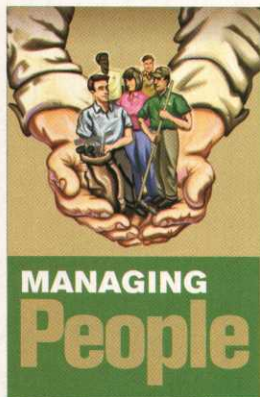




Terry Bonar is in his 44th season at Canterbury Golf Club. Sitting in the golf car is Bonar's Border Collie, Molly.

PAYING HIS Respects



Canterbury Golf Club superintendent Terry Bonar believes the best way to manage employees is to show your appreciation of them

By Larry Aylward, Editor

It's no wonder Terry Bonar has endured more than 40 years at Cleveland's Canterbury Golf Club, the past 20 years as its superintendent. The easy-going 63-year-old Bonar is as highly regarded as the 1921 design, which is ranked in the top 100 classic courses in America.

Nowhere is Bonar's popularity more evident than on the golf course maintenance staff

he manages. Bonar's employees welcome him like a cool breeze on scorching July day.

Consider that the four veteran members of Bonar's 12-person staff have nearly 75 years between them at Canterbury. They don't want to leave Canterbury because it has evolved into more than just a place they go to work every day. It has become a second home, thanks in part to Bonar.

"It's like home here; it's like family," says

first assistant superintendent Ed Smith, who has worked with Bonar for nearly 15 years. "Everybody is close, and we have no desire to leave."

Smith's impressions reflect Bonar's basic but influential management style. Bonar's style boils down to treating everyone with respect and dignity, and he does that through different means.

On the professional side, Bonar encourages crew members to learn new skills continually. (His secretary, Kelly Lanckiewicz, can mow a mean green). On the social side, Bonar often cooks breakfast for his crew on cold winter mornings.

"You try to be fair and treat people with respect," says Bonar, who sports a long but neatly trimmed gray beard. "I just want to make their jobs as enjoyable as possible. It can't be all head-down, full-blast and double-time without some fun."

Chris Sulyok, the course's 26-year-old second assistant superintendent, says Bonar has shown unwavering faith in him to learn and improve since he joined the course eight years ago. "He gave me the freedom to do things I thought I could do," Sulyok adds.

Eric Moses, who has worked at Canterbury for 30 years, says Bonar has always been supportive. "It helps me to know he has confidence in me," the 49-year-old says.

Kim Stegh, who has worked on Bonar's crew for 20 years, has looked for other jobs but can't find anything better. She says Bonar is a flexible leader who listens to employees' ideas and concerns.

While Bonar expects his crew to work hard, he urges them to have lives outside of Canterbury. The crew works from 6 a.m. to 2:30 p.m., and Stegh says Bonar makes sure they quit on time. "We're willing to work overtime if we have to, but we're not here until dark every day," she adds.

You've heard the philosophy that bosses shouldn't be overly friendly with their employees, but that logic is not heeded at Canterbury. One thing Bonar's crew members like about him is that he makes himself available to them, even if they want to discuss personal matters.

The 34-year-old Smith says he and Bonar have a father-and-son-like relationship. They attend turf meetings and sporting events together, and play golf together.



PHOTOS BY LISA LEHMAN

"I'm very proud to work for Terry," Smith says. "I can tell him anything."

When Bonar hears what Smith has said, he chimes in: "It works both ways. I can tell Ed anything."

Bonar also believes strongly in providing feedback. He praises his crew members and wants them to know how much he appreciates them.

"He's my right arm," Bonar says of Smith. "He's always up. You never see him walking around with his head down — never. He comes in every morning ready to go. He'd just as soon pick up a shovel and dig a trench 100 yards long. He's that kind of guy."

Bonar calls Stegh an amazing and multi-talented person. She does everything from planting and tending flowers to grinding mower reels.

"She's an asset to the crew," says Bonar, noting that Stegh commands crew members' respect. "They know that she knows what she's talking about."

While eager to reward a crew member with an "attaboy," Bonar doesn't hesitate to express concern if a crew member is not performing up to task. For instance, Bonar guards against complacency, especially with the people who have worked at the course for a long

Terry Bonar (far right) says he would be nowhere without his crew, including (from left) Eric Moses, Ed Smith, Kim Stegh and Chris Sulyok.

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Paying His Respects

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time, including himself. He says he owes it to the club to keep the staff motivated and performing at a high level.

"Complacency is our biggest enemy," Bonar says. "I'm cognizant not to get complacent. You can't drop your standards, or everybody else will pass you by. This is a great club, and we need to be moving forward."

That said, Bonar strives to make sure his employees are happy in their roles. He did that with Stegh, who started on the crew in the mid-1980s and eventually became Bonar's first assistant. But Stegh wanted a change after about two years at the post.

"Kim didn't do anything wrong," Bonar says. "She just didn't want to be in management anymore, and I didn't want to lose her."

Stegh, who's interested in horses, wanted to work on a private estate where she could tend to the animals and the grounds. Bonar assigned her to the crew at an hourly rate until she could find such a job. More than 10 years later, Stegh is still on the crew and couldn't be happier. Her peers view her as the jack-of-all-trades. "She likes what she does, and she's good at it," Bonar says.

Bonar says he has developed a credible reputation with his employees, which he strives to sustain. That means being straight with them. If Bonar doesn't know the answer to a question, he admits it.

"I would never jeopardize my credibility," he says. "It's the most valuable thing I have."

Bonar displays an egalitarian spirit as well. When Canterbury's maintenance facility underwent a facelift about 12 years ago, the project's architect told Bonar he could design a spacious private office for him. Bonar said thanks but no thanks. He wanted to share the office with his two assistants.

"We need to be in the same office to sit down in the morning and make plans for the day," Bonar says. "We interact a lot."

Bonar is also a modest man. He has learned not to let his ego get in the way of making decisions. He says Mother Nature often reminds him of who's in charge.

"Just when you think you know what you're doing, you have a dead green," Bonar says. "This is a humbling profession, and I've been humbled many times."

Bonar's management style rubs off on crew members. On a recent morning, they talked openly about how much they respect one another and are happy to help each other in their roles. They're also friends.

"That's why I like working here," Sulyok says. "Everybody knows everybody on a work level, but we know each other on personal levels, too."

Bonar, who graduated from Penn State

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University in 1961, doesn't look his age. He appears healthy and tries to stay that way. Bonar, who once weighed 305 pounds and now weighs about 190, works out about four times a week. He can still hit the ball, too. He sports a nine handicap.

In his career, Bonar has hosted several big tournaments, including the PGA Championship in 1973, the U.S. Amateur in 1979 and several top senior tournaments throughout the 1980s and 1990s. He has spent his entire career at Canterbury.

Bonar slumps in a chair with his hands in his lap. He wears a black baseball cap pulled down tight over his head. "I don't have a long time left," he announces in his deep and neighborly voice. "But I'm not ready to retire. I love Canterbury, and I love the people."

Even Bonar is amazed at his lengthy stay at the course. "It's been a good ride," he says with a grin.

The warm sun shines in the modest maintenance facility's window. Bonar gazes up at nothing while talking about what has enabled him to stay on this ride for so long. But the talk is not about himself.

"The secret is to surround yourself with good people," Bonar says convincingly. "I'm just pointing the way." ■

Golfdom Staffer Offers Fond Memories of a Summer Spent on Terry Bonar's Crew



Editor's note: Pat Roberts, Golfdom's national sales manager, spent the summer of 1988 working on Terry Bonar's crew at Canterbury Golf Club. Roberts offers his recollection of that summer.

I could have been a caddy like all my buddies. The money and the hours beat the daylights out of the grounds crew. But from the moment I shook his

hand when he hired me to my last day on the job, Terry Bonar was different. I was a 16-year-old goofball who scalped greens with the best of them, but Terry treated me with the same respect that he treated everyone on the staff. If I made a mistake, he would show me how to get it right the next time. If I had a question, he would make the time to answer it.

There were full-timers on the staff who had been with Terry for a long time. There were also seasonal people like me. I figured we'd be relegated to digging holes or sweeping cart paths. I could not have been more wrong. We worked right along side everyone else.

The people on the crew did everything they could to the best of their abilities. We knew that Terry expected perfection because his bosses (the members) demanded it. Terry worked hard and expected us to do the same. We did.

Terry never raised his voice or treated me like the scalper I was. He treated the crew with respect, and the crew treated him and the course the same way. I loved every second of working on the course that summer. ■

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