

I'm still miffed that golf course superintendent Terry Bonar — one of the golf course maintenance industry's stars — didn't get his due at a news conference a few weeks before the Senior PGA Championship was played in May. During the news conference staged by the PGA of America, not one word was mentioned about Bonar's 49-year career at Canterbury Golf Club in Cleveland, site of the tournament.

And nobody mentioned the 68-year-old Bonar was retiring at year's end after nearly a half-century and that the tournament would serve as his swan song at the club. How could Bonar's accomplishments be overlooked? It was a dang shame.

If you know the class act that is Bonar (and many of you do), you understand why I'm still miffed. But Bonar, being the unassuming person he is, didn't take the snub personally. He let it roll off his shoulder like a golf ball off a Stimpmeter.

The fact is, Bonar doesn't need any validation for his worth. If there's anybody who should feel comfortable in his own skin about a job well done, it's Bonar.

If he hadn't been doing his job at Canterbury, the prestigious private club that has hosted many professional tournaments over the years, Bonar would've been run out long ago. But Bonar has endured green committee after green committee for 49 years. His staying power is not only amazing, it says a lot about the man.

I had lunch with Bonar recently at a cafe he fancies a few blocks from Canterbury. We talked in-depth about his career. It's clear to me Bonar chose a humble path to follow during his journey through this often pressure-packed profession.

Obviously, Bonar accrued many accomplishments in his career, but he hardly talked about them during our conversation. Instead, he spoke about how important it was for him to keep his ego in check.

"There's a thin line between a hero and a goat," Bonar said firmly.

Bonar told me of the many times he'd gaze

A Humble Man Will Hang It Up

BY LARRY AYLWARD



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at the course while driving out of the parking lot at the end of a day's work and say to himself proudly, "Man, the course looks good!" But so often, he learned that such pride can be short-lived. "I'd come back the next morning and say, 'What happened here?'"

Bonar also talked about the importance of credibility. He says he never told a lie during his career, not even an itty-bitty white lie.

"If you lie, you'll get caught eventually," Bonar said. "And if they catch you, you're done."

Bonar told me how appreciative he is for his career. I lost count how many times he knocked on wood after saying something for which he was thankful.

When we talked about his career highlights, Bonar didn't speak much of personal accomplishments, like winning the United States Golf Association's Green Section Award earlier this year. Bonar said he's proud of his many assistants who have moved on to become superintendents. He's also proud of his department's safety record. "I can't remember anybody getting hurt on my watch," he said.

Bonar, who graduated from Penn State University, is also humble enough to admit he just can't operate like he could earlier in his career. "I can't go 110 miles an hour anymore," he says. "I'm lucky if I can go 75."

Bonar says Canterbury was "great when I got here" and the course "will be great after I leave." He spoke about how "unbelievably blessed I've been" to have participated in several tournaments at Canterbury featuring some of the game's greatest-ever players.

The industry was unbelievably blessed to have Bonar for 49 years.

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