

HONEY, YOUR SUPPER IS ON THE TABLE

By Suzy Fredrickson

Talk given at Midwest G.C.S.A. Clinic at Medinah

I made up my mind I was going to be scared or nervous today, but it's a woman's privilege to change her mind, so please bear with me.

I've been asked to tell you my experiences as the wife of a golf course superintendent—so here goes!

When we were first married I wanted to be able to converse with my husband about the things that interested him, and, of course, impress him. One of my tricks was to steam open the "Golf Course Reporter," look up the answers to "Tom Mascaró's Quiz," then seal the envelope again. Boy, was he surprised when I was able to solve the problem correctly later.

I also learned to throw around words like pythium, fescue, helmethisporium and poa annua. It helps to know the meanings, but it wasn't always necessary.

I guess all you superintendents are tired in the evening, and my husband is not an exception.

We would often sit watching television, and I would glance over at him occasionally, very contented with the fact that he was enjoying the program with me.

One evening we were watching the weather report and Harry Volkman had just predicted two weeks of 90° and over temperatures with extremely high humidity. I looked over at Harold with my most sympathetic look, getting ready to console him, only to find him smiling, the same smile he had been smiling so many times before.

It was then that I discovered his secret. He had learned to fall asleep with a smile on his face, and every once in a while he would nod his head, as if in agreement. I had thought he was a captive audience, and all the while he was probably dreaming about his love affair with Kentucky blue grass.

When we were expecting our son I heard Harold bragging about the nursery he was planning. Needless to say, I was thrilled that he was taking an active interest in our blessed event.

That just proves how naive I was, for I soon found that the nursery he was planning wasn't a baby nursery at all. It was a sod nursery.

I still say it was fortunate that the baby was born at Little Company of Mary Hospital and Harold was working next door at Evergreen Country Club, otherwise I have a sneaking suspicion he wouldn't have seen his son until he was old enough to introduce himself.

I hope I never have a baby that's born in June, July or August, because I'm sure everyone in the hospital will think I'm an unwed mother.

Harold spends so much time at the golf course that our son thinks Mommy and David live in our house and Daddy lives at the course, or "Daddy's House," as he calls it.

Yes, we've suffered through many frustrating experiences, but the worst was the "Garbage Affair."

Every Wednesday I hated to get out of bed because I knew that Harold had forgotten to put the garbage cans out at the curb for the weekly garbage pick-up. That meant I had to lug them out there or start my own garbage dump.

At first I made large signs saying, "Harold, put out the garbage." I placed them in very conspicuous

places — the mirror in the bathroom; taped to the inside front door; and completely covering the windshield of the car.

But, as we all know, superintendents seem to have so much on their minds, that my signs went unnoticed or forgotten.

I even threatened to load the full garbage cans into the car, drive out and dump them on his first green. But, after thinking things out carefully, I decided to pay an extra \$1.25 a month to the garbage man, have him come in to the back yard and pick up the cans, and save our Happy Home.

We have also had many mysteries occur, but the most mystifying of all was the missing meat thermometer. It happened during a time of crisis, a crisis at our house at the onset of some form of turf disease. This particular time I spent a good hour searching for my roast thermometer.

I finally discovered, after some crafty detective work, that it was stuck in the middle of No. 4 green.

Well, you take a sick person's temperature—why not a sick green?

I must admit I was worried about using it in a roast after that. I had visions of us coming down with helmethisporium.

The meat thermometer isn't the only thing I've sacrificed for the cause! When Harold decided to rebuild one of his green, he found that it would be helpful to make a model out of clay first. The main problem, however, was finding a base for its construction.

After much consideration he decided that a sterling silver steak platter, one of my most treasured wedding gifts, was exactly the right shape. I reluctantly consented to its use after receiving a promise that it would be returned, good as new, as soon as it served its purpose.

That was four years ago, and I'm still serving steak on a paper plate. It seems that the model turned out so well that it was a shame to dismantle it.

I also have only four salad forks left out of 10. I was told they are perfect for repairing ball marks on greens.

I think that summer is the worst time of the year for a superintendent's wife. I've often complained the standard complaints that I'm sure you've all heard more than once.

"I'm lonesome"

"You never take me any where"

"I think you love that stinking golf course more than me" and

"I never have anybody to talk to but the baby, the dog and the butcher"! Sound familiar?

The most ironic situation that happened was the time I was told we were going to view the Fourth of July festivities at the club. I was thrilled! A lot of people to meet and talk to, and a chance to spend an evening with my husband.

When we went there we stopped at the maintenance building and, as usual, some problem arose that needed Harold's immediate attention. Off he went—and there I sat for two hours with my little boy, two doberman pincers and seven Mexican women who had come to watch the fireworks. You guessed it! They didn't speak a word of English and the only Spanish I know is "La Cacaraca."

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(Continued from preceding page)

Oh, I've spent some exciting summers since I married into this wonderful world of golf. I figured being married to a golf course superintendent we would have, without a doubt, the most enviable lawn in the neighborhood. Boy, was I mistaken!

When I said, "Let's fertilize the lawn," he said, "Why? You only have to cut it more often." When I said, "Let's kill the weeds," he said, "Why kill them? They're green, aren't they?" And in the fall when I said, "Let's rake the leaves," he said, "Why rake them. I'll mulch them in the spring when I mow the grass."

The most enviable lawn in the neighborhood belongs to our neighbor. He's a school teacher!

I guess everyone of you gentlemen has had some kind of trouble with your night waterman. But they have personally become my most unnerving type of people. They have ruined so many Saturday nights for me that I figured if I can't beat 'em, I guess I'd better join 'em!

Every Saturday in the summer, I have my hair done, get a baby sitter and we go to the golf course. I end up watching television with the night watchman, or bouncing around in the jeep, ruining my hair-do with the mist from the sprinklers.

Well, at least it's a night out, and if I'm lucky, we stop for a beer and a hamburger on the way home, or between sets.

Saturday night isn't the only outing we have in the summer. We frequently take a ride in the country, supposedly to see nature's beauty, but it's really amazing how many golf courses we "just manage" to pass. I guess there's no getting away from it!

I bet I can tell you the name and superintendent of every golf course in the Chicago area! I might even be able to tell you whether they have watered fairways or not.

There are many advantages in being married to a golf course superintendent. The convention, for an example, is something I look forward to all year. At my first convention I found that there weren't too many wives that I knew. I felt sorry for poor Harold, because all the other guys were free in the evening to shoot the bull, play cards, or go out and view some of the local color—a red-headed belly dancer, if I remember right.

Last year more wives were there and there was always something for everybody to do. I hope that this year will be better than ever, and it will be if more of you fellas bring your better half along.

The convention isn't the only advantage in my position. Every Christmas we are given many lovely gifts from the firms and salesmen that Harold does business with. I'll admit one year they did present a problem though. We received three ten-pound hams. We had ham and eggs, baked ham, broiled ham, ham salad, and ham sandwiches. Not that I don't like ham, I love it, but I sure wish someone would have given us a turkey! That's not a hint, by the way, I don't know what I'd do with three turkeys!

Speaking of food, I have reduced so many good pieces of meat to lumps of charcoal because I've tried to keep dinner warm in the oven. I've often asked the question, "What time will you be home, honey," only to be answered with, "I'll be home when I get there." It's awfully hard to plan a meal that won't turn to stone when you try to keep it warm in the oven until nine o'clock in the evening. Usually we

have such a late dinner because of some problem out at the golf course. More than likely it's some kind of labor problem.

Lately Harold has been talking about female labor as an answer to his problem. I'm not too sure I'll like that, unless, of course, I can help select the crew. After all, it's the big, strong girls who are six feet tall and weigh 200 pounds that are going to be able to do the most work. A pretty face may prove to be a dangerous distraction to the male laborers.

I'm sure many of you have found that a camera is one of your most useful tools. I know we must have at least 3,000 slides. When Harold started to show an interest in photography, I encouraged him, all the while figuring how many pictures we would have of our offspring. We bought two of the best 35mm cameras, flash attachment, tripod, viewer, projector, sorter, visual screen, lenses, and a storage case for housing the slides.

As I said before, we have approximately 3,000 slides. We have slides of greens mowers, aerifiers, sprayers, stacks of fertilizer, holes in the ground, busted branches, not to mention puddles of water, and five smiling mexicans holding a dead deer.

We do have, however, one slide of our son, and guess where he is—on the nursery I referred to earlier—his father's sod nursery.

HELP IN OUR AREA

This is the second resume of the men that are in our area that you can call on for help.

Name: Bruce Johnson

Employer: Cooperative Extension Service, University of Illinois

Address: 213 West Wesley — Suite 201
Wheaton, Illinois 60187

Phone: 312-665-0598

Title: DuPage County Assistant Farm Adviser

Debrees: B. S. Ornamental Horticulture, University of Illinois, 1964. M. S. Plant Pathology, University of Illinois, 1966.

Residence: Wheaton, Illinois

Since people are incurring more and more leisure time during these days of automation, they are spending a great deal of this extra time working in their yards and enjoying more outdoor living along with more GOLFING. This increased outdoor living can readily be seen by the extensive landscaping of new shopping centers, malls, and city beautification programs.

As these people devote more time to their yard, they begin to realize there is more to having a picturesque yard than just cutting the grass every week or two. They begin to recognize the fact that many problems can and do arise in trying to maintain trees, shrubs, lawns, and flower beds properly.

Thus, part of my time will be allocated to working with these people which include the homeowner, the nurserymen, the garden center operator, the florist, and the golf course superintendent in DuPage County with their problems concerning plant material. Since my education, training and experience has been mostly with ornamental trees, shrubs, shade trees, and plant diseases, I would be most happy to render my services in the area of horticulture and plant pathology to the golf course superintendents in DuPage County.