

Mr. Putney left his mark on the GCN staff

Legendary Maine sportswriter and Golf Course News Contributing Editor Vern Putney passed away in December. On short notice, we published his obituary last month. The GCN staff has written the following addenda:

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When GCN launched in 1989, it was Vern Putney and me — a lick and a prayer, not necessarily in that order. He had spent 40 years covering golf and other sports, oftentimes more as a crusader than simply

a reporter. He gamely pushed for space on the sports pages for women's sports — especially female golfers and runners like Olympic gold medalist Joan Benoit Samuelson, a friend of his... because it was right. He started a semi-pro football team in Portland, Maine — yes, Portland, Maine... because it was right to have one. He started various sports halls of fame, including the Maine Golf Hall of Fame. And he guaranteed that every year a woman

and a superintendent, as well as the perfunctory male pro, would be installed... because it was right.

He operated a caddie program in his younger days, trying to instill the sense of etiquette and gamesmanship that he loved about golf... because it was right. Perhaps it was that quality of his that kept him fighting his way out of hospitals to make deadline appearances at GCN. He strongly felt it was right to have a publication that covered the industry side of golf. He'd tell the doctors:

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Mr. Allan MacCurrach

PGA TOUR AGRONOMIST MACCURRECH, 57

JACKSONVILLE, Fla. — Allan MacCurrach, 57, for 18 years the senior agronomist for the PGA Tour, died of massive heart failure on Jan. 14, while on assignment in Palm Springs, Calif.

The winner of the 1994 Distinguished Service Award from the Golf Course Superintendents Association of America, Mr. MacCurrach was a superintendent for 12 years before joining the Tour. He also was senior agronomist on the Nike Tour since its inception.

"Allan had a tremendous impact on the Tour for a number of years," said Cal Roth, director of golf course maintenance operations for PGA Tour Investments and its Tournament Players Clubs (TPC). "I've looked to Allan over the last 13 years for a lot of help and support due to his background and knowledge. That transcends the whole industry. He knew so many people in the business."

"Allan was a leading agronomist in tournament golf and always had the respect of all the golf course superintendents he worked with, week-in and week-out," said Terry Buchen, who worked with Mr. MacCurrach in 1979 and 1980. "He was one of the great guys and true gentlemen in the business."

An Ipswich, Mass., native who grew up in nearby Hamilton, Mr. MacCurrach earned an associate degree in 1962 from the University of Massachusetts' Stockbridge School of Agriculture after earning an associate degree from Burdette College in Boston. He was a superintendent at Valley Country Club in West Warwick, R.I., and Chevy Chase (Md.) Country Club before joining the PGA Tour as its first agronomist in 1974. In 1984 he left the Tour to work with Golden Bear, Inc., before returning in 1988.

Mr. MacCurrach was one of the first in the country to earn the status of certified golf course superintendent.

He leaves a wife, Carol; daughter, Jennifer MacCurrach, a golf professional; son, Allan III; two grandchildren; a brother, Bruce; and a sister, Ann Bloom.

Donations in Mr. MacCurrach's behalf can be made to the Mike Richards Memorial Scholarship Foundation for agronomy turf students, 1009 Ruth Ave., Jacksonville Beach, Fla. 32250.



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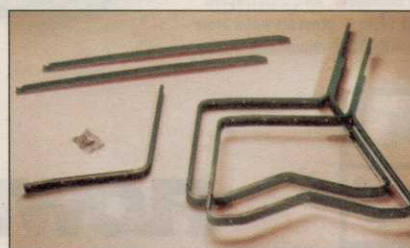
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Putney remembered

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"Do whatever you must, just get me out of here for deadline."

Well, Vern's gone Home. And I'm going to miss him a lot — especially at deadline time.

— M.L.

...

Maine is off the beaten path. Those who have made the effort to get here have often take away fond memories of the rock-bound coast, boiled lobster, quaint fishing villages, clear mountain lakes, unmatched fall foliage (step aside, Vermont) and, for those in the golf in-

dustry, Vern Putney.

It seems as though everywhere I've traveled for *Golf Course News* the past 7-1/2 years, someone has asked me about Vern.

"How's Vern?"

"Make sure you say 'Hi' to Vern for me."

"Tell Vern I still have that picture of him and me hanging over the fireplace."

This always amazed me. Vern spent most of his career as a sportswriter for the *Portland Press Herald* and rarely traveled out of state. He always said the best was right here, so there was little need to roam. The only way he could have come into contact with these people was when

business or pleasure brought them to Maine.

Queries about Vern inevitably led to some delightful story about how the little man with the big heart had made their stay in this tiny Northeast corner of the country more enjoyable, often opening their eyes to some aspect of the Maine golf scene the visitors never knew existed.

Vern was the best ambassador Maine golf ever had. He will be sorely missed by the state and everyone who knew him.

— P.B.

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Vern Putney, introduced to golf as a young caddie at the Portland (Maine)

Country Club in the early 1930s, was an early and constant champion for golf course superintendents and their important roles in preserving and promoting the true spirit of golf.

Long before it became a fashionable or more obvious thing to say, Vern argued that golf course superintendents were the real heroes of today's golf courses, the upholders of the values and soul of golf, from the roots up.

Rightfully so, in my opinion, Vern had grown disenchanted with many modern golf pros. He characterized them as "glorified haberdashers" more interested in selling overpriced pro shop merchandise than giving lessons or carrying out other ambassador-like duties that Vern associated with golf pros from the 1920s, 1930s, 1940s and 1950s.

Pros from that era were men he admired and respected deeply.

For Vern to say that golf course superintendents are the most important people in golf was an honor and a tribute from a man who never missed a chance to tell you that he had been there and seen it all.

As someone who worked on a golf course maintenance crew for two years and knows many superintendents, and as a friend and co-worker of Vern's, I believe Vern's vision of the heroic, principled, knowledgeable superintendent intimidated and frustrated some in the trade. It is a lot to ask of someone to bear the future of golf on their shoulders, to speak out when they feel strongly about something, to guard the worthy traditions and revise those that need to change.

But if golf course superintendents don't try to do it, who will?

— J.B.M.

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You didn't want to get on Vern Putney's bad side. For sure, he was a sweet, courtly old guy, a throwback to more chivalrous times. But one false move, one disparaging comment about Maine's Golden Age of Baseball, one no-show at some hall of fame banquet, one missed deadline and you got yourself an earful. And a penetrating scowl.

This was part of Vern's charm. High standards. By the same token, when you hustled to make that deadline, when you spent a Friday night at the Maine Golf Hall of Fame reception and banquet, you were automatically canonized in the Church of Putney.

You always knew where Vern stood — and where you stood with him.

Vern Putney was damn-near fanatical about *Golf Course News* deadlines. When we went to press, the penultimate Tuesday of every month, Vern was here to proof pages, write last-minute stories and chide us for lazy grammar. As a 40-year veteran of the newspaper trade, Vern viewed the deadline something sacred. As far as he was concerned, you would leave your own death bed to make deadline — and Vern lived this metaphor many times over.

The entire *GCN* staff had come from the daily newspaper world, so we thought we knew about deadlines. But Vern's commitment to the timely publication of *Golf Course News* — his commitment to everything he embarked upon — gave us all pause.

Vern left us with many things. But our standards, higher because of him, will be with us always.

— H.P.

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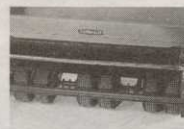
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