

Tim's Personal Price of Professionalism

By: Cheryl Jones

Professionalism and the Superintendent . . . a topic from which massive amounts of articles could easily spring! As recent newcomers to this profession, I cannot write with any amount of expertise on the daily professional conduct and contacts of the golf course superintendent; however, I do know that the potential for this quality is present at birth in every human being, the upbringing nurtures it, and that education and experience polishes it. A prime example: the editor of this magazine; Dan Jones, Superintendent of Banyan Golf Club in West Palm Beach, who thru sheer hard work gained the experience and knowledge to get where he is today. I, as the wife of a graduate of the Lake City Community College Golf Course Management Program can attest that professionalism was indeed called upon during those college years. My husband Tim has just come thru those years with flying colors.

The well dressed, well spoken, intelligent managers of men who work miracles on the golf course greens all have their own style, but in common they share maturity, intellect and an intense desire to succeed and exceed current levels of success. They look to a future not measured by days, but by years of improvements which are accomplished though often invisible to the naked eye, but clear in the superintendent's mind.

All of you started somewhere, and I seriously doubt it was by walking into a country club and announcing, "I'd like to be your superintendent". Some began as laborers, working and sweating your way up the ladder. Some chose the degree route and put years and years of study into this profession. Some, like my husband, chose 3-year programs at schools such as Lake City Community College.

Tim began his golf course career in 1977 as a laborer in South Florida. Eventually he left the greens and fairways and entered the field of radio broadcasting long enough to meet and marry me. He was soon back on the golf course, working as a laborer until an opening was available up in Lake City.

While we worked and waited, our first son was born. When Timmy Junior was two months old we packed up lock, stock, barrel, baby and cat, and headed to Lake City. Before leaving we were advised by a former Lake City graduate, "If your marriage can survive school, it can survive ANYTHING." How many times those words gave us strength; if this was truly the worst, we would be able to manage anything life chose to throw in our path.

Our first year in Lake City wasn't too bad. We lived in a drafty trailer in the woods, heated solely by a kerosene heater. Tim would study at the kitchen table, leaving the heater in the living room for the baby and me. He not only had to re-develop study habits, he had to also keep his family together. With no second car and no nearby neighbors, Tim's daily trips to school became dreadful to me; he was just about my only life to the "outside world", and aside from fulltime classes and studying, he held two part-time jobs. He HAD to become a professional manager of his time to satisfy all of his responsibilities.

On-the-job training in Clearwater, Florida followed that first year, and that June brought news that our second child was on the way. Tim got 50 more gray hairs, perhaps cried in private at the prospect of another mouth to feed, and coped. This was truly trial by fire. Thru it all, Tim

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(cont. from page 52)
maintained straight "A's".

The second year began much like the first year, with a few "bad weeds" who decided that they wanted an easier profession no longer in the class. Two weeks after school began that second year, our 15-month old son fell onto the kitchen floor in a Grand-Mal seizure. Tim was at school at the time. No phone. No car. No neighbors. It sure looked like God was looking the other way. This fateful day began a long string of serious illnesses for our baby, more seizures, more sleepless nights for both of us, with Tim facing tests in the morning. Halfway thru that second year Tim again pulled in straight "A's". Don't ask me when he studied, or how he managed to retain what he read at 4:00 a.m. With a sick baby and very pregnant wife on top of constant financial worries, it could be nothing else but "Professional Tenacity".

Our second son chose to be more than 3 weeks late in arriving. I went into labor on the first day of mid-term exam week. Daniel was born on the second day of exams . . . (the only thing that would keep Tim away from class) . . . and at 3:00 a.m. on the third exam day my husband rushed our 20-month-old son to the hospital with croup. Both of them got the flu. Between tending a sick toddler, a recovering wife, and being ill himself, my husband managed to study, make-up, and pass all his exams. The end of the second year brought straight "A's" again. Professionalism.

At graduation, my husband wore the gold sash of the PHI THETA KAPPA. Grade-wise he was either at or very near the top of his class. He did this thru professional management of the time, money, and energy. No one gave him the grades, he earned them, and paid for his efforts with very little sleep and at times at the expense of his own health. The three years at Lake City Community College afforded us very few luxuries. While other students had new cars, clothes and dorm housing provided by their parents, we clawed our way thru. Our parents did help us, and at crucial times. We are eternally grateful to them for the checks that came when the cupboard was quite literally bare. We are grateful to the aunt and uncle whose assistance covered the cost of antibiotics needed by our son. College was not easy, but my husband got the most for his money . . . education and knowledge. While others partied, he bathed babies while I quizzed him on test material. I would not know a mole cricket if it crawled into bed with me, but often they were on Tim's mind when he fell asleep. Professionalism.

Our marriage? Scarred. Tested. Strong. Our future? Thanks to my husband's tireless efforts, Bright. Secure. Hopeful. Some classmates who preferred beer to books did manage to graduate and enter the golf course industry. It will not take long to weed these out. You need more than passing grades to get by and succeed in this competitive industry. My husband is a survivor. My husband is a professional. ■

Editor's Note: Tim Jones has recently accepted the position of assistant to Jim Watkins, Golf Course Superintendent at Frenchman's Creek Golf Course in Jupiter, FL. Tim, Cheryl, Timmy Jr. and Daniel are also part of my family and I am very proud of what they have accomplished.

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