

Michael & Vinny Iacono:

Whatever it took for her sons ... she did it

BY LARRY AYLWARD

The two brothers — their eyes wide and smiles bright — beam when they talk about their mother.

"She's always been a rock to me," says 43-year-old Vinny Iacono, the younger brother and superintendent of the Blue Hill Country Club in Canton, Mass.

"She's genuine," says 49-year-old

Michael Iacono, the older brother and certified superintendent of Pine Brook Country Club in Weston, Mass.

Michael and Vinny, who tend turf at two of the Boston area's most exclusive country clubs, say their mother, 75-year-old Pat, taught them how to be strong and not waver in their beliefs.

"She was just a strong person," Vinny says. "She would never let anything on the outside influence her beliefs."

His mother's genuineness, Michael says, reminded him of Edith Bunker from "All in the Family." Not that Pat was a dingbat, Michael says with a chuckle, but she was patient and honest like Edith, who was credited as the glue that held the Bunkers together.

A large part of Michael's and Vinny's jobs at their respective clubs is dealing with members. As any wise superintendent knows, the key to solid communication with members is candidness.

"We do well in our positions because we speak to our members with honesty," Michael says. "We don't BS. That came from her."

Pat's honesty was not only inspiring, it was persuasive, Michael and Vinny say. It made them think twice about behaving badly. And when they faltered occasionally and made bad decisions, they only hoped she would never find out. Because if Pat did find out, Michael and Vinny felt that much worse about what they did because they had disappointed



Michael (left) and Vinny love to talk about their mother, Pat.

their mother.

But even if they did disappoint her,

Vinny says, she always tried to understand why they made the wrong choices.

"She would always be there in a caring way," Vinny says contemplatively. "She gave you a pat on the back and a hug. She didn't make you feel like a loser."

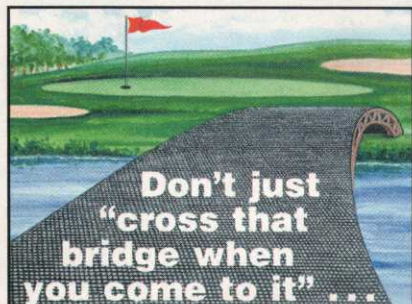
The Iaconos, of Italian heritage, grew up in Providence, R.I. Michael and Vinny lost their father, who was a superintendent, when they were in their 20s. Pat was 52 when her husband, Vincent, died.

The boys spent a lot of time with their mother when they were younger because their father worked long hours and many weekends. Michael and Vinny admit their mother doted over them. They didn't have many chores and she cooked them whatever they wanted to eat.

"We were mamas' boys," Vinny says.

Michael and Vinny learned the value of hard work from both parents. The

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Shaffer

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Shaffer is confident in his abilities as a superintendent, something he attributes to his mother.

"She encouraged me to be an adventurer," Shaffer says. "She knew I couldn't stand to be in the valley, and I had to go to the top of the mountain to see what was on the other side."

Shaffer says his mom also taught him about humility. "She instilled in me that it's not important to boast."

The most important thing his mother taught him, Shaffer says, was the ability to forgive others for their mistakes. Shaffer says he never holds a grudge.

"I could have a big blowout with someone and an hour or two later I'll go up that person and say, 'Hopefully that's behind us and we can move forward,'" he says.

Miriam told Matt that forgiving oth-

ers goes hand in hand with being at peace with oneself. Hence, Matt has found it easy to forgive.

"If you're full of malice and you're bitter . . . well that just fosters ill feelings, which doesn't make you happy," Shaffer says. "And then ultimately you're just a miserable individual. And that's no fun."

Shaffer likes to think he lives an honest life, and he attributes much of that to his mother's influence. "I remember her saying, 'God is watching and He has a good memory,'" he says.

People who know Shaffer know he's a pleasant person to be around. Shaffer says that comes from his mom, too. She has the gift of gab — in a good way — and is an engaging conversationalist.

"She can talk to anybody," Shaffer says. "Today when I stand in front of an audience and give a speech, I'm nervous initially. But then I settle in like we are having a friendly conversation."

Miriam also taught Matt and his sib-

lings to read, as in novels and plenty of them. Shaffer says he reads about 50 books a year.

"We're all voracious readers," he says of his family members.

If there's one regret, it's that Shaffer doesn't see his mother and father enough. He lives about a five-hour drive from his hometown and sees his parents about seven times a year.

"I can't get home enough," he says. ■

Iacono

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family operated a small farm when they were young. The brothers remember their mother working on the farm, sometimes for 12 hours a day and in the hot sun.

"It was work that nobody should have to do," Michael says.

Pat loved school. And despite only making it through the eighth grade because she had to go work for the family when she was a teenager, she championed the importance of an education. Michael, who graduated from Providence College, says his mother instilled him with the value of continued education. "It's why I became a certified superintendent," he says.

Vinny says he was the weaker student of the two brothers. "But all through school mom was the one sitting beside me and helping me with my homework," he adds.

Pat lives in a retirement community in Providence. Her boys stop by to see her as often as they can.

"She's had a tough life, and it was never easy," Michael says. "But she smiles every day."

The two brothers love to talk about their mother. The way they speak of her — what she has taught them and given them — is indicative of their ongoing appreciation for her.

"Whatever it took for her sons . . . she did it," Michael says. "And she still does." ■

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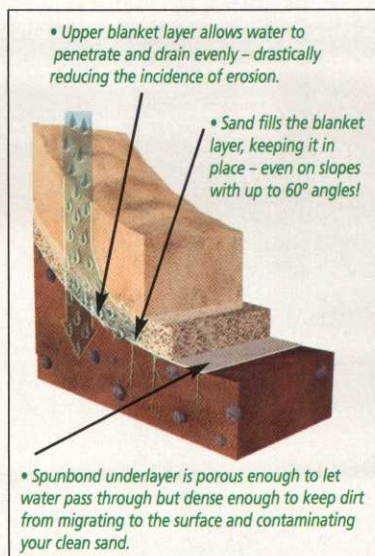
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