

The 15th Hole-

(Continued from Page 20)

life, and it still remains at the top of my "dumbest thing" list more than four decades later. Maybe that's why 18-year olds make the best soldiers; they shoot first and think about the consequences as an afterthought.

I was being robbed, and I knew it. My take of golf balls from #15 and the adjacent #4 holes was down to almost nothing. I could see the back and forth tracks of the thief in the Salt Creek spur in front of #15 green. I tended to my ball hawk duties on Thursdays and Mondays; as Wednesdays and Saturdays/Sundays were the major golfer traffic days. On good weekends, we would have over 700 golfers, some teeing off as early as 4:30 a.m., with the final foursomes making their way back to the clubhouse after 9 p.m.. The thief worked on Wednesday and Sunday nights, leaving me next to nothing in the way of retrieved golf balls.

I had to do something, and as an 18 year old I immediately came up with a plan that wasn't the brightest. So on a

Wednesday night I put my brother's 16-gauge double barrel shotgun in the truck of my car and headed out to York Golf Club. I parked my car behind a stand of Blue Spruce next to the long tee at #15 and walked to the 2nd tee that gave me a clear "shot" at the #4 hole creek immediately in front of the green. About midnight I heard the methodic splash and drag over the gravel bottom of the creek, a sound I most certainly knew as I had heard it every time I had cast my own specially designed rake at that same location.

"You X@%&XX< take this", as I fired both barrels at once in the general direction of where I heard the sound. There was no crying out, but simply a rapid splash, splash, splash as the thief made his way to shore.

Early the next morning the pro (Vince Di Tella) and I found the thief's equipment; his waders, rake, and golf ball bag along Cermak Road. I took those items home with me for safe keeping.

A day or two later the golf course received a telephone call from an unknown person suggesting that the thief's equipment should be returned to where it was found or the golf course

might end up having gasoline spread and ignited on several of its greens. The equipment was immediately returned and no more threats were received.

I ended my career as ball hawk a short time later, as I became a freshman at a university some five hours driving time from home and my after-school and weekend work in the fall and spring came to an end.

So what would have happened to me in today's world? I can't help but think I would have ended up in jail, while the thief successfully brought suit against York Club for "pain and suffering" due to being shot at. I sometimes wonder if I could ever shoot at anyone ever, for any reason. Most likely not, but, perhaps, just maybe, and then I turn to other thoughts!!!

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United We Stand

By JACK MacKENZIE, CGCS

North Oaks Golf Club

Editor

Father and His Sons

Æsop. (Sixth century B.C.) Fables.

A father had a family of sons who were perpetually quarreling among themselves. When he failed to heal their disputes by his exhortations, he determined to give them a practical illustration of the evils of disunion; and for this purpose he one day told them to bring him a bundle of sticks. When they had done so, he placed the faggot into the hands of each of them in succession, and ordered them to break it in pieces. They tried with all their strength, and were not able to do it. He next opened the faggot, took the sticks separately, one by one, and again put them into his sons' hands, upon which they broke them easily. He then addressed them in these words: "My sons, if you are of one mind, and unite to assist each other, you will be as this faggot, uninjured by all the attempts of your enemies; but if you are divided among yourselves, you will be broken as easily as these sticks."

"UNITED WE STAND, DIVIDED WE FALL"

During the most recent legislative session at our State Capitol many new regulatory ideas were kicked around including House File 414 that detailed Limitations on Synthetic Turf, HF 336 regarding Pesticide Application Warning and HF 500 and Senate File 74 describing Standards for Recycled Water. Perhaps the issues debated are good ideas, yet then again their implementation could deliver a serious blow to certain factions of our green industry.

I made the opportunity to sit in on several Senate hearings, two of which were related to water use in our state. It should come as no surprise that there are entities who do not feel that irrigation upon golf

courses is a good use of our limited resource. In fact there is one group making a direct point that golf courses are detrimental to our water supplies. This group is organized and well connected.

"The point is if we represent ourselves in mass we will get attention. We will be asked questions and we will create our own destinies. But first we have got to get organized as a Green Industry and not just golf course superintendents."

Their intentions are good and as we can only hope to partner with them in the future. As an industry, not just golf courses either; we have got to be prepared to represent ourselves or we can expect increased regulations and mandates. We need to get ahead of this curve or we will be impacted severely.

How can individual organizations protect themselves from poor regulation? Or even more progressive, how can a limited membership group partner with legislators to develop good rules for both the community and businesses alike? As small groups, small dollars can be contributed and a small impact can be made with small numbers of individuals. Or the small groups can band together, create a funding vehicle, hire a support team of lobbyists and represent our industry in a large group of concerned constituents. United we stand, divided we fall.

To that end the Minnesota Turf and Grounds Foundation is discussing a potentially mutually beneficial partnership with the Minnesota Nursery and Landscape Association to form a coalition on behalf of the Green Industry. Together we represent over 80,000 employees and contribute over 11.5 billion dollars to the state economy. Together we can be a very LOUD voice and as professionals present

ourselves articulately and with pride. Together we can generate the funds necessary to support the muscle needed to help carry our heavy message to the proper destination.

The goal of the Coalition would be more than just a reactionary force swaying to the ever changing views of the prevailing representatives. The end game is to partner with key legislative voices, participate through testimony and become the "go to" source for green industry environmental and business issues. In essence we will help craft good legislation.

During one of my forays I sat beside two other green industry representatives. We got the look from every Senator in attendance, not the negative kind, but rather, "who are these guys? Hmm.. suddenly we have an audience?" Pretty cool actually as I even answered a simple question for the group and had the chance to introduce myself prior to the meeting with a big dog on the opponent's team.

You should have seen the heads turn at the second freshwater meeting I attended. Senators recognized me and took notice of my presence. The point is if we represent ourselves in mass we will get attention. We will be asked questions and we will create our own destinies. But first we have got to get organized as a Green Industry and not just golf course superintendents.

Indeed this is a new and bold concept, not unlike the very successful and mutually beneficial creation of the Northern Green Expo. Utilizing the energy and talent of our diverse, yet similar organizations we can and will make a difference today, tomorrow and into the future.

There is but one key thread to the success of this charge, "united we stand, divided we fall."



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