

# The Superintendent's Wife

By BILL GULLICKS  
Bellwood Oaks Golf Course

**I**t's that time of year again where the golf course is running on all cylinders. The adrenaline is flowing through our veins 24 hours a day. I have butterflies in my stomach, and my wife is dealing with her own pains as the snow melts and a new season of golf is about to begin. The 'divorce open' (my wife's favorite saying) has just begun in many marriages across the world.

With the shocking divorce rate among superintendents, I wanted to step back and recognize the Super Wives in so many of our lives who choose to stand beside us and keep our families ticking throughout the golf season. My Super Wife, Kristen, is an elementary teacher, so our work seasons are com-

pletely opposite of each other. She always says that we have a love/hate relationship with our careers. She loves mine during the winter and hates it over the summer, while I feel just the opposite. Despite these differences, I've found it interesting how many other superintendent's wives are school teachers. The two occupations must complement each other.

When the golf course is in full swing, we are at its beck and call. We are checking irrigation systems during the evening hours, working weekends, attending meetings and, of course, dealing with unexpected occurrences (ie.,

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Mother Nature). Our work day is never 9-5 five days a week. We have the mentality to work until we have the course the exact way we envision it. Some days we will work from 6:00 a.m. to 2:30 p.m., but more often than not our days will last until the early evening. That is when those Super Wives in our lives gently remind us that "It is just GRASS!"

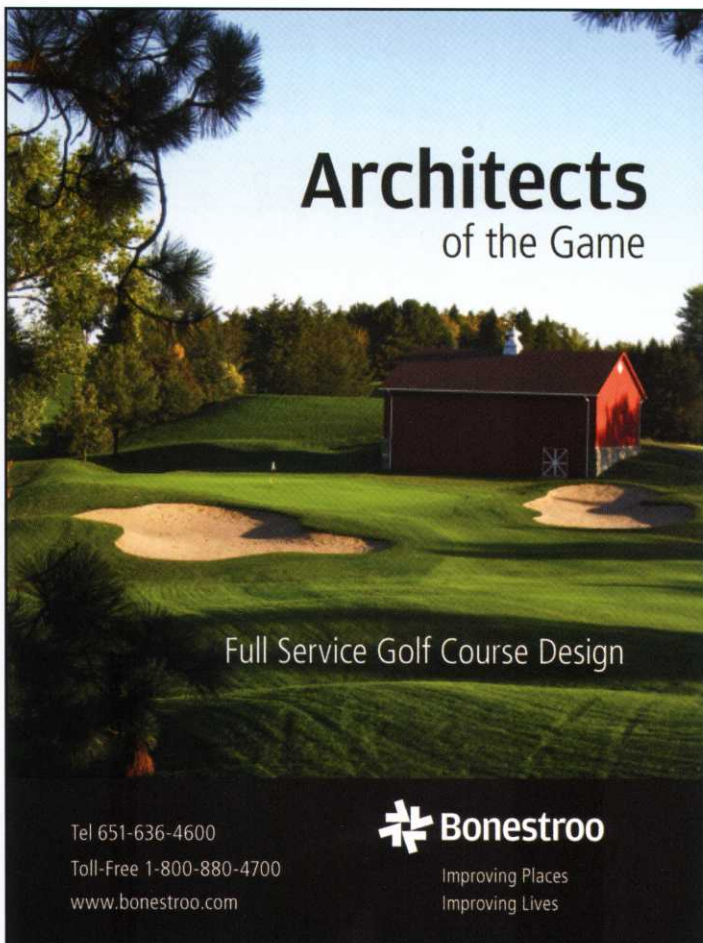
When things do get busy during the "dog days" of summer it is nice to have someone to share our frustrations with, whether it is simply a personnel issue, equipment problem or the weather. The ability to share with and get input from someone we truly trust is valuable in keeping us going.

Over the years my wife has come to the realization that there is no such thing as a schedule in a superintendent's life. When I call to let her know when I will be home, she simply asks, "Is that real time or golf course time?" Supposedly "golf course time" tends to run one to two hours longer than actual time. I guess it is her way of dealing with those frustrating, long days when she receives my "good news" phone call.

Early on in our marriage I made a mistake that I will never be able to live down. I put "the grass" first. We were expecting our second child and had just visited the doctor for the first time. He informed the proud parents that their child would be due on September 5th. Immediately my wheels started turning and I had already figured out that it would be around Labor Day weekend. What??? That is the time that we aerify the greens.

On the way home I turned to my wife and said, "Let's hope that you don't have to deliver on your due date, since that is the day scheduled for aerifying the greens." She gave me that "I'm too tired, so just call yourself an idiot look" and never responded. Abigail came along on September 9th after the greens looked great and we had moved on to other fall projects, but to this day I still hear her tell the Great Aerifying Story of 1995 to all her friends.

(Continued on Page 7)



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(Continued from Page 6)

During the golf season, my wife does a fabulous job of keeping everyone going in the right direction. She has learned how to keep things balanced at home with and without me around. We have four children that range from high school to kindergarten that fill the calendar up each month with piano lessons, sports, church activities, choir concerts, doctor/dentist appointments and many other things. I feel lucky that my career hasn't stood in the way of my children enjoying family times to the fullest. Several times over the summer my wife doesn't hesitate to hook up our 23-foot camper to the back end of our 3/4 ton Suburban and head off on a camping adventure. I try to take advantage of two camping trips each year as well as traveling somewhere warm during the winter.

This past winter my wife decided that she would like to attend The Golf Industry Show. She wasn't going for the equipment or speakers, unless they were planning on presenting pool side. During the trip she didn't hesitate on asking questions and was amazed at all the different



The Gullicks family in Cancun.

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vendors, distributors and suppliers who support the superintendents. It gave her a new perspective on what my career involves, and she was able to put faces to many names.

She had to laugh at how easy it was to spot a superintendent from far away. If it wasn't the blue blazers or golf shirts that gave us away, it was the trendy name tags. You can imagine her excitement as she received her own name tag for the trade show. She is already talking about San Diego in two years and looking forward to the Minnesota Hospitality Night.

During the past few months, I attempted to become a Super Dad and gave my wife a much-needed break. I took over her daily routines so she was able to read the paper, drink some tea and head out the door at 7:00 am. That is when I truly understood how much I take for granted during those long, summer months. Every day I had to get the kids ready in the morning, drive them to school, pick up for after school activities, cook supper, and so much more. And all of this while I was trying to get myself to work each day, which some days seemed impossible.

As I look ahead at the golf season and glance back at the past few months, I now understand how my career changes my wife's daily routine. So as the sun starts shining and the days get longer remember to thank your Super Wife for all she does during the

busy season *before* it begins, not after.

Happy Anniversary on May 14th Kristen, just in case I forget or I'm on "golf course" time.

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