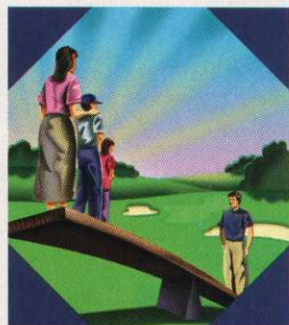


BY LARRY AYLWARD, EDITOR

# Career and Family

## The Balancing Act

How can you maintain  
a demanding job  
while sustaining  
a healthy home life?



### Living Well

**PART 2:  
BALANCING  
CAREER AND  
FAMILY**

It was supposed to be a short day of work for Louis Miller. But on a sweltering summer Sunday in 1980, the then Louisville (Ky.) CC superintendent had to work overtime to fix the golf course's burnt-out irrigation pump.

Miller had been trying to install a replacement pump for a few hours when he fielded a phone call from his irate wife. "You promised to take your daughter swimming this afternoon," she told him.

Miller remembers his wife lecturing him about family commitment. He recalls telling her that he also had a responsibility to his job.

"You don't understand," he told his wife. "This is my job; this is what pays the bills. And if I don't get this irrigation pump running, what's green on this golf course is going to turn brown."

Miller fixed the irrigation pump that day, but he couldn't repair his marriage. Miller and his wife divorced in 1981 after 13 years. Many factors contributed to Miller's marital demise, including his profession, which played a major part.

"A lot of it had to do with the stress that

comes with being a superintendent," says Miller, noting that 80 percent of the superintendents he knew then were divorced. "My wife didn't understand that I sometimes had to work seven days a week. People who aren't in this industry can't relate to it."

More than 20 years later, superintendents empathize with Miller's views. They say they spend less time with their spouses and families because they work long hours and take few days off. They say their spouses accuse them of ranking their careers ahead of their families because of the passion they have for their livelihoods.

Many superintendents believe their profession has a high divorce rate, but there are no statistics to support their claims. Kim Heck, GCSAA's senior director of career development, says it's difficult for the association to gather data through a formal survey because divorce is a personal issue that many superintendents don't want to discuss. "But we've also heard superintendents claim there's a high rate of divorce in their profession," Heck says.

So how can you maintain a demanding career and a healthy family life in a profession



DOUGLASS OSTER

with a perceived high divorce rate? How can you learn to balance work and family?

Tom Kastler, superintendent of the Club at Runaway Bay in Runaway, Texas, says a golf course is a living and breathing entity that needs constant attention from a superintendent. Despite the attention Kastler gives his golf course, the 42-year-old has maintained a healthy family life for 13 years. Kastler treasures his job, but he values his wife and son more.

Kastler says there's not one element to managing a successful career with a meaningful family life. He says it takes focus, communication, dedication, patience, self-control, compromising and prioritizing, among other intangibles. "It's a bunch of things rolled into one," Kastler stresses.

### Time and precedence

A divorce made superintendent Tom Seapker realize that he and his wife separated partly because he was working too many hours.

"The business can consume you because you want to do everything perfectly," says Seapker, director of grounds for Southpointe

GC in Canonsburg, Pa., who was divorced in 1990 after 19 years. "So you put more time in, and your family suffers. Maybe it takes a brick to hit you in the head, but you learn that you don't need to work so many hours."

When he came to Southpointe CC 3.5 years ago, Seapker reduced his workload. At previous posts, he worked seven days a week. Many superintendents work long hours because they don't delegate. They convince themselves they must spend most of their waking hours at work.

Sandy Clark, superintendent of Barona Creek GC in Lakeside, Calif., says some superintendents "get hung up on their own importance" and refuse to delegate. Clark, who has been married nearly 33 years, says superintendents need to appoint reliable assistants, empower them and let them do their jobs.

But Paul B. Latshaw, superintendent of Oak Hill CC in Rochester, N.Y., says delegation is not always easy nor the right management move. "The old saying, 'Lead by example,' is my biggest motto," says Latshaw,

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**The Shaws have made golf a family affair. John Shaw, certified superintendent of Rolling Hills CC, often plays golf with his wife, Michelle, and children, Christine and Nicholas.**

### Living Well Series

Look for these stories in the coming months:

**August** – *Dealing with the Threat of Skin Cancer*

**September** – *Watch Out for Lyme Disease*

## Career and Family: The Balancing Act

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who has been married for nine years and has two children.

Latshaw, who's preparing his course for the 2003 PGA Championship, says it's difficult for him to ask his assistants and crew to do something he's not willing to do himself. For instance, some of Latshaw's crew members work until 9 p.m. on some nights. Latshaw says he would feel like a hypocrite if he didn't join them. "Delegation is easier said than done," he adds.

### Priorities, priorities

Pete Salinetti, certified superintendent of Schuyler Meadows Club in Loudonville, N.Y., says he's a former "sunrise-to-sunset superintendent." But Salinetti has learned that nothing outweighs the importance of his family life.

"I'm only a superintendent; I'm not a brain surgeon," says Salinetti, who has been at Schuyler Meadows for 23 years. "I don't enjoy life any *more* than when I'm in the presence of my family."

Don't get Salinetti wrong. He enjoys his profession immensely, but he has learned to balance his career with his family, which includes his wife of 23 years and three sons. "I work hard to try and draw a distinct line between my family life and my responsibilities to my club," he says.

On a recent spring day, Salinetti left Schuyler Meadows shortly before 4 p.m. to attend his son's lacrosse game. He wasn't leaving work early, though. Salinetti usually works from 6 a.m. to 4 p.m. daily and four hours on Saturday morning.

Salinetti is proud to say he's been home for dinner with his family almost every night for as long as he has been at Schuyler Meadows, where he doubled as general manager for 15 years. He's proud to say he's involved in his sons' lives and helped them become Eagle Scouts when they were young. "My family is the high point of my life," Salinetti says.

John Shaw, certified superintendent of Rolling Hills CC in McMurray, Pa., enjoys his job and works long hours, but he

makes time to spend with his wife and two children. Rolling Hills CC members often ask Shaw to play 18 holes with them on Wednesday nights, but he politely declines their invitations.

"It will cut into my family time," Shaw says. "They keep asking me to play, and I keep telling them where my priorities lie."

Latshaw admits he's driven by his career, but he also realizes it's vital to strike a balance between his work and family life. He learned that from his father, Paul R. Latshaw, who was a superintendent for 37 years at some of the top golf courses in the world. Paul says his father worked long hours, and missed some family functions. But he says his father made it a priority to find time to spend with him.

"I played high school football, and he never missed a game," Paul B. says. "We also hunted together. He made time for the things that really mattered."

The Latshaws are perfect examples of two men who have the superintendent

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## Love And Marriage And ...

**A**lbert Stok and Natalie Amos-Stok are married with children — and with golf course maintenance as their chosen careers. Between their time-consuming jobs and raising their kids, you would think that Albert and Natalie never see each other. But they do, and more than you might think.

Natalie is the superintendent of Harbour View Golf & CC in Gilford, Ontario, and Albert is her assistant. "We work hard, and we're very happy," Albert says.

The Stoks have been married for seven years, and they've been working together for six years. They have two children: Sean, 2, and Kayleigh, infant. "I ask him, 'Do you ever get tired of seeing my face every day?'" Natalie jokes.

The Stoks "have their moments" like most married couples, Natalie says, but they never get tired of seeing each other at work.

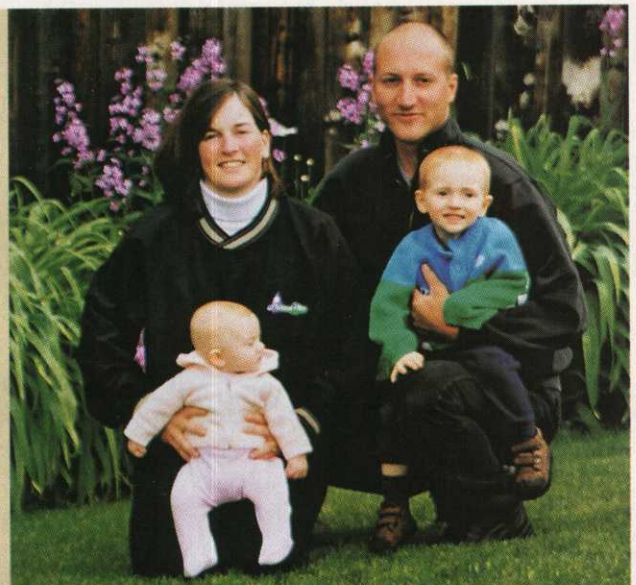
"We love what we do," Natalie says. "If our jobs were a grind, there would probably be more frustration between us."

Although they work closely, the Stoks' responsibilities are different. Natalie, 34, oversees the operation's budget, and Albert, 36, is the course's turf craftsman.

Albert has no problem working for his wife. He was acting superintendent when the children were born and Natalie took time off.

"I don't undermine her authority," Albert says. "I'm mindful of that. For us, it's a team effort."

On this day, Albert will stay late and spray the greens and Na-



**Natalie (holding Kayleigh) and Albert (holding Sean) don't talk about work at home — much.**

talie will leave at her normal time to pick up the kids from day care. During the summer, they work opposite weekends so one of them is always with the children.

As with spouses in other marriages, the Stoks say communication is the key to a healthy relationship — and they don't always talk about work at home. — Larry Aylward, Editor

COURTESY OF NATALIE AMOS-STOK

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COURTESY OF SANDY CLARK

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business in their blood. But that's fine, says Carol Dombrose, a psychologist who operates a marriage counseling business with her husband, Larry, in Westlake, Ohio. Superintendents can be passionate about their work as long as they extend that passion to their families. When you come home from work, give your family attention and make them feel like they're important, Dombrose stresses.

### Open communication

Four months ago, Mike Sosik and a few associates purchased the Harrisville GC, a nine-hole track in Woodstock, Conn., that needs a lot of work. Sosik, the former superintendent at Middleton GC in Madison, Mass., is now the owner, superintendent and general manager of the course.

Since coming there, Sosik has been working 6 a.m. to 8:30 p.m. seven days a week. By the way, Sosik is married with

three young children. "Better let me call my wife to see if I'm still married," he says with a chuckle.

Sosik can joke about his situation because his wife, Christine, understands her husband's plight. Sosik, who has been married for nine years, explained to her the specific ramifications behind the purchase of the golf course. He told her it was an excellent business opportunity, but that he'd be working long hours for several months to get the course in shape.

"Communication is the key," Sosik says. "When I took over the business, I told her I wasn't going to be home until July. She understood. She had the chance to say she hated the idea, but she didn't."

Larry Dombrose reiterates the importance for married couples to explain their professions to each other, especially if a spouse has a job that's more demanding than working 9 to 5. "Explain your job to your spouse and offer con-

## Are You Neglecting Your Family?

Marriage counselors Larry and Carol Dombrose list the top signs that you're working too much and neglecting your family:

- Your spouse complains you don't spend enough time together.
- You no longer feel like you're part of your family's activities.
- You say, "My father was a workaholic and it didn't hurt me."
- The only thing you do at home is sleep.
- Your children ask, "Why are you sleeping on the couch?"

*The Dombroses operate a marriage counseling business, Creative Life Changes, in Westlake, Ohio. For more information, contact their Web site: [creativelifechanges.com](http://creativelifechanges.com).*

**California superintendent Sandy Clark (far right) and his wife, Ginny, raised their sons, Michael and Doug (from left), to believe that problems should be worked out in a marriage. This photo was taken at Doug's wedding in November 1999.**

crete examples of what you do," Dombrose advises.

Paul B. Latshaw says superintendents must explain the fundamentals of their profession and their career goals to their significant others before they get married.

"It's important that your spouse knows what she's getting into," he says. "I was up-front with my wife. I told her not to expect me to take a week of vacation in the summer and to take weekends off."

Seapker suggests superintendents marrying for the first time take their future spouses to their courses and show them what their jobs entail. Seapker, 53, did that with his second wife, Carolyn, whom he married seven years ago. She understands why her husband has to work on Sundays and return to the course on summer evenings to syringe the greens. "I hear her tell other people, 'There's more to Tom's job than cutting grass,'" Seapker says, noting that communication is vital.

## Job sharing

Michelle Shaw, John's wife of 10 years, helped her husband study for his certification test. Michelle, a former accountant and full-time mother, is also temporary secretary of the Greater Pittsburgh GCSAA, of which John is president. She proofreads the articles John writes for the association's publication.

Michelle is willingly involved in her husband's career and enjoys it. "I'm more involved in his career than most superintendents' wives," Michelle says. "In a marriage, you want to be involved in what your spouse does for a living."

Lacy Kastler, who works as a social worker, is also involved her husband's career. "She comes out twice a month to change the ladies' and seniors' tees," says Tom, stressing that it's important to share your work with your spouse and vice versa.

Larry Dombrose stresses that married couples should strive to be best friends, which includes knowing and caring about each other's careers. The Shaws are best friends, and Michelle is her husband's biggest booster. "He's one of the top superintendents in his field, and I want to see him get ahead," she says.

## An understanding spouse

Sosik says the only reason his marriage works is because his wife understands his profession's arduous demands.

"I think about that every day," Sosik says. "She knows I love what I do, and she knows I'm going to do it. I appre-



COURTESY OF TOM KASTLER

Texas superintendent Tom Kastler says his wife, Lacy, is his best friend.

ciate her for understanding. If I had a different wife who was not as understanding, there's a good chance I'd be divorced."

Larry Dombrose says a superintendent should marry an independent and self-assured person, not someone who needs a lot of attention.

Michelle Shaw doesn't need a lot of attention. She chuckles when recalling that John forgot about her birthday last year. Michelle says her husband's lapse "stung a little," but she understood. John was in only his second week as superintendent at Rolling Hills and was keenly focused on his new job.

Latshaw says his wife, Ann Louise, is strong-willed and independent. Ann Louise has a master's degree in business

and is in charge of the family's finances.

"She pays all the bills," Latshaw says. "She does a lot of things around the house so we can do fun things when we're together. I could never do what I do without her support."

Kastler says his wife has the patience of a saint, which he adds is an important trait if you're married to a superintendent.

"You don't need a high-strung racehorse," he says. "That's just a setup for a train wreck."

## Lessons learned

Louis Miller, 58, left the Louisville CC last year after 33 years as superintendent. He's now managing partner of Golf Development Construction, a Louisville-based certified golf course builder. Miller remarried in 1989, but he still works many hours. This time, however, his wife Lesa knows all about his demanding profession.

"She understands," Miller says. "Things are going great. But I told her from the start that it will never get better insofar as the time demanded."

Miller has had a successful and rewarding career. Despite a divorce, he's doesn't regret choosing golf course maintenance and building as his professions. But Miller realizes that balance is required if a superintendent wants to maintain a successful career and have a healthy family life. Achieving balance, however, is not easy, he insists.

"My first wife was offended that I loved my work," Miller says. "She told me that I placed my job before her. But I had to make the house and car payments, and put food on the table."

Miller suggests younger superintendents realize what they're taking on when they get married and have children. There will be PTA meetings, soccer games and school plays to attend. There will also be broken-down irrigation systems to repair on their days off.

"About 90 percent of the people in this industry are workaholics," Miller says. "It's hard to balance your career and family life — but you have to try." ■

## Family Ties

George Pierpoint IV, superintendent of Orange County GC in Middleton, N.Y., suggests 10 ways to spend more time with your wives and kids:

1. Say no to working late. The job will be there tomorrow.
2. Come home early to spend time with the wife and kids.
3. Bring home take-out Chinese and go to the park for dinner.
4. Plan a day off — and take it.
5. Flowers never hurt.
6. Surprise your wife with a baby-sitter and then go out for a nice evening together.
7. Plan a family project to work on, even if it's something around the house.
8. Offer to cook dinner and clean up the dishes afterward.
9. Insist that everyone eat dinner together and talk about each other's day.
10. Take time each day to tell everyone in your family how you feel about them.

