

# 'I Absolutely Fell in Love with the Business'

By Larry Aylward, Editor in Chief

**T**he best thing about being a woman in a male-dominated field, Brigit Braun jokes, is that the women's rooms are never crowded at the Golf Industry Show.

Braun laughs. She's been a woman in the golf course maintenance industry for about 25 years. Braun began as a greenkeeper and worked her way up to a certified superintendent. She's now a turf district sales manager for Precision Laboratories. She loves the field as much as any man does.

Braun attended the University of Wisconsin and studied journalism. When she graduated from college in 1980, she headed to Hilton Head, S.C.

"I went down there on a lark," she says. "I didn't know what I was going to do."

Instead of landing a job as a journalist for the local newspaper, Braun ended up working on the golf course maintenance crew at Seabrook Island Resort.

"I absolutely fell in love with the business," she says.

She took the job partly because of her love for golf. Braun once qualified for the U.S. Amateur and now plays to about an 8 handicap.

"I grew up playing golf, but I never saw women working on the golf course," Braun says. "So I never equated that that was an option."

Braun learned golf course maintenance on the job.

"I put my nose to the grindstone," she says. "I took advantage of continuing education and short courses. I just dove into it."

In nine months on the job at Seabrook, Braun worked for three dif-

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ferent superintendents. With such turnover, she figured she had a good chance to move up the career ladder quickly.

Braun landed her first superintendent's job in 1984 at the now-defunct University Club of Jacksonville, Fla., which was operated by a management company. She took a job with ValleyCrest Golf Course Maintenance in 1995 and the next year moved to California, where she managed the city of Modesto's golf courses. She returned to

Florida under ValleyCrest in 1998 and worked as a regional superintendent. She left the company in 2003.

In April 2004 she learned that Precision was looking for a new sales rep in Florida. As a superintendent, Braun had used Cascade, Precision's wetting agent product, and was impressed with it. "If I could sell anything, it would be Cascade because I know that it works," she says.

She contacted Precision and got the job a few months later. She's the only woman sales person on the turf side at Precision.

"But there are no gender issues in this company," she says. "I couldn't ask for a more supportive group to work for."

Braun says she likes being on the other side of the fence, so to speak. She likes speaking with superintendents about their challenges and getting the opportunity to help them.

"I know how they feel," Braun says. "I bring a lot of credibility because I've been there and done that."

What does Braun, who was "called on" often during her days as a superintendent, think of salespeople?

"There are salespeople that don't deserve any business, and there are sales people who really bring value," she says. "It's all about, 'What can I do to make your job easier?'"

Many times, Braun says she goes on sales calls and doesn't even talk about Precision's products. She'll just speak with superintendents about the things they're battling that day and try to offer some advice. "When you do that — just bring information to them — it's huge," she says.

Back to that journalism degree, which wasn't all for naught, Braun says, adding that classes she took in the field taught her to become a better communicator. But the biggest thing she's learned in her life is that you have to do what you really want to do for a living.

"When you find something you love, you just go do it," Braun says.