

# Beyond Mere Words . . . What the Golf Course Is



Cheryl Maibusch

*President's note: I'm taking a breather from writing this month to give you a perspective on our profession from one of the people who most inspires me, my wife Cheryl. You should know that she is uniquely qualified in offering her opinions, having worked on grounds maintenance staffs at four Chicago-area golf clubs, including a very brief stint working with me at Hinsdale G.C. Cheryl is a 1985 graduate of Northwestern University, having attended there as a Chick Evans Caddie Scholar. She is the proud mother of our 11-year-old daughter Alex and our nine-year-old son Kieron. Cheryl's most recent of many accomplishments was winning the silver medal (2nd place) in women's competition at the USA-National Karate Federation National Championships in Charleston, WV, in July. Enjoy. RJM*

**B**OB: Well, hon, now that I've been elected president of the Association you have to write an article for the newsletter.

CHERYL: I have to?

BOB: Yeah, it's tradition. The wife of the current president gets to write a column. Besides, I only have material enough for 11 columns. Help me out here.

CHERYL: So tradition consists of anything done in the prior year, huh? Well, I think Peggy Czerkies covered everything pretty well last year. I don't have anything new and original to say.

BOB: Well, you've worked on as many golf courses as I have. You can write about how you understand the stresses put on those in my profession with weather, expectations, things like that. Or you could just tell stories about working for Dave Ward, Jim Miteer and Ray Schei!

Or I could just tell stories about Bob himself—stories that would be familiar to any wife of a golf course superintendent. You know, like how Bob will be the only person in any group who is not impressed with a beautiful sunny day because it hasn't rained in two weeks. Or how, when we were still dating, he didn't appreciate my efforts to learn more about his profession when I asked one evening while looking at a beautiful, yet somewhat hazy, summer full moon whether or not it was a perfect evening for pythium. Then there's always the 3 a.m. trip to the hospital for the birth of our first child when we

had to stop by the golf course ("It's on the way, honey") to leave a note for then-assistant Dan Tully that Bob might not be in that day. ("But it's the first day of the Invitational in the morning!")

Yes, I could talk about all that, but let's go into an area more unexplored, or at least more unspoken—the area of the working environment itself—the patch of ground all you folks are responsible for maintaining in the first place. In my column, I would like to revisit what the golf course is, by definition and beyond mere words.

By definition, the golf course is 18 holes of varying lengths covering ground of typically more than 100 acres. Pretty cut-and-dried. Golf courses can be found in most inhabited areas of the world and they have been developing and evolving as such since pre-1700s Scotland.

Other sports have been around for many years too, and have expanded across the globe. Soccer—played outdoors on a large field. Polo—played outdoors on a large field. Football—played outdoors on a large field. Baseball—played outdoors on a large field. You get the point. Yet none of these sports is being played in ever-greater numbers by the common man more than golf. So what's so special about golf courses that has kept this game an actual sport for hundreds of years? What makes golf different from every other outdoor sport?

You all know this one. It's easy. It's the spirit of the playing

*(continued on page 4)*



## On Course With The First Lady

(continued from page 2)

field! And unlike a soccer, polo, football or baseball field, it's different wherever you go! I've heard it said that one can feel closer to God in the early morning hours on a golf course than one can at 8 a.m. in Sunday service. It must be a version of what the Quakers call quiet time—a time to listen to God and His Creation. <sup>(1)</sup>

Most of us have, in our travels, discovered places of true beauty that spoke to our souls. Places where we felt close to God, close to nature, and fortunate to be alive to experience it at all. These places could be in the deserts of the Southwest or the autumn-colored hills of the Northeast. Maybe the majestic heights of the mountainous West are more your style. One can't count out the lush greenery of the Southeast or the expansive vistas of certain areas of the Midwest either. There's something special about the spirit of each of these places, something that touches the soul.

Golf courses are microcosms of the elements that make a place memorable—the beauty of rolling hills, of tall stately trees, the sound of nature passing you by in the form of a babbling stream. Many courses still see varied forms of wildlife. These sightings are always topics of conversation shortly thereafter. “Did you see the deer this morning?” “How about that fox we saw last week?” Courses in more remote areas perhaps are more surrounded by the natural beauty of an area than those found in suburban areas. For the suburban superintendent, it is all the more prestigious to be in charge of interpreting what defines a peaceful place and how to maintain that refuge from the outside influence of everyday life.

Sound like you're playing God? Don't be silly. But one should find it extremely honorable and humbling to think that he has a hand in maintaining a place that even Mother Nature's creatures feel is their home. No wonder humans would feel safe here as well. No need to have one's guard up when the only thing that could hurt you is a poor golf score. (Alright, or the occasional wayward golf ball!)

It's totally awesome to work in a place where you can see the weather changing right above your head instead of from one side of a pane of glass. I remember watching a storm roll in while raking bunkers at Ravisloe C.C., and I just had to stop and marvel at the clouds right over my head—before I scanned the horizon for the nearest rain shelter! I read somewhere that the Amish believe that farming is the occupation closest to God's heart. By exten-

sion, golf course maintenance would be included as a form of agriculture, taking care of the natural areas we have left. So the next time you've put in a 12+-hour day dealing with budgets, crabby members and broken sprinkler heads, take time out to look around and realize the importance of your position. Watch the sunset if you're still there, and know that each and every day YOU are making the world a saner, more beautiful place for those who visit your little patch of ground, your “island of serenity” in the greater (sub)urban jungle.

<sup>(1)</sup> *Great Possessions*

by David Kline



Another  
special  
member benefit!

## Looking to invest your money? Golf Retirement Plus™ can help you ...

You may think you need a big pile of money to start investing today. But with your new, Golf Retirement Plus™ benefit, you can open an account with as little as \$50.

Start investing your money today ... for a more secure future.

Call the Golf Retirement Plus™ TOLL FREE helpline at:  
**1-877-RET-PLUS (1-877-738-7587).**

