

*Pros agree it's a definite asset to have a woman in the shop, but it's more than just an asset when that woman is the pro's wife*

# **Wife in the pro shop?**

## **You bet!**

**P**art of the refrain of a song that caught the public's fancy not too long ago stated succinctly that if you let a woman in your life your serenity was through. Not to deny the truth of the songwriter's observation, but to give recognition where recognition is due pro shops throughout the country are taking issue with those words and rather successfully.

GOLFDOM set out to question pros operating shops on their feelings about women in the shop, or more specifically using their wives in the shop or a woman they had hired. In addition, we wanted to know which they felt was the better of the two.

Surprisingly, most pros said it didn't make that much difference, although most were quick to add that wives tended to give that little ounce of something extra when the situation called for it. Almost without exception, however, the pros queried agreed that a woman is a necessary adjunct to the successful, well-run pro shop.

Wives get into the act in most instances because they come along to help run the shop (probably in its infancy) the way a pioneer's wife came along when the move West was made. Most pros, who recognize the need for good merchandising and selling for a pro shop operation to succeed, also recognize the need for having a woman as a salesperson. Most queried immediately tick off the point that a woman can sell to another woman much better than a man.

In one shop the wife's place has now reached such a propor-

tion the lady now runs the operation. Twenty years ago she went to work in her husband's shop to help with the ordering and selling, but today she runs the four locations that have grown from that single operation, overseeing a staff of 13 employees, five of whom are women.

The unanimous verdict on the necessity for women in the shop comes from pros who have realized the many advantages women offer to a shop, especially when it is fashion-oriented, as are many of today's more successful shops.

Pro Bob Klewin of Tucson National GC in Arizona told GOLFDOM that it would be impossible for him to estimate the contributions his wife Maryellen has made to his business. He knows her presence has demonstrated he could not run his shop without a woman's help. Bob and Maryellen have run the shop in tandem for years, and the Tucson pro shop is an outstanding instance of a well-run operation.

Many pros visit Bob's shop and have come away convinced that they need a woman in their own operations. "We've had many a pro come into our shop when vacationing in this part of the country and when they see how well our operation goes with a woman selling to other women they've gone home and hired a woman for their own business."

Bob had his own eyes opened to the advantages of a woman in the shop when Maryellen was enlisted as a staff person in his shop. The feedback Bob has gotten from pros who profited from his example has been entirely favorable.

"They recognize, as we have, that it must be more than just a woman in the shop. It takes a woman with selling and merchandising savvy, but it takes a woman."

MacGregor Hunter of California's Riviera CC feels there are some exceptions to this. "When it comes to selling a woman, another woman does have something of an edge, but I have men here in my shop that perform as well as the women salespeople I've got when it comes to selling some items to women."

However, Mac is quick to point out that both his wife and mother work in the shop and his mother worked alongside Mac's father who also operated a pro shop in past years. He concurs with the opinion that a wife's interest in the shop will go deeper than that of an outside employee. "Of course, that's only natural," he adds.

It was in the early days of most shops that wives joined the staff. When a shop is getting on its feet, say most pros, and another pair of hands is needed for the operation but funds are short and hours long, the wife is the logical choice for additional personnel. Later, when the business is on a sounder footing and the budget will allow for outside help, the wife continues in the shop because she is by now an experienced salesperson and merchandiser and it is difficult, well nigh impossible say some pros, to replace her with anyone nearly as skilled.

Henry Thomas of New Orleans City Park course has had Mrs. Thomas working by his side for

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## Wife in the pro shop? You bet!

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most of the 20 odd years he's operated a pro shop. His opinion of the wife in the shop? "A great asset. My wife is a tough customer, or to be more accurate I should say tough with my customers, in a good way. For instance, we sell tees at a quoted price of a penny each but neither I nor the other salespeople ever count them when we give a handful to a customer for our usual price of a dime. We just reach into the tee container, pull out a handful, take the dime and hand the customer the tees.

"One customer gave his dime to my wife and when she gave him a somewhat smaller handful of tees than what he was used to, he complained. She counted the tees, found that she'd given him 12 instead of 10, and took back the two she felt were being given above the posted price."

Seriously, Mr. Thomas recognizes that a large part of the success of his business is due to the help he's received from Mrs. Thomas over the years. "In the early days it was awfully difficult for her to spend too much time in the shop with the youngsters and all. However, it's probably then that the young pro needs help from his wife and she probably finds it most difficult to get away from her household chores and help out. Somehow my wife managed."

A kind of reverse twist was achieved by Irene Koennecker of Canyon Hills CC in Palm Springs, Calif., who started as a helpmate with her husband in his early days as a pro and wound up running the four shops they now operate while he takes care of lessons and other areas of golf activities at the club.

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All pros queried by GOLFDOM agreed that where the wife is involved she plays a tremendously important role in management and operation of the shop, but perhaps her most important role is outside the shop proper as a buyer. Buying for the shop represents one of the most intricate and critical of functions. Most pros find that their wives make

excellent buyers.

Mac Hunter says, "They're style conscious. They read the fashion publications and keep up with developments in general fashion and golf fashion in particular. This not only enables them to talk freely with customers about the latest in fashion but enables them to buy wisely.

"Lines at our shop include both men's and women's sport apparel but also dresses, blouses, sports jackets, Capri pants and even evening wear. Our customers are very style conscious and so we need good buying know-how. It takes a good fashion sense, and my wife is of inestimable help in buying for the shop."

Bob Klewin echoes this sentiment. "We try to buy six months to a year in advance what we think will be selling in the season ahead. Out here we really have two golfing seasons so our fashion business runs year-round.

"My wife has the right feel for things that will be in demand at that future date and always seems to hit it right on the button with the items we stock. To an operation like ours, buying is very important. We're essentially a small business that can't afford the luxury of being caught with too much of the wrong merchandise. We don't get caught either, because I've got a first rate buyer in Maryellen."

Some wives act as models for merchandise offered in the shop. They will dress during the business day in items sold in the shop, in effect modeling the items while doing business on the selling floor, often changing outfits several times each day to show off the shop's wares.

Pros talking about their wives in the shop single out as the most telling factor that having their wife in the shop has been a positive experience for both and made their personal lives a closer thing through working together.

Without exception pros queried by GOLFDOM registered complete approval about having their wives in the shop, when such was the case. When it comes to running a pro shop it's really a case of a woman being necessary and a wife preferred. □

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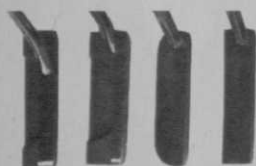
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