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I knew what I was getting myself into. It was 1978 when he went straight from the prom to Cog Hill without first going home to sleep, and I knew. You see, it was already 3 a.m., and he couldn't be late for work. In another two hours, he should be changing cups, mowing greens, etc., and otherwise begin to learn this trade that would consume his life eternally.

As a golf course superintendent's wife, I consider myself lucky in a lot of ways. It takes an ambitious man to put in the kind of hours that he does. It also takes a man who loves his work. Sending him out to spend the day doing something he hated in order to support his family would be a tremendous guilt trip for me. Instead, he is doing what he loves to do and is constantly rewarded by the progress he sees. From April to November, he is there to see his results seven days a week.

As you know, any wife of a superintendent has to deal with her husband sacrificing family time in order to be at his golf course making sure everything runs smoothly. It's not only his job on the line, it is also his name in the business. Any of you who

The Ultimate "Golf Widow"

have gotten married in the summer and now have to spend all of your anniversaries at home know what I mean! If any of your children were born in the summer, I hope you had loving, caring people around to help out. Getting your husband to take time off during the golf season for ANYTHING (besides actually getting to play golf) is totally impossible. That family camping trip when the kids are out of school is virtually nonexistent, unless you're into taking them yourself. This is not a bad idea. We have built some really great memories over the years.

The fact is, if I want to have a life in the summer, I'm on my own because my husband is always going to be at work. There is a positive side to his work schedule though. Because his day begins and ends so early, he is able to spend time with the kids.

We wives see very little of our husbands during "the season." You really have to work hard at creating quality time. Unless you're one of those wonderful women who gets up before the crack of dawn to make breakfast for her man, the first time you see him will be after work. This can be dangerous. He is tired, dirty, grumpy, and stressed out. He wants to eat, take a shower, and he's hoping he can get "Seinfeld" in before he falls asleep. Don't let this "end of the day" image become who he is to you. He must be pleasant sometime during the day, or he wouldn't have a job. Here are a few tips that I've discovered.

I suggest shocking him in the morning with a fresh pot of coffee and a smiling face. (Caution: I don't do this very often. If I spoil him, I'll be locked into getting up

every day.) He won't know what to think, and we might even strike up a conversation. If I want to talk to him at all, **I never turn on the weather channel!** He would be glued to it like it was the Super Bowl. They watch it obsessively; with their weather radios, weather computers, and every scientific toy on the market, nothing replaces the almighty weather channel. "It changes every ten minutes, you know!" The only thing that challenges the weather channel on TV for Kevin is sports. It is also the only thing that makes me thankful that he has chosen the weather channel to watch instead.

If breakfast doesn't work, or if it works so well that I want more time with him, I like to invade his world for lunch. Seeing him in his element is quite an experience, especially if he has a crew to boss around. You can also learn some Spanish that they don't teach you in high school. I can see firsthand what kind of an insanely busy day he has facing him every time he wakes up. Not that I don't appreciate that now, but seeing it really helps me to be a little nicer to him when he comes home. He really doesn't just ride around the golf course in his cart all day.

These are ways that I can get to see the different facets of my husband's personality and confirm that during this hectic season of work, there is, in fact, still some beauty left in the beast. I wouldn't recommend getting into his world too often; it is still his turf (no pun intended). They work so hard during the golf season, it is amazing to me that they still know who we are at the end of it all. When people ask me if my husband works in the winter, I tell them,

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“Just barely, he only works 40 hours a week then!”

There is a definite difference between a “regular” golf widow and a superintendent’s wife. Golfers don’t go back at night just to make sure the course is still there. Our husbands do. When golfers are not on the golf course, they are at work. Even when our husbands are working, they are on the golf course. At least ordinary golf widows can learn how to play, or just drive the cart, and maybe spend some time with the men they married. We can do that too, but I believe it pays more to learn how you can include yourself into his time spent working.

For example, if he has to go back at night, I see what I can do to help. Helping him with routine tasks lets him know that his work is interesting to me, and it can be fun. I’ll ask him to demonstrate his irrigation system for me. He seems to be very proud of his water pipes. If we’re lucky, we get to see some nonpaying, freeloading, after-hours, walk-on golfer get hit with about 20,000 pounds of water pressure. Life’s little rewards are all in his day’s work. If you really want him to admit he needs you, get his Border collie to fall in love with you. Man’s best friend is she who can handle his dog! You might even get hired.

OK, I was hired. I fell in love with this dog faster than he fell in love with me. The Park District hired me to travel to various parks and chase geese with Mick, the dog. It was either I take the job, or let some stranger work him in the parks, thereby confusing my precious pup even further with three people to have to take orders from. It really has been great though. If you have ever seen these dogs work, it is quite a rush.

When picking up my dog from the golf course to do my park route, I have learned a few things about life in the golf course workplace:

1. Most of the money won on a golf course is not betting on your game. It is betting on whether or not it takes that novice golfer less than 10 shots to make it to the green.
2. You don’t have to speak Spanish to communicate with your crew. Slow, broken English with a heavy Ricky Ricardo accent will do nicely.
3. The most vile and contemptuous creatures on earth are those pesky honkers (geese, not golfers). They make a mess every eight minutes, and they know how to play head games with your dog.

Being an “ultimate golf widow” sometimes has advantages. It teaches me to be independent. I also love knowing that my husband’s job is to nurture a little piece of the earth. I have learned to appreciate his work through the beauty of the golf course. It is incredible the way the moon can shine through the trees and beam onto the strip of green velvet that is the fairway, and that the gift of a perfect green cannot even be described. All this means that Mother Nature is on her throne, and Kevin is happy. His golf course truly is his Emerald City, and he is the Wizard. The Wizard: you know, the man responsible for all the magic, yet still the man behind the curtain that no one pays any attention to?

When I think of what he goes through during his season, it makes it much easier to let him go on his convention alone. He needs his time to be on his own without having to answer to

anyone but himself. He’s earned it! It’s funny though, when I go with him, the convention is work, work, work. It’s only when I stay home that he seems to have the really big fun. It was easy to be resentful of his trip when I couldn’t go with, especially when we had very little ones at home. Again, this is where I had to make my own fun. Now, my kids and I usually head north to ski at convention time. It’s much better to trade stories when you get back together than to hear about all the fun you missed.

The game of golf has been very good to us. At 17, I fell in love with that blonde kid on the high school golf team. It was then I knew that I would someday be married to a golf course superintendent. I pray that this career doesn’t turn him into an old man before his time. I knew what I was getting myself into when, on our first date, he turned to me and asked “Want to see where I work?” I’ve always known, and I have no regrets.

He is now the president of this fine organization, and I am very proud of him. I appreciate this opportunity to share with you what being a golf course superintendent’s wife means to me. Best of all, now that I have done his homework for him, he owes me big! Hail to the Chief! 