organizational or "corporate philosophy" is part of that interest. Many of us have adopted the "team approach" whose mantra "all for one, one for all" is in effect a building block of a corporate philosophy. By definition, any system of motivating concepts or principles is a philosophy, so as we write and define policies and procedures for our staffs, we need to be consistent with what our underlying beliefs are. For example, if my fundamental belief is that an employee's family is as important as his work, but I fail to grant him time off for family matters, then I have 1) confounded the employee, and 2) eroded the philosophy and culture of the organization. Just as a cart follows a horse, so should policies follow the organization's beliefs and values.

Closer to the ground, a turf management philosophy developed by the superintendent and the green committee could help immensely regarding cultural practices and applications. The key to this, of course, is that all parties are in agreement to the fundamental beliefs. If, for example, the superintendent has a philosophy that "lean and mean" is the best approach for a fertility program, but the committee subscribes to a "lush and plush" mentality, an ensuing conflict is inevitable.

Take a few minutes to examine your philosophies in these three areas. If it helps, light up the meerschaum!

— Fred Taylor,  
MGCSA President

HOLE NOTES (ISSN 108-27994) is published monthly except bi-monthly December/January, February/March for \$2 an issue or \$20 per year by the Minnesota Golf Course Superintendents Association, 240 Minnetonka Avenue South, Wayzata, MN 55391-1617. Scott Turtinen, Publisher. Periodicals postage paid at Wayzata, MN. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to HOLE NOTES, 240 Minnetonka Avenue South, Wayzata, MN 55391-1617.