

To the Tour and back, Buchen puts down roots

By Vern Putney

GALENA, Ohio — Associates long have needed R. Terry Buchen as "the traveling man," a golf course superintendent with unbridled wanderlust.

Having about "done it all," Buchen now is ready to settle down and settle in. He's joined the staff of Double Eagle Club, a new Jay Morrish/Tom Weiskopf design under construction outside Columbus.

Wife Debbie and daughter Elizabeth, 5, welcome his intended new lifestyle. Buchen will have many treasured memories to savor, especially a stint as associate agronomist for the PGA Tour in 1979-80.

"It was the greatest experience of my professional life," declared Buchen. "Working with head agronomist Allan MacCurrach and meeting other superintendents who hosted Tour stops was a tremendous learning process."

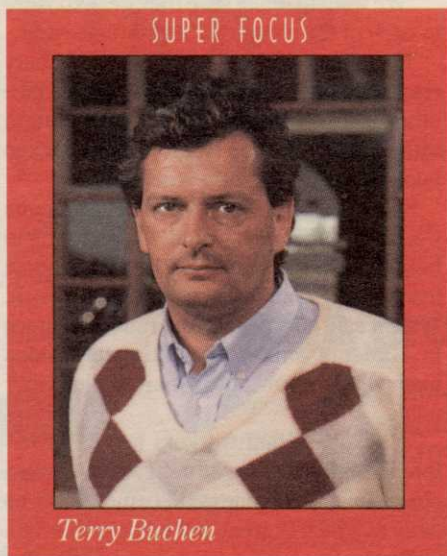
From his Jacksonville, Fla., Tour office base, Buchen as advance man and agronomist on all regular Tour events zipped to 20 states and Canada four to eight weeks prior to each event. About 60 percent of his duties were agronomic, the rest administrative.

"I guess I symbolized the word 'peripatetic,'" mused Buchen, "though colleagues preferred the term 'gypsy.'"

Buchen noted that the PGA Tour has some great tournament specifications that try to make playing conditions consistent week to week. "Mowing heights, widths, speed of greens, etc., make for fascinating study and research."

He also witnessed construction of the original Tournament Players Club at Sawgrass in Jacksonville, Fla., and observed at close range the changing of a virtual swamp into a famous golf course. Watching Pete Dye and Deane Beman design the course approached an art form, he said.

Buchen was delighted that the nation's press heaped praise upon Sawgrass superintendent Fred Klauk for grooming the course to perfection last March, especially after the Fourth Estate had nearly flooded Klauk in a sea of soiled ink the previous year.



"Klauk merited the kudos," Buchen said.

From 1977-84, Buchen was a member of the USGA Green Section Greens Committee. With the USGA agronomists, he assisted in valuable services to golf course superintendents.

During the 1984 U.S. Open at Winged Foot Golf Club in Mamaroneck, N.Y., Buchen was a member of the Rules of Golf Committee. Sitting in with the distinguished likes of P.J. Boatwright, Tom Meeks, Dye and other rules experts provided tremendous insight.

Watching superintendent Bob Alonzi and his staff prepare the course for a major championship was fun and stimulating, he said. Renowned award-winning, widely honored course superintendent and author Sherwood A. Moore, now of Brewster, Mass., added his considerable talents.

Bolstering third-generation superintendent Buchen's extensive background was overseeing construction projects across the country as the golf course superintendent and owners' representative.

Buchen first worked as an assistant superintendent at the Playboy Club-Hotel in Lake Geneva, Wis., on the Briarpatch Golf Course designed by Jack Nicklaus and Dye.

He was promoted to his first

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superintendent's position at the Playboy Club-Hotel at Great Gorge in McAfee, N.J., a new George and Tom Fazio creation.

Tom Fazio "launched" their careers together in 1970, Buchen said.

Buchen also worked with architect Ted Robinson on the Sunrise and Rancho Las Palmas Country Club's in Ranch Mirage in the Palm Springs area of California; Nicklaus at Castle Pines Golf Club in Castle Rock, Colo.; Tom Fazio at The Golf Club of Oklahoma in Broken Arrow and at Golden Eagle Golf Club, Tallahassee, Fla.; Pete and Perry Dye at Glenmoor Country Club in Englewood, Colo.; and Morrish and Weiskopf at Willowbend Golf Club in Wichita, Kan.

In his present post the past 11 months, Buchen again is hooked up with Morrish and Weiskopf in overseeing construction. Double Eagle is an exclusive private club of tournament-caliber course design 25 miles northeast of Columbus.

"I've learned much of growing desirable golf course grasses throughout the country," Buchen said, "and have profited immensely from working with and observing some of the best golf course architects in the world."

Buchen still marvels at his good fortune in the industry with which he literally grew up.

Raised in the Chicago suburb of Glenview, he graduated from Penn State University in 1968.

He lived at the old Chesterfield Country Club in Glenview, later sold to the city and renamed Glenview Park Golf Club.

His grandfather was the superintendent, his dad the head professional/assistant superintendent, his mom the club manager and his sister the driving range operator. Buchen began mowing the greens at age 6.

Though he has put down firm roots at Galena, Buchen still is seeking challenge on

the international scene. Since last December, he's concentrated on a Master Greenkeeper Certificate from the British and International Golf Greenkeepers Association, of which he's been a member since 1984.

The MGC is equivalent to Certified Golf Course Superintendent status with the Golf Course Superintendents Association of America. Three areas must be achieved before a certificate is issued: meeting the proper educational and experience requirements; an on-site inspection visit and evaluation of his golf course, and passing a rigid test of all facets of golf course management.

As soon as the golf course is grassed and in playable condition, the on-course evaluation will be completed. The written test then can be accomplished.

Filling in "free" time other than with his family includes playing and rating golf courses for Golf Digest, and writing trade magazine articles on golf course maintenance.

During the early and mid-1980s, Buchen was a frequent contributor to Golf Course Management magazine.

A sense of humor and a light touch balance serious tomes. He hosted an annual Christmas party for friends in the golf business called "Let's Get Bombed on Pearl Harbor Day Celebration."

A festive occasion started last year and scheduled as an annual March event is dubbed "The Millard Fillmore Celebration."

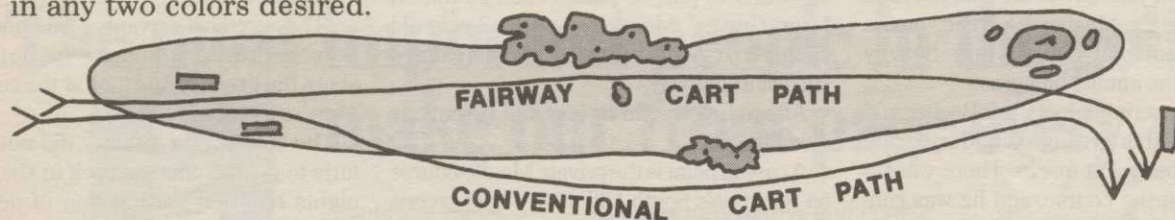
Millard is not the most memorable of our former presidents, but the golf gala adds a bit of spice to one regarded as somewhat dull.

Buchen's more serious membership affiliations include: GCSAA, since 1968; CGCS, 1978; Pennsylvania Turfgrass Council, 1974; Penn State Turfgrass Alumni Association, 1971, and Golf Writers Association of America, 1984.

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