

YOU ARE THE DIFFERENCE

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This will be an unorthodox and relaxed approach to this fine conference and get-together. You will have a lot of technical and scholarly stuff in your ear. You have a program of the best practical turfgrass people in the country -- the very finest -- learn from them, they really know. They are willing to share their knowledge with you, to help you improve, to help you do a better job. They can be the difference in your work and in your life.

This talk, "You Are The Difference" is non-technical, non-academic, and observes the human side of your profession. It deals with how to apply what you will have learned. It is important that you share the knowledge you receive here, because knowledge is not knowledge unless it is shared. Surely, if the speakers have kept everything to themselves, we would learn nothing. Learning, knowing, and sharing make a big difference.

Let us see how we can be the difference -- in the great epic Homer has Achilles state on his return to battle, "You shall know the difference now that I am back again." You, too, can be the difference; in fact, you are the difference.

Let's check your everyday operation. How are your relations with your crew, your co-workers, your customers, your family, your church, your community? Do you make life easier? Are you pleasant? Do you just sell a service, or do you sell the beauty of the job? Do you let the customer realize that he is enhancing the beauty of the place -- and hence the value? Do you make your customers' place so attractive that neighbors will request your business? Does your family love you and respect you? If they do, you have achieved greatness. Are you involved in church and community affairs? They need leaders and directions -- these are times that try the hearts of men. Be a leader and be the difference of a better environment. There is so much good to be done -- strive to bring joy and hope -- not gloom, into the lives of others. To use a well-known motto, "It is better to light one candle than to curse the darkness."

Apply this to your everyday life. Communicate with people; often they are afraid to make the first move. Do you tip the scale to make it a better day for those people who come into contact with you? Remember you can be the difference. If people are down, lift them up. If people are up, compliment them. Mark Twain said, "A good compliment can last me for two months." At least you noticed -- you were the difference. Inspire people to compliment others; it's contagious. I like the attitude of the fellow who says, "All women are beautiful, some are more beautiful than others." Make people happy -- it's so easy. Lincoln said, "Die when I may, I want it said of me by those who knew me best, that I always plucked a thistle and planted a flower where I thought a flower would grow." Have you planted enough flowers -- have you ever seen anyone kick a flower?

There is so much beauty in this world. Enjoy it. Teach others to enjoy it. It will make you a different person. There are many people in this world who need you. You are the difference in their lives. You can make them miserable or you can make their lives worthwhile. Let people realize that they should count and enjoy their blessings. It is so easy to give a word of encouragement and love. It is so rewarding to see the response. In all your good efforts, it is gratifying to see the difference a kind remark will make. Ask yourself, 'are people better because they know me?'

Don't be John Average or Dick Mediocre -- be a leader even in a small way. Influence people to be better, do better, and live better. Someone once said, "I

expect to pass through this world but once. Any good, therefore, that I can do, or any kindness that I can show to my fellow creature, let me do it now -- for I shall not pass this way again."

Especially do we feel that one of our great responsibilities is to make fond memories for people -- especially children. It is our Godgiven duty to instruct, direct, and influence children in the ways of truth and happiness.

Our profession is one that is different. We work with the Great Architect and carry out His beautiful plan -- this poem tells it all:

Prayer for God's Good Earth

Father,
You looked on everything that you had made
and saw that it was good.
But we have squandered
The riches of creation.
We have laid the ax to the mighty
forests.
We have despoiled the green
hillsides
and wasted earth's mineral wealth.
We have fouled the air,
littered the countryside
and polluted lakes, streams and
oceans.
Voices have been raised to stop us
from squandering our inheritance.
May we heed them.
May we heal the earth.
And one day, may we look on our
planet
and say with pride,
once again,
"Behold, it is good."

So stop sometime and ponder how wonderful our vocation is. It helps the environment, it creates beauty. Keats said, "A thing of beauty is a joy forever." Your work with nature makes this a wonderful, beautiful world. Do you see the beauty around you? Walter Hagan said, "As I go through life I want to stop and smell the flowers."

You are the difference in every step of your work. As we in the industry say, "Our product is only as good as the applicator." If you put on a chemical or fertilizer too heavy, it will burn and cause damage; if applied too lightly, it will be ineffective. If not properly protected it can hurt flowers, plants, trees that received the dose in error. You again are the difference -- not only for yourself but your employer, who could easily lose the contract. Remember, no matter whose payroll you are on, you are working for yourself. Work to please others.

Adopt a positive attitude, about yourself, and your job. Have a personal individual commitment; have a game plan. Motivate yourself, do it better than anyone else. You are better than you think. Go two steps further in your plan, make it two points better. Thank God that you can envision what you and your work can do. Don't accept anything less than perfection, and when you finish your days labor look up and thank your maker for letting you be the difference.