

A Time to Remember

By Gary K. Carls CGCS

As I write this message the anniversary of September 11th has just passed and I heard a lot of amazing stories about events of the day and weeks immediately following the tragic events. Two main items really came into focus for me as I heard the stories of those that survived and the unfortunate ones who were not so lucky on that day. What really stood out was how people came together and focused on what they had to do to get through those days. I have read many different columns about how suddenly a lot of little things did not mean that much any more and everyone had the single focus of doing whatever they could to help save lives. One of the things I remember most about that day was the story my brother told me about the events in his life for that week. He works for United Airlines in Philadelphia and was moved to Newark airport on September 12th to help with the expected rush of passengers out of New York in the days after September 11th. He talked about the eerie feeling of spending two days in the airport with armed troops and no passengers. He was then switched back to Philadelphia when flights were resumed. For the next several days he and others working there dealt with most of the passengers who had been scheduled to fly out of New York on the 11th. There was a great deal of emotion when you combined the new fear of getting on a plane with the strong desire for people to get back home to their loved ones. Everyone had to pull their strongest emotions together to get through those days. On that day I think we all realized that nothing is as important as life and family.

For me it brought back into focus a column I had posted on my office walls several years ago by Bob Brame of the USGA. The point of the column was "do the best you can

do and then go home". In this business we often feel pressured to produce the best turf possible every day. Most of us have been around long enough to know that it will not happen every day. We work with a lot of elements that we don't control such as nature. We can do our best to try and manage them but at times things are just not going to go our way. If you stay at work that extra hour is it going to fix the damage caused by that irrigation failure when it was 105 degrees last week? Can you regrow that poa you lost to anthracnose in that extra hour? It is important to be there to do whatever you can, but at some point you've done all you can do and you have to let nature heal its' wounds. So do what you need to do to get through the tough times. Be open and communicate with your players about the problems and what you are doing to make things better and be there when you need to be. At the end of the day be comfortable that you have done your best and go home and be with your family.

The second main thought I had about September 11th was how important your family needs to be. In this business we all need to be supported by family and friends because it is a business that has no real schedule or timeline. Despite the best of planning I'm sure most of us have missed some family functions because of our jobs. Believe me, I never had intended to spend nights sleeping in my irrigation pumphouse when I first came to California because my system on our newly seeded golf course was not yet fully automated. Those long days spent prepping for some special event also took away from my family and friends and often meant I wasn't in a great mood when I did get home.



Friends often wondered how anyone could like a job where you have to get up at 5am every morning, earlier for special events, and couldn't go on a real vacation until it started to rain. Those of us in the business know what is so special about the early morning or late evening at the golf course. You know, when the players aren't there yet or have left for the day. That time alone out on the course as the sun is rising or setting is very special and why many of us love what we do so much. The challenge of working with nature inspires us every day to try and do a little better. You also have to know how special your family and friends are for starting to realize how important all of this is to you. You never know when you will lose your family or friends and that is why it is important to enjoy them while you have them. Spend every moment you have with them and enjoy life. Appreciate both their weaknesses and strengths as they do yours. As the holiday season approaches remember that this is the time most meant to be with those you truly care about. Make a little extra time this year and truly enjoy all the blessings of family and friends.

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