

THE FRONT OFFICE

OPINION PAGE

THE PRESSURE OF THE JOB



As a young golfer, I always pictured the superintendent's life as serene. The superintendent of the course I used to play lived in a small house on the grounds, went home for lunch and could be reached easily by his wife or kids if they needed him. The course was home to his family, not a remote workplace that they had to compete with for his attention. It seemed like the superintendent and his family had a nearly perfect existence.

As I grew up and had to pick a career of my own, I started to realize the flaws of my image of a superintendent's life. He faces the same

pressure to change as everyone else. In a society driven by progress, the thought of staying in one comfortable spot for an entire career is unrealistic. Upward mobility requires moves to bigger and more prestigious courses. To gain independence and a competitive salary, the superintendent is doing what he has to do, move off the course so he can market his skills to the highest bidder. It's hard to negotiate with a club when it owns the house you live in.

Moving off the course has apparently worked. Salaries have risen to the point that a career as a superintendent is more attractive. Some of the brightest college students are choosing golf course maintenance as a career.

The modern superintendent applies the latest turf management techniques to achieve standards previously considered unrealistic—with crews smaller than ever before. As a result, competition among superintendents for the high-paying jobs has become pretty fierce.

Superintendents, striving to compete for positions at elite courses, are working seven-day weeks during much of the year. It's not unusual for a superintendent to become so preoccupied with his job that he loses touch with his family. Unfortunately, when some superintendents reach their cherished goal as a well-paid superintendent at a premier course, they have lost their families along the way. It's a personal price paid by some top superintendents that is often overlooked.

I am concerned about the number of successful superintendents who are separated from their families. One of them recently kidded me that an abbreviation should be established to follow the names of superintendents who are divorced. Instead of C.G.C.S. (certified golf course superintendent), their initials would be D.G.C.S. (divorced golf course superintendent).

Being a superintendent will never be as simple as it used to be. The job has gotten bigger and more complicated. As the cost of constructing golf courses pushes through the \$10 million level, the owners require superintendents with more expertise. High tech has come to the golf course . . . and with high tech has come high pressure. Competition for the plum jobs has increased.

It's easy for greens committees who meet a few times each month or club managers who work normal hours to make demands on the superintendent. How often do they say, "The superintendent should do this right away," without truly understanding the amount of planning and work involved? It is precisely this kind of pressure that demands additional time and turns superintendents' hair white.

I admire and respect the superintendent who has a total commitment to his profession and his job. Maybe greens committees and club management could have a little more compassion for his private life.

Bruce Shank

EVENTS

CALENDAR

APRIL

27-29 Turf and Landscape Institute, Anaheim Convention Center, Anaheim, CA. Contact: Ed McNeill, 2492 East Mountain St., Pasadena, CA 91104. (818) 798-1715.

22-24 National Recreation & Park Association Regional Conference and Washington Recreation & Park Association State Conference, Spokane, WA. Contact: Bob Hudson, Cheney Parks & Recreation Dept., 520 Fourth St., Cheney, WA 99004.

26-29 National Forum on Marketing Leisure Services, Hyatt Regency Hotel, Cincinnati, OH. Contact: National Recreation & Park Association Marketing Forum, 650 W. Higgins Rd., Hoffman Estates, IL 60195. (312) 843-7529.

MAY

20 North Carolina Turf & Landscape Field Day, North Carolina State University Turf Field Center, Raleigh, NC. Contact: J. M. DiPaola, NCSU, Box 7620, Raleigh, NC 27695-7620. (919) 737-2657.

JUNE

18 Iowa Turfgrass Field Day, Horticultural Research Farm, Ames, IA. Contact: Dr. Michael Agnew, 105 Horticulture Bldg., Iowa State University, Ames, IA 50011. (515) 294-0027.

18 Turf Seed Field Day, Hubbard, OR. Contact: Tom Stanley, Turf Seed Inc., P.O. Box 250, Hubbard, OR 97032. (503) 981-9571.

24 Midwest Sports Turf Institute, College of Du Page, Glen Ellyn, IL. Contact Susan Glasgow, College of Du Page (312) 858-2800, Ext. 2770.