



CHIPS & PUTTS

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"Perfection is Only Marginally Acceptable"

by Virgil Robinson

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 chose 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 the theology, also, until recently, perfectionism ruled in the way I related to my Lord and Savior. If I could only do this 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 what the pressure can do to personalities, can do to marriages, can do to individuals, and I 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 a lot of questions. Will you help me piece this puzzle

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...this perfectionist mentality has affected three areas of my life - my personal relationships, my vocation, and my theology.

In this issue.....

- GCSAA and PDI
- Secretary/Treasurer Report
- Roundup Tidbits



President's Message.....

I guess the time for mild temperatures is finally over. We have nearly sixteen inches of snow on the ground, and they are calling for another one to three inches today. Now we have to worry about snowmobiles and sleigh riders! I'll take that over members calling about opening the course.

By the time this edition is out, the GCSAA Conference and show will be over. It is something all of you should attend. It is growing each year, and as you will read in future publications it is quite an event.

To hopefully answer some questions in regards to the GCSAA Annual Meeting and elections, I would like to express a few things. Each year the local chapters are given a list of voting members within their chapter. This list is comprised of all members who are both members of the GCSAA and the local. It lists the way each member votes, with his or her chapter, with another chapter or as an individual. Each year we pursue those members who vote individually, to get them to sign a proxy. Many of you have and we thank you. This year we also contacted GCSAA to receive a list of other GCSAA members within our region to pursue their vote. This also gives us a list of prospective new members. We have many PTGA members who are not members of the GCSAA. That said, those members are obviously not eligible to vote at the GCSAA election or by proxy. If you are not a member of the GCSAA... JOIN!

Who do we vote for anyway? We vote with the state of PA as a group for the most part. Annually a day or two before the election, each representative from the local chapters of Pennsylvania will sit together to discuss which way the votes should be distributed throughout the state. As many of you are aware, Sam Snyder, VII, is a GCSAA Board member and is running for the Secretary/Treasurer position. He is a native Pennsylvanian who now works in Delaware and still resides in PA. As in years past we will be informed at this meeting where our votes will benefit the state of Pennsylvania and Mr. Snyder the most. At that time the vote totals of each chapter are decided on where to be distributed. Obviously if there is a chapter which feels strongly towards one candidate versus another, their vote goes where they wish. We as a Board have decided to follow what is best for the state of PA, as we have in the past. Each GCSAA/PTGA member equals one vote. Each proxy signed equals one vote. All votes equal more for the state of PA. Thank you for the proxies.

We will be having a meeting in March this year at Pine Hills G.C. in Scranton. Our host will be Mr. Greg Kozar! I'm sure it will be a great day with or without snow! In April we will be back at Silvercreek C.C. with host Tony Grieco, CGCS. This will be a three way joint meeting with the Central PA and Philadelphia groups. The guest speaker will be a GCSAA representative.

Congratulations to Gary Phillips who is a Grandfather again! Gary's daughter and husband, Newswatch 16's weatherman Joe Snedeker, recently were blessed with their third child. Sounds like the son-in-law would be a good educational speaker...

See you all at the meetings!

Ron Garrison, CGCS



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From the Editor's Desk.....

Continued from the last issue is another article on "Perfection". The theme of this piece of work is focused on how a lot of us live and work our daily lives. Once again it is a classic that I have had in my hands for a number of years and believe it is worth reflecting upon from time to time.

Also in this issue is a summation of GCSAA's Professional Development Initiative (PDI). It is presented here to help give everyone an understanding of what it is all about. I'm sure there will be much to follow on PDI in the next 11 months, as we get closer to the convention in Dallas. In closing as always I welcome members' comments, questions and concerns about the newsletter, so feel free to contact me. Thank you!

Darrin Batsky



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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 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 through 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 ninth degree explaining what we do not know; it simply got tired of living. I do not hear the physician going to any 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 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 through 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 perfectionist 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 introspection 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? (Reprinted from: Mid-Atlantic GCS Newsletter)

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GCSAA & Chapter Delegates set Goals for new Professional Development Initiative

Last September, GCSAA and chapter delegates met in Lawrence, Kansas to discuss mandates, long-range goals, and short-range goals. What follows is an abridged version of the new Professional Development Initiative (PDI) that GCSAA is close to finalizing.

Membership Standards Resource Group (MSRG) members and consultants from the Franklin Covey Co., during a six-hour period, presented a history of the PDI; its goals, mission, and concepts; progress since 1996; current projects; and future plans.

The PDI is being undertaken to improve knowledge, skills, and abilities of the professional superintendent that will contribute toward improved playing conditions and enjoyment of the game. The success of the PDI will be measured by achieving:

- Increased salaries of golf course superintendents
- Enhanced job security of superintendents
- Intensified recognition by employers and influential golfers of the golf course superintendent as the key member of the golf course management team
- Improved job opportunities for superintendents
- Substantiated credentials that can be marketed to employers through improved playing conditions

Franklin Covey representatives demonstrated HR Web, software that supports and measures superintendents' professional development using this software, individuals complete a competency-based performance assessment that measures proficiency in golf course management.

Delegates viewed slides of a mock competency model. Once finalized, the model would be used to develop profiles for individual superintendents in order to provide guidance relative to competencies needed for their current job, a future job, member classification, and certification.

MSRG members shared a proposed model for a new classification system. The association will remain inclusive for all who wish to be members. However, there is a need to develop a brand that can be marketed to employers. Proposed requirements to acquire class-A status would include:

- Having a minimum of three years of experience as a golf course superintendent
- Completing a competency self assessment
- Completing a validation process for the assessment
- Maintaining a valid pesticide license, and

- Completing a nationally accredited two-year turf program or four-year degree from a college or university.

Proposed ongoing requirements to maintain a class-A status would include:

- A three-year renewal cycle
- Completing a self assessment once every 3 years
- A required amount of continuing education (to be determined through member input)
- Professional development (includes chapter and civic participation)

Just as class-A requirements would change, so would entry-level and ongoing requirements to maintain certification. The goal is to keep the certification program simple, manageable, and integrated with education. Entry-level requirements would include a minimum of three years as a class-A golf course superintendent member, testing at a higher proficiency level than class-A members, and completing the same formal education as class-A members. The ongoing requirements would be the same as class-A members, but at a higher level.

Grandfathering of current members into both a new membership classification system and changing requirements for certification were discussed. Members could potentially vote on these changes at the conference and show in Dallas in 2001. However, the requirements would not take effect until July 2002.

A part of the PDI includes redesigning the education program. Franklin Covey representatives are working with GCSAA staff to analyze current educational offerings identifying areas where more educational opportunities are needed to fill gaps, and developing new ways to deliver education to members. A faculty resource group was recently formed to recommend standards for faculty recruitment, training, faculty certification, and ongoing assessment.

A communication plan was developed to share concepts and ideas about the PDI with members and gather feedback during the next year. The plan includes:

- Presentations from MSRG members at chapter meetings from October 1999 through May 2000
- Publishing the schedule of chapter visits in *Newsline* and posting it on GCSAA's Web site
- Holding a town hall meeting at the 2000 conference and show in New Orleans
- Collecting member comments/questions via GCSAA

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communication tools (i.e. *Newsline, Golf Course Management*, the GCSAA Web site). A quarterly update of member feedback will be provided, and providing a complete copy of the presentation to the delegates on the GCSAA Web site

The MSRSG will present its recommendations at the 2000 Chapter Delegates Meeting. Delegates will be asked to provide feedback. The following questions, comments, and issues regarding the PDI were discussed between MSRSG members, chapter delegates, and Franklin Covey representatives. Note: *delegates' comments are printed in italics.*

- *Will there be an impact on membership dues?* At some point, there may be an impact on dues. The MSRSG has not specifically reviewed this issue.
- *Will there be an exam or measure for conducting an assessment of superintendents who apply for certification?* There will be a form of validation. Franklin Covey will develop a validation process for the Certification Committee to review.
- *Could a current class A member be reclassified to a class-B?* Yes, if that individual does not complete ongoing requirements.
- *Why allow grandfathering if all superintendents should adhere to higher standards?* Grand fathering is proposed to recognize work experience of current Class-A members. Proposed requirements are intended to provide a benchmark for what is needed for future superintendents to be successful. (All delegates support some form of grandfathering.)
- *Will members be provided an option to earn an on-line degree on the Internet by GCSAA?* No discussions are currently being held on this issue. However, GCSAA will work with institutions to provide guidance in curriculum development when requested and will seek to develop partnerships that provide assistance to our members.
- Franklin Covey discussed experiences of other companies working with the competency assessment model. Some examples of successes using the model include higher employee retention, higher customer satisfac-

tion, and enhancement of employee skills. Success depends on continuous updating of curriculum and matrix. The pitfalls occur when individuals do not participate in the assessment because they do not have interest or investment in professional development. Self-directed individuals complete the assessment and benefit from it

- *How will chapter and civic participation be monitored?* This requirement is intended to encourage members to serve in leadership positions at the chapter level and be more involved in their local associations. It supports chapter needs to recruit and involve more members. This may also serve as a motivator to members who need public speaking training and encouragement to serve as leaders. Some level of involvement at the chapter level will be mandatory, but there will be options. GCSAA will work with chapters to verify local involvement.
- A majority of delegates agreed that civic and chapter participation is a key component of professional development. It is a tool to enhance the image and professionalism of superintendents.
- A degree from a two-year certificate program is sufficient as long as an individual meets a minimum 800-hour criteria.
- *Should individuals with a 4-year degree in a non-turf-related Field be permitted to apply for certification?* The MSRSG members discussed this issue extensively and reached a consensus that a superintendent with experience who wishes to become certified may do so by earning the education credits required. In order to become certified, an individual must have a minimum of three years of experience as a golf course superintendent and be a CCSAA class-A member for a at least three years.
- *Why should class-A in embers be required to maintain a pesticide license, but not B or C?* Most states require one individual on the golf course property to hold this license, but it is preferred that the superintendent also holds a license.
- *Will GCSAA bylaws need amendment if members ap-*

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prove the PDI? Yes, any changes in membership classification require a bylaws change.

- It is advantageous to use the web site interface for competency assessment. However, a paper version will be available to those who do not have access to the Internet or prefer the hard copy option.
- *If members do not approve the PDI, does the MSRC have a back-up plan?* Because they provide good career planning and educational tools, the HR Web and competency assessment are likely to be implemented, regardless of member approval of the membership class requirements. The proposed membership classification changes are the only part of the PDI that will require member approval.
- *Will a currently certified superintendent that does not have a four-year degree be required to get one in order to maintain certification?* No. However, future members that apply for certification would be required to have a two-year turf or four-year other degree under the proposal.
- *If a superintendent does not keep up with ongoing requirements while re-certifying, will that individual lose certified status?* Yes. The individual must collect all required CEUs and successfully complete a simple self-assessment to maintain certification.
- *Did the MSRG consider playing the game of golf as a requirement for being certified or maintaining a class-A status?* No. Knowledge of the game and rules of golf are an important part of the profession, but the MSRG has not discussed playability.
- *Currently, a certified superintendent is not required to have formal education. Current certified members were able to use their experience and collect CEUs to maintain certification. In the future, the proposal is that a formal degree will be required for those applying to the program. Class-A members should be given consideration for previous experience. Class-A mem-*

bers that declare intention to work toward certification by July 2002 will be allowed to forego formal education requirements until 2007. They will be required to meet all other requirements for certification.

- A majority of chapter delegates were in favor of implementing a minimal standard that class-A members must complete a 2-year turf program or a 4-year non-turf degree.
- A majority of chapter delegates said a 4-year non-turf degree is acceptable as a class-A requirement
- *How do you validate the results of the competency mode4 when the responses are subjective at best?* Franklin Covey representatives will further define and develop specific measures to validate the assessments. Examples include: working with a mentor on completing the assessment (i.e. general manager or owner).
- *When an individual advances to general manager or higher, does the individual move beyond a class-A status, and if so what occurs?* GCSAA committees will discuss individual career tracks.
- *What is the timeline for educational upgrades?* New seminars and educational offerings will be provided at the 2001 conference. New programs and alternative delivery mechanisms for education will be provided in the following three years.
- *There's very little difference between a class-A member and certified superintendent, according to the competency chart. The difference falls within proficiency levels on the competency models and the amount of ongoing continuing education and professional development. The Certification Committee will review certification requirements, work with Franklin Covey on redesign of the program, and make a recommendation to the Board of Directors within two years.*



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A message from your golf course superintendent and GCSAA



PTGA Secretary/Treasurer Report – Feb/Mar 2000

As I have mentioned in the past, the Pocono Turfgrass Association has set up a Scholarship and Research fund. Recently, we invested this money (\$8,750) into an Oppenheimer Fund through our accountant. It is our intention to continue to grow this fund until it is self sustaining, meaning that the dividend produced by the fund equals the amount paid out to the scholarship annually. At that time, the Board will have to decide whether to continue contributing to the fund and what to do with any excess dividends, increase the scholarship, roll it back into the fund, start a second scholarship or separate research donation.

I am excited about the immediate and long-term financial stability of our Association. Through careful planning and monitoring, we have put ourselves in a good position. Please do not misconstrue this statement to mean we are making a big profit. We have and always will budget at break even numbers; I'm simply saying these are break even numbers that actually work.

Thank You,
Tony Grieco, CGCS

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POCONO ROUNDUP

NEWS AND VIEWS FROM THE POCONO
TURFGRASS ASSOCIATION



Congratulations!

Congratulations to **Jack Patterson** on receiving his 25 year pin from the GCSAA. Go for 25 more!

Congratulations and Good Luck to the following:

- **Charles Kitchnefsky** on becoming superintendent at Elmhurst C.C.
- **Jason Barndt** on assuming the responsibility of Country Club of the Poconos, as well as his position at Fernwood Resort.
- **Aaron Kramer** on his superintendent's position at the new Windsor Heights in Buckhorn.
- **Fran Davitt** has taken over at Flying Hills in Reading.
- **Mark McCormick** has been promoted to superintendent at Huntsville Golf Club.



Winter Observations



With the unusually warm fall weather we experienced, a great deal of poa Annua was observed germinating well into the "Winter" season. This, being opportunistic, was seen filling in voids that were left from the summer drought. So be aware of greater populations of poa.

The Dog & Pony season is over, so it is now time to re-load on plans, products, and procedures for the upcoming season. I hope we all had the chance to see old friends and view new products and procedures for 2000.

Good Luck in the upcoming Season!

A REMINDER:

**March Meeting - March 20, 2000
Pine Hills Golf Course**



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