

**Mid-Atlantic Association of
Golf Course Superintendents
NEWSLETTER**

Published by this Association to aid the advancement of the Golf Course Superintendent through education and merit.

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From the Golf World

For those MAAGCS members who missed the Falls Road meeting, the dinner speaker was GCSAA national director Stephen Cadenelli, who had some interesting things to say as well as some tough questions to handle. He made the key point that the national's two main methods of reaching the world outside the superintendent's profession were the annual national conference and show and GOLF COURSE MANAGEMENT magazine. The show generates a great deal of publicity for the association in addition to providing a direct link to the suppliers to the industry, while the magazine not only reaches all members but also all club and course managers plus the green and golf committee chairmen that country club superintendents must deal with. For obvious reasons, the GCSAA officers and directors view both channels as extremely important and are devoting more and more time and effort toward improving and expanding both.

The main thrust of the question directed to Steve Cadenelli, a certified superintendent who is now involved in building a golf course in Lakewood, N.J., concerned the need for better public relations efforts that will improve the image of the average superintendent while getting across the professionalism that more and more characterizes the superintendent's position. Quite a few of our members felt that golfers should be the target of GCSAA public relations efforts, noting the job that the PGA has been doing in educating the public on

"Perfection is Only Marginally Acceptable"

by Virgil Robinson
Superintendent, Burning Tree Club

I do not know the source for the phrase that is the title of this article, but many years ago, even before becoming a superintendent, I consciously or subconsciously accepted it as my creed. What a heavy burden it has been to bear; what a labor of love it has been to start shedding!

If one thinks seriously about the phrase, it sounds innocent enough, maybe even a little bit macho. In reality it put me inside the "gerbil ladder" — the little exercise wheel where no matter how fast the gerbil runs he never reaches a goal, he just keeps going faster!

For me, this perfectionist mentality has affected three areas of my life — my personal relationships, my vocation, and my theology. I could have said each of these areas were affected in a negative way, and the tenor of this article might suggest that I choose to believe, however, that all things in life, the good, the bad, and the ugly ultimately work together for good.

My personal relationships, this perfectionistic attitude manifested itself in several ways: (1) Always being overly critical of others where they did not quite "measure up" to my standards, my values, or my ideals. This critical approach may not have been verbalized, in fact, it almost never was, but it was there, and it was felt and real. (2) Never feeling as if I quite measured up in interpersonal relationships, always running inside the "gerbil ladder," trying to prove myself and yet never quite being able to do it — at least, to myself. Often, I would try to impress others, or worse, put someone down to raise myself up. (3) And, because of the first two manifestations, sometimes trying to control or manipulate others to help them attain this "marginally acceptable and quite illusive" perfection.

Perfectionism is a cruel taskmaster. In my vocation, this mentality surfaced in my never having the golf course primped or primed or aesthetically prepared to please myself.

Never mind that those who are privileged to play are "oohing" and "ahhing," it could still be better, couldn't it? Never mind the ninety and nine sincere and deserving comments; worry about the one "off the cuff" critical remark that was probably forgotten before leaving the lips of the speaker.

Never did I accept a genuine compliment on the condition of the course with a simple "thank you." I could always proffer a course deficiency, even if it had to be manufactured. A dear member in the above situation, who intended only to be complimentary, hit the nail right on the head many times when he used to say, "Yes, but you're a perfectionist." To me, at that time, it was a wonderful comment, but not any more!

In my theology, also, until only recently, perfectionism ruled in the way I related to my Lord and Savior. If I could only do this or that or not do this or that; if I would try harder. If I would, etc., ad infinitum, I could reach Him and be accepted by Him. Poppycock, fiddle-faddle, hogwash and mustard greens!!!! The "Good News" of the Gospel is simply that we are accepted just the way we are and exactly where we are!

Why do I bother "shooting from the hip" and probably "shooting myself in the lip"? Maybe it's because I have seen many beautiful golf courses around the country and I have talked to many of my friends and peers at these courses. I have seen what the pressure can do to personalities, can do to marriages, can do to individuals, and I

the broad responsibilities of the club pro. The details Steve provided on video ads and their astronomic cost to run were revealing, to say the least, and his answers demonstrated his understanding of the problem.

The first-ever Golf Summit will be

held October 8-10 at Westchester Country Club in Rye, N.Y. Sponsored by the National Golf Foundation, the Summit will bring together key decision-makers within the golf industry to focus on the issues that will face the game of golf through the 1990's.

Meeting Schedule 1986

November 11 — Diamond Ridge G.C.,
Howard Gaskill, host
December 9 — Green Spring Valley
Hunt Club, Grant Pensinger, host

WANTED — SUPERINTENDENT

Lakewood Country Club
13901 Glen Mill Road,
Rockville, Md. 20850
Send Resume to Ralph Pecca,
General Manager

believe this perfectionist syndrome just might be considered an occupational hazard for the golf course superintendent.

I do not have any answers; I do have many questions. Will you help me piece this puzzle together? For instance, have you looked around lately and considered how many supers are on their second or third marriage? That sounds like a legitimate question for the next GCSAA survey; I would be willing to guess it is higher than the national average. Let's forget about the salary levels and get to the really important issues of life. Or, how many of us really consider it a compliment to be termed a "workaholic"? That job will get done if I have to do it myself and work until dark to do it; and, oh yes, if I have to I'll work thru the weekend also, thank you! Perfectionism, with a capital "P".

Or consider the defensive posture we take when the golfer asks what happened to that patch of grass on the 5th green. We go to the nth degree explaining what we do not know; it simply got tired of living. I do not hear the physician going into lengthy verbiage when a patient succumbs; he simply writes on the death certificate, "death by natural causes." Try that one on the next golfer who wants to know what happened to good ole #7. Is turf more important than human life? I wonder, does this also smack of perfectionism?

Don't raise your hands on this one, and above all do not incriminate yourself. But how many of you know of superintendents who buy antacid by the case for that ulcer-threatened stomach? How many breakdowns or near ones are you aware of among superintendents? When the going gets rough, sometimes the tough can't get going! Could perfectionism be a stress factor?

If perfectionism is an "occupational hazard" for the superintendent, as I contend and have tried to illustrate, then the very next logical question, it seems to me, is, simply, why? As I look at friends and peers who have been superintendents at courses in the 1980's, I see similar backgrounds among many of us. A composite might include some of the following:

- (1) We are either "baby boomers" or "early postwar" babies.
- (2) Our parents had little or no education beyond high school, if that — but their children were going to have a college education.
- (3) For the most part, they were blue collar workers, in the lower or lower middle income brackets of their day.
- (4) They were going to see that their children had it better than they did whatever that meant.
- (5) Our generation was the first where the mother worked outside the home either on a part-time or full-time basis so that "their children could have it better than they did."
- (6) We were not "latch-key" children because there were extended families or trusted neighbors in close proximity, but the parents, especially mothers, still expressed guilt feelings at not being home with the children.
- (7) Most of us "grew up" on a golf course either caddying, working in the golf shop, or just hanging out there. It allayed the guilt feelings of the parents because "they always knew where we were" and we did have money jingling in our jeans much to the envy of fellow classmates.
- (8) We did go to college; we were goal-oriented, we knew that we wanted to be involved on a golf course.
- (9) For most of us "success" in our chosen field came in our early '20's. The first-generation superintendent was dying off or retiring, Eisenhower and Palmer were sparking interest in the game, and golf enjoyed its heyday with a proliferation of new courses. With our turf degree or certificate under our arm, we were in the right place at the right time.
- (10) We have had the burden of first-line management on our shoulders for 10-20 years, 6-7 days a week, and — — — we are still only half way thru our normal career life, performing the exact tasks we did at the start of our careers.
- (11) Most of us enjoy middle to upper middle income salary levels and because of this are "locked into" this profession.

Again I have more questions and precious few, if any, answers. What, if anything, in our parentage or early background could be at the root of such a perfectionistic syndrome? I ask not to point the finger but merely for a point of reference. Is this inherited, learned, or does it simply come with the "turf," no pun intended, of our profession? As a valued mentor of mine in the turf field would often times say, "You tell me." Many times simply asking the questions and musing over possible answers cause insights and introspections to come forth.

One final question I would ask and "you tell me." Is "Perfection Only Marginally Acceptable" or is it NOT ACCEPTABLE at all?

Championship Trophy Honors Bob Shields

The late Bob Shields will be honored by a new low net trophy at the annual MAAGCS golf championship to be played October 14 at Hidden Creek. Four times president of the association, Shields had been superintendent at Woodmont Country Club for 30 years when he died of a heart attack in 1982. The Shields Memorial Trophy was donated by TESCO, while the Bill Glover Trophy for low gross will be given this year by the G.L. Cornell Company.

This year's championship will have a 1 p.m. shotgun start and will also have a combination guest-affiliate division. Entry fee for both divisions will be \$5.

NEW MEMBERS

Philip F. DeMarco, Class F
President, Aqua-Flow, Inc.
Hammonton, N.J.

Jeffrey C. Michel, Class D
Assistant Superintendent
Woodlawn Country Club
Alexandria, VA

Peter Lague, Class D
Assistant Superintendent
Reston South Golf Course
Reston, VA

Thomas Shuey, Class A
Superintendent
Lake Arbor Country Club
Mitchellville, MD

Tom Rider, Class F
Parks Superintendent
Queen Anne's County
Recreation and Parks
Centreville, MD

Carol Lee Offenbacher, Class C-Student
Student-Trainee
Eisenhower Golf Course
Crownsville, MD

David Alan Rudinski, Class C-Student
Student-Trainee
Lake Arbor Country Club
Mitchellville, MD

Charles W. Stone, Class F
Manager
Imperial Nurseries
Manassas, VA

Gary Mitchell, Class A
Superintendent
Golf Gridiron
Reistertown, MD