RESPECT

they richly deserve

BY BRIDGET FALBO

Even when she’s changing a mower reel or spraying pesticide on a fairway, people still don’t believe Lynn Richert is a superintendent.

Even while sitting in her office — the superintendent’s office, mind you — at Angushire GC in St. Cloud, Minn., sales people stop by and ask Richert where her boss is. Telephone callers frequently ask for Mr. Richert.

To Richert, it’s a frustrating part of being a trailblazer, but one she cheerfully accepts to do a job she loves.

"[People] assume it’s a guy in my position," Richert says.

Statistics from the GCSAA make clear that people’s confusion about Richert is at least understandable. GCSAA reports that only 153 women belong to the organization, which has more than 20,000 members. That’s right — women constitute less than 1 percent of its membership. And GCSAA has been criticized for using the generalized pronoun "he," rather than a more gender-neutral rendition, in its literature.

Getting into such a male-dominated profession is not easy for women. Younger women have few role models with which to identify, and that stunts the development of female mentors so vital to the development of the next generation of women superintendents.

But there is hope on the horizon. Those GCSAA numbers are changing. Thanks to the efforts of Richert and others like her, the idea of women joining the ranks of superintendents is not as unusual as you think. In his position as director of media relations for the GCSAA, Jeff Bollig says he has noticed a change in the field.

"More women are getting into the profession because of all the turfgrass programs [at schools], more exposure of golf in the media and more females playing the game," Bollig says. "With the turfgrass degree, you don’t have to grow up on a course."

As in many fields these days, an academic background helps launch careers.

"[In the past], the profession of greenkeeping was learned," says Jan Beljan, currently a golf course architect with Fazio Design Group and previously an assistant superintendent for six years at Kingwood CC in Kingwood, W.Va. "It was an apprenticeship. In the past few years, much more emphasis has been put on agronomics as a science, and anybody can learn the job if they

Continued on page 24
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### Percent of Diseased Bentgrass

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Treatment</th>
<th>Percent of Diseased Bentgrass</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Untreated</td>
<td>27.5A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aliette 80WG + Daconil Ultre®</td>
<td>6.5C</td>
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<tr>
<td>Aliette 80WG + Fore 80WP</td>
<td>4.3C</td>
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### Turf Quality Rating

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<tr>
<td>Untreated</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aliette 80WG + Daconil Ultre®</td>
<td>6.03B</td>
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<td>Aliette 80WG + Fore 80WP</td>
<td>7.27AB</td>
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</table>

Treatments made every 14 days; ratings taken 71 days after first treatment. Quality ratings based on 1-9 scale. Numbers followed by same letters are not statistically different.

Source: Martin, Clemson University, 1996

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Woman On a Mission

A turfgrass professor told me that golf course maintenance was too tough for a woman. That only fueled my desire to be the best superintendent possible.

By Kathy Antaya, CGCS

I've always loved rainy days in summer — especially the day-long, soaking kind. As a kid, I would joyfully splash through the puddles, unplug the street gutter grates and watch the water spiral down. I refused to come in out of the rain until I was drenched and the puddles drained away.

Today, as a superintendent, I perform that same routine, but now I get paid for it. By the way, I still love rainy days.

I get the morning chores done, sweep the shop and send the crew home early. Then the fun really begins.

I jump in the cart to inspect the course, draining every puddle I can find. Every superintendent has his or her own secret passions about a golf course — the perfect mowing pattern, a spiral-raked bunker, and the sound of sprinklers throwing water. What a great career we have chosen.

As an 18-year-old college student, I longed to be a superintendent. I met other students at school equally enthusiastic about turfgrass management.

We helped each other through difficult classes and group-studied for most exams — even job hunting became a

Continued from page 21

have a desire and study the science, learn the equipment and have the skills to manage people.”

But agronomy still hides in the agriculture department, making it difficult for women to access the often male-dominated programs. From her experience in school, Ann Weaver doesn't think colleges do enough to interest women in the field. Weaver, a former superintendent, oversees the municipal courses in Sacramento, Calif., as golf manager for Capital City Golf.

"At the college level, [the profession] is not presented in a way that reaches a lot of the female students," Weaver notes.

Joe Vargas, professor of botany and plant pathology at Michigan State University, agrees there's a lack of recognition of the program by women.

"This university has had a population of 50 percent women and 50 percent men for many years, and our turf program has been here for 30 years. But it is only in the last 10 years that women have entered the program," he says.

Karl Dannenberger, professor of horticulture and crop science at The Ohio State University, acknowledges that women may find themselves in the minority if they look into turf management programs.

"With 30 students in a class and only three women, it can be intimidating," Dannenberger says. "When I bring in superintendents to talk to the class, they're always male because there are so few women in the profession. There are not a lot of women superintendents, so there are not a lot of role models."

Determination to succeed

Despite these handicaps, some women became superintendents through a determination to work at something they love. When Zelda Baxter joined the GCSAA in 1956 at the age of 45 as the first woman in the organization, she laid the groundwork for other women to follow.

Clay Loyd, a past communications director for the organization who is currently writing a book on its history, reports that the subject of her membership was discussed and debated by the executive committee. But his research indicated no evidence her admission was ever in doubt.

Baxter had a long association with the business of golf as a pro shop operator before taking subsequent superintendent positions in both Iowa and Illinois. She reportedly felt accepted by the association, even though it was dominated by men, and said one of her proudest achievements was having trained nine young men who went on to become successful superintendents.

As with Baxter, women have often apprenticed at courses as irrigation technicians, course crew members and assistant superintendents and view themselves as well-qualified for the jobs, no matter their gender.

Continued on page 26
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Continued from page 24

I didn't see myself as a female or others as males. I saw myself as a professional just doing my job," Beljan says.

Weaver didn't realize how few women were in the field until she entered the job market after college in the late 1970s.

"When I was in school, I believed whatever I put my mind to, I could do, and I never saw [my gender] as an issue," she says. "I never once felt that I couldn't do the work. Although sometimes I may have been tested to see if I could do the job physically, like hand mowing and weeding, I enjoyed being physically tired at the end of the day."

The first day Andrea Bakalyar reported to work as a golf course crew member, she said she was hooked immediately. Since her father once told her that he didn't think girls could work at golf courses, Bakalyar wrote on her application that she could work as hard as any man, just in case her father's comments reflected the prevailing attitude. When Bakalyar told friends and family she was going to school in turf management, they warned her she wouldn't get as far nor move up as fast as a man. After four years working on courses and earning her golf course management certificate from the University of Maryland last spring, however, she now is superintendent for Montgomery CC in Laytonsville, Md.

Bakalyar attributes her success to a love of the work and her dedication, not that she set out to prove a woman could do the job.

"Some people say it drove me because I was a woman and had something to prove," Bakalyar says. "They don't understand that it was because I found something I really liked, so I had the drive [to succeed], which possibly opened doors for me."

Find a mentor

Many women superintendents credit their success to the encouragement of a male superintendent who taught them the skills required for the job. Denise Kispert, superintendent of Highland GC in St. Paul, Minn., recalled how her first supervisor, Bob Grew,
had total confidence in her abilities. Grew supervised Kispert at St. Paul’s Nine Hole GC.

“He just said, ‘You can do it,’ and he taught me how to run tractors and aerators
and loaders,” Kispert says appreciatively. “He spent the time to teach me. He would
take me out on the greens and say, ‘Look at this disease. Look at the weather condi-
tions,’ and it really sparked my interest.”

Richert believes she was chosen for her present position because of her mentor,
Bruce Klinkner, then superintendent of Oak Glen CC in Stillwater, Minn.

“He trained me to work on the irrigation system,” Richert says. “He wanted some-
one who was a perfectionist and who he wouldn’t have to check up on all the time.
He spent the time to train me in on all the equipment.”

At her small private course, Richert needs mechanical knowledge and experience
because she has to be plumber, carpenter and mechanic as well as turf manager.

Before women storm the walls of turf management schools, however, they should
understand the sacrifices that can accompany the career of successful superintendents.
They work long hours, and the time demands can strain even the strongest family
ites. It takes a strong personality to handle such strains, so a woman should carefully
examine the choices a career as a superintendent may force her to make.

“The absolute physical demands of time influences anybody who goes into the
profession,” Beljan says.

At one point in Stephanie Tannone’s college career, an advisor told her to go into
horticulture rather than turf management because that’s what women do. Tannone
pursued turf management nevertheless.

“I’m glad I decided to do what I did and I like where I’m at,” she says.

She manages an oceanside municipal course in Palm Beach, Fla., and has two chil-
dren, ages 6 and 18 months. Though in her first few years at the municipal course it
was difficult dealing with the lack of money for improvements, she realized city-owned
courses allowed her the flexibility to raise a family. There are tradeoffs, of course, but
Tannone says she’s happy with the choice she has made.

“We all want to be at the big club and making all the money, but I’m much hap-
pi er here and I like what I’m doing,” she says. “[Private superintendents] spend a lot
more time on the course than I do, and I don’t work on the weekend. The avenue I
took with a municipal course probably helped me.”

Tannone is a realist about the necessity of being on hand for weather-related
problems and sometimes working through long shifts, but believes her chosen profession
also provides a wonderful backdrop for her children’s lives.

“It’s a great place for my kids to grow up; my 6 year old has been playing golf since
he was 2,” Tannone says.

Women superintendents believe their gender is not a factor in how they perform
their jobs, and they feel they receive equal pay and enjoy positive support from male
colleagues. With the rate of golf course construction at an all-time high, more qualified
superintendents will be needed to run them. Danneberger believes that opens up new op-
portunities for women, and the profession improves when a work place diversifies.

“The greater diversity in a profession just makes it a better profession,” Vargas says.
“T’m optimistic about the future because I’ve not had one woman come back to me
to say she didn’t get a job because she was a woman.”

Richert laughs off the mistaken identities her gender causes. “Once they know who
I am, there’s no problem,” she says.

She’s happy to be in a job she cherishes.

“When I graduated from college with my teaching degree and the superintendent
position opened, I knew my heart was in golf course maintenance,” Richert says. “It’s
what I want to do, and every morning I’m excited to get back on the golf course.”

Bridget Falbo is a freelance writer who lives in Albertville, Minn.
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**Terrific Twosome**

Jim and Kim Shine prove superintendent couples can have it all

By Frank H. Andorka Jr., Associate Editor

They work vigorous schedules. Long hours prevent them from returning home for long periods of time. They are always on call. Are we talking about doctors? No, we’re talking about superintendents.

So who would want to marry a superintendent? Another superintendent, of course.

Jim and Kim Shine, of Jacksonville, Fla., say superintendents need love and understanding, and no one recognizes the challenges of the profession better than a fellow superintendent. Kim is currently superintendent at the Windsor Parke GC in Jacksonville. Jim is now a landscape professional with the Jacksonville Electric Authority, but spent more than 20 years at various levels of superintendency at Sawgrass CC and Cimarrone GC in Jacksonville, as well as being director of golf operations for Arvida Corp.

“Being a superintendent can be an emotionally stressful experience for anyone, so it’s great to have someone who can always relate to what you’re going through,” Kim says. “If you’re having problems at work, it’s always good to have someone you can bounce ideas off of and, in a worst-case scenario, actually come out on the course with you and help you figure out solutions.”

“We still do that, even though I’m not a superintendent anymore,” Jim says. “It’s nice to have someone who will tell you what they really think and not pull punches about what mistakes you have made. It’s refreshing.”

Kim worked at the now Oakbridge GC as an operations crew member in 1980 when Arvida Corp., of Ponte Vedra Beach, Fla., bought the course. Jim was director of golf operations for Arvida at the time. The superintendent at Oakbridge GC had promoted Kim to be his assistant. When the superintendent left in 1980, Jim promoted Kim into the lead job. For five years, Jim was Kim’s boss.

“At first, we were just thrown together as a matter of chance, but we got to know each other pretty well during that time,” Jim says.

Kim, a widow, liked Jim’s sense of humor. Jim, recently divorced, liked Kim’s presence and self-confidence. Kim says Jim took the time to train her in all aspects of being a superintendent, and that he still promotes the cause of women in the industry.

“He was one of the first superintendents to hire women on his crews at Sawgrass, and he has done a lot to promote the cause of women in the industry,” Kim says. “That’s one of the things that makes him so special.”

“Like anyone else, we just fell in love,” says Jim, who married Kim in 1990. “It’s obvious from our choice of careers that we already had a lot in common, and it just seemed a natural fit.”

Kim, who served as the president of the Northern Florida chapter of the GCSAA from 1993 to 1996, says Jim’s experience in course construction — Jim helped Ed Seay design...