



In Bounds

By Jack MacKenzie, CGCS
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Only in the far reaches of my imagination am I a mechanic. Wielding a Snap-On tool belt and man handling a pneumatic drive impact gun, I traipse around my fictitious garage tearing apart, repairing and then rebuilding to perfection anything that runs on fossil fuels. And then I wake up.

My mechanic will attest that since my first winter at North Oaks Golf Club I am no longer allowed to work on the equipment. During the winter of 1985 I was self-charged with "fixing" the old Toro Pro 70 tri-plex mower. We had been experimenting with this unit as a precursor to lightweight fairway mowing, and it had taken a beating during the summer. According to my method, less plan parts were removed and strewn about "my" shop area. The mound of parts grew until I felt ready to put my life-size Revel model back together.

Of course in the process I changed out a few nuts and bolts, replaced the muffler, changed the oil and sharpened the reels. However, when my project was reassembled I ended up with a left over spring, a rather large spring useful in the counter balance of the machine when the operator vacated his seat. With the spring unit in place, the Pro 70 set on all three tires. Without the spring the rear end popped up off the ground several feet.

I never did figure how to get that spring back on the mower, and Bob wouldn't fix it. He felt I needed a reminder to "keep out of MY area of expertise." Okay, okay, I am not a professional mechanic and know where my deficiencies are, and who to call upon concerning all things mechanical. You see, Bob is the best mechanic I know of.

It was about a quarter of the way through my 20-year career here at North Oaks that I decided to take on another project. It was of the personal nature. You see, I was beginning to think that I was broken and, being a good superintendent, I could fix myself. Funny how being good in one field makes a person think they can conquer another with ease.

Although I had been out of college, was married and had two children I still maintained some of my adolescent mentality. I enjoyed partying and would share beverages with my staff after work many (most) evenings of the week. Tired of this behavior and bored with my absence, my former wife ended our marriage.

Somewhat shattered and knowing of the core to my problem, I quit drinking for several months. All went well for a while. I applied myself to my job and children. They were the sunshine in my life and I enjoyed my newfound relationship with them. However, as things tend to go when you have a compulsion such

as mine, old habits returned.

Along with the booze came a live-in girlfriend, her children and the loss of my sanity. By 1994 I thought that I was going crazy. Totally nuts! My parenthood skills were beginning to suffer, my relationship with a woman whom I thought I loved was crashing on the rocks and my thirst was at its all-time high. And finally my inability to think straight and act "normal" created havoc in every aspect of my life. I was the one broken and I needed some serious fixing, and not a tune-up found in a bottle!

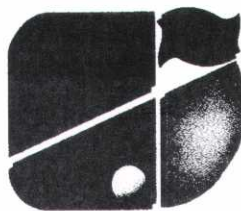
Enter my psychologist. The first and second visits went well. She began to know me and I felt comfortable with telling her everything. On the third occasion of our acquaintance she suggested I quit drinking for a week, perhaps it would clear my mind. Simple thought I, the one in charge, the commander of his own ship, the king of his city the man in control. I lasted two days. However, this was one dry day longer than I had been in the previous few years.

My fourth session with Nancy was interesting to say the least. Confronted with my issues, I began the session acknowledging that I drank too much. Of course I wasn't an alcoholic, but just consumed too much booze (like everyday!). After a total mind blitz she told me at the end of the meeting that if I indeed wanted my sanity back I, first had to confront my inability to control my compulsion and enter a treatment center.

Two weeks later I was sitting in a room surrounded by everyday Joes and Mary's who were also attempting to regain their mental faculties. On March 6, 1995 I took my last drink. On April 7, 1995 I graduated, clean and sober, from spin dry and have never looked back.

In the course of one month I learned the skills I would need to help me give up my compulsion and thus allow me to become a better father, partner, employee and employer. I was empowered to make good and healthy decisions. My "live in" was invited to "move out." 40 pounds slipped off my body in no time. And best of all I had some control over a compulsion that was making my life insane.

After nine years of sobriety I am still a bit crazy, but I don't wrestle over issues at night. And I have come to the conclusion that I cannot "fix" everything all by myself, nor do I need to. When in trouble I humbly seek professional help. And just having that tool in my box provides me an incredible amount of comfort.



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