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### “Supervisors should strive to use informal power because people resent formal power.”

ROBERT MILLIGAN

*Continued from page 30*

better golfers. It's the same with these skills.”

Milligan suggests taking classes or attending seminars on conflict. Also, superintendents can find confidants in superintendents from other towns, and call them up and discuss these issues as they arise. Sometimes you just need someone to confirm that you are doing the right thing, Milligan adds.

#### Peer problems

Another stressful situation for a superintendent is when he or she has conflict with a peer, boss or customer. When you can't fire the source of stress, how do you deal with it?

Last fall, one of Perry's peers was playing in a charity event at his club. The weather was inclement and the course was unplayable so the outing was canceled. The visiting superintendent demanded to know who was in charge. Perry was off-site so his assistant dealt with the angry man. The superintendent demanded to see proof of the course's condition and, when Perry's assistant showed him the puddles, he became rude and made inappropriate comments.

“I wish I could have handled the situation immediately, but instead I investigated and then made a phone call to him the next morning,” Perry says. “I had to call to show

that I support my assistant and the decisions he makes when I am not on the property. After listening to him and explaining my objections, he apologized.”

Superintendents have two types of power at their disposal, Milligan says. There is the formal power that gives them authority over their employees, and there are informal powers that they can use to influence people over whom they have no authority. Examples of informal powers include charisma, positive feedback and expertise.

Although Perry had no formal power over his offending peer, he got the apology because the facts were on his side and he approached his peer with confidence but without arrogance.

“Supervisors should strive to use informal power because people resent formal power,” Milligan says. “We ought to be leading by our ability to influence people with informal power.”

And when the conflict is with a customer? They are always right, aren't they?

“The customer is always right, but there is a line that can be crossed,” Pachter says.

Like when the golfer verbally attacked one of Nelson's staff members because the course was being aerated. When Nelson confronted the member, he denied saying anything and called the staffer a liar. “I almost blew a gasket, but had enough sense to just walk away,” Nelson says.

That was the smart move. Although it is OK to let a member know his or her behavior is not acceptable, the best bet is to simply walk away if someone is screaming or out of control.

“Golf course managers often have as many customers as members,” Bade says. “I tell myself that it is their golf course and they pay the bills. But sometimes it is a matter of educating them about goals and what you are trying to accomplish.”

Perry does his best to eliminate membership conflict before it begins with active communication through newsletters, the club's Web site, bulletin boards, and daily personal appearances on the first tee, in the pro shop and clubhouse.

“By being available, approachable and forward-thinking, most conflict can be stopped with intelligent responses before it starts,” he says. ■

### Grace Under Fire

When conflict leads to confrontation, things can get ugly. It's particularly difficult when you are on the receiving end of a verbal attack. When the tirade comes as a surprise, it's easy to get thrown off balance and say or do things you'll later regret.

If you are prepared to handle such a situation, it's easier to remain composed and act appropriately. Follow these guidelines from Barbara Pachter, the author of *The Power of Positive Confrontation* (Marlowe & Company, 2001), the next time an employee, customer or peer puts you on the defensive:

- **Agree:** Agree with what the person says but add additional information that turns the comment around, such as, “You're right. We did spend a lot of money because it's important to our customers.”

- **Clarify:** Ask questions to get more information. “Why are you saying that?” “Tell me more about your concern.” Probing makes you less likely to appear wounded, and it buys you time to calm down.

- **Acknowledge:** Reiterate what the person has said, then use *and*, not *but*, to provide clarifying information. “There may be some truth to that, and we are looking at the numbers.”

- **Disagree:** Be polite but firm. You can say, “I disagree, and here's why ...”

- **Postpone:** Sometimes it's best to talk to the person privately or at a later time. Say something like, “You obviously have strong feelings. Let's get together at the end of the day so we can discuss this issue in more depth.” ■

— Becky Mollenkamp

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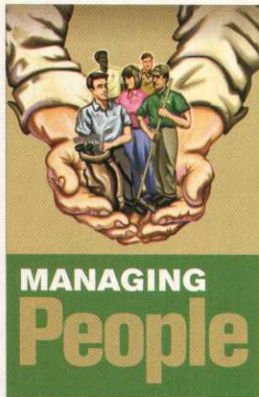


Terry Bonar is in his 44th season at Canterbury Golf Club. Sitting in the golf car is Bonar's Border Collie, Molly.

# 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

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

## Paying His Respects

*Continued from page 35*

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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# SUPER Service

Judy Hutt, owner of Shadow Valley Golf Course in Idaho, is known for her terrific treatment of customers

By Larry Aylward, Editor

It's Monday morning, and Judy Hutt is trying to wake up. The tall and twiggy 53-year-old brunette sits at a tiny table in the sunlit concourse of the Tampa Convention Center and orders a steaming cup of coffee.

But Hutt, the spirited owner and general manager of Shadow Valley Golf Course in Boise, Idaho, doesn't need a jolt of caffeine to stimulate her senses. All one has to do is start talking about the golf business to get her roused.

Hutt, who was in Tampa to attend the National Golf Course Owners Association's annual convention held earlier this year, is asked how she got her start in the business nearly 31 years ago. She tells the story about Shadow Valley, built in the foothills in southern Idaho, and then offers commentary on a range of subjects, including the state of the industry.

"Do you know what I think is wrong with this industry?" Hutt states, her piercing blue eyes widening. "People trip over dollars trying to save pennies. They're so worried about the dollar they make today that they don't worry about the dollar they're going to make the next day, the next day and the next day."

About 15 minutes pass. The coffee, its steam diminishing, sits untouched. One wonders if Hutt, who's wide-awake now, remembers that it's there. But that's Hutt for you. Start talking about the golf industry and the passion begins to flow from her like a swift stream after a fierce rainstorm.

Hutt is blessed with a sturdy pair of vocal cords and likes to use them. She stands out at

meetings such as the NGCOA convention because she asks a lot of questions and gives many opinions. But she says she's not one who speaks up just to be noticed.

"I told myself before I came to this conference that I wasn't going to talk as much," she says. "I have a tendency to [talk too much], but I never want to dominate."

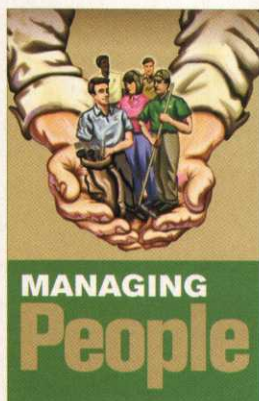
Hutt adores the golf industry, but not because it's such a time-honored sport. Hutt, who seldom plays the game, enjoys the industry for its people. She can't get enough of them, even the rude ones. She'll give her all to get the brusque people to smile. And the whiners? Hutt just looks at them as the ultimate customer-service challenge.

Customer service is Hutt's forte. She's a stickler for it. In fact, her attitude toward customer service is what made her a name in the business and among her peers.

"She's one of the most progressive owners in the business," says Mike Hughes, executive director of the National Golf Course Owners Association. "Other association members perceive her as one of the real innovators."

**H**utt entered the golf business by accident in the early 1970s. Her parents owned an alfalfa farm and opted to turn it into a golf course. Then they asked their seven kids if they wanted to help run it. Judy, who has a bachelor's degree in fashion merchandising, lived in Washington at the time and managed an upscale retail store. She decided to come home and help her family operate the course.

"None of us knew anything about golf,"





Hutt says. "Nobody in the family knew a green from a tee or a putter from a driver."

Business was tough in the beginning, but improved mainly because of the Hutt family's focus on satisfying customers. Interestingly, Hutt believes the golf course survived the early days because none of the Hutt's played golf and devoted all their time to running the business.

"We worked really hard, and we listened to the customers," Hutt says.

Today, the course is a partnership between Hutt and her mother and siblings. But Hutt is the only family member who works full-time. A brother and sister work part-time.

Because of the large number of family-owned golf courses, there are many women involved in the golf business. But there are few women like Hutt who take such up-front roles. There might be no other woman as devoted to the business as Hutt, who jokingly refers to herself as the "token babe" in the industry.

"She always stretching the boundaries of what she can do," Hughes says. "She's definitely someone to listen to and admire."

Bill Fountain, operating partner for The Majestic at Lake Walden golf course and a frequent attendee of the NGCOA show, doesn't know Hutt personally but says he's impressed with her charisma.

"She's a dynamic lady, and she has great ideas," Fountain says. "She knows the business as well as anybody from an operations standpoint."

Fountain says he's impressed with Hutt's marketing ideas about gaining new customers and satisfying current ones. "She's done a lot of great things and has been ahead of the curve for several years as far as customer service," he adds.

Indeed, Hutt and her staff are frequent winners in the NGCOA's annual Idea Fair. Criteria for submitting a concept in the Idea Fair is that it must be "an innovative, revenue-generating or cost-saving idea" that was implemented and yielded a return on investment. Often, the ideas are related directly to customer service.

In 2001, Hutt and Shadow Valley won the Idea Fair for their "G.O.D. for a Day" program. Prior to opening on weekends that playing season, the Shadow Valley staff took all the names of players who phoned in reservations and put their names in a hat. A winner was drawn and named Guest of the Day. Everyone on the staff — from starters to marshals to golf course maintenance workers — were made aware of the Guest of the Day and treated that person like a . . . well . . . a god. The Guest of the Day, who was given a hat with a logo and the initials G-O-D, received a free round of golf, practice balls, lunch and drinks.

Where does Hutt come up with these ideas?

"My mind is like a ping-pong ball," she says. "Sometimes I have a hard time sleeping at night."

**Judy Hutt (center) always makes herself available to golfers at Shadow Valley. To her left is T.J. Gomez, the course's pro.**

PHOTOS BY LISA BROWN

*Continued on page 40*



**Judy Hutt (third from left) says she couldn't operate the course without input from key members of her staff, including Jan Ashley-Schmall, deli manager; Greg Hunnicutt, superintendent; Suzie Lund, assistant manager; T.J. Gomez, head pro; René Hadley, assistant superintendent; and Jean Smith, golf shop manager.**

*Continued from page 39*

One of Hutt's favorite books is T. Scott Gross' *Positively Outrageous Service!*, which she says brings customer service down to an elementary level everyone can understand.

Hutt is concerned about everything related to serving customers, from the condition of the bunkers to how many times the phone rings in the clubhouse before someone answers it.

"I like to have it acknowledged by the third ring," she says. "When I call someone, I count how many times it rings. And when someone answers, I'll tell that person, 'Do you realize that it was 22 rings before you picked up the phone and acknowledged me?'"

Excellent service breeds high expectations, Hutt believes, but that's what she wants. When a golfer drives into Shadow Valley's parking lot, Hutt wants that person to know what to expect from Shadow Valley. If a golfer has no expectations, he or she may as well have bad expectations, Hutt says.

There are certain "musts" the course strives for, Hutt says. They are a clean clubhouse, a well-manicured course, cold water in the coolers, fresh water in the ball washers, an on-time tee time and an 18-hole round in less than 4.5 hours.

Greg Hunnicutt, superintendent of Shadow Valley, says Hutt is passionate about the business. "The thing I admire about her most is that she takes the course to heart," Hunnicutt says.

Hutt instructs the golf course maintenance staff to be courteous to players. In fact, she

believes the maintenance staff plays an integral role in the customer-service process because players often encounter them on the course.

Hutt's philosophy is that Shadow Valley is in the entertainment business, and people play the course to have a good time. "And if they don't have a good time, I'm going to give them their money back," she vows.

Hutt believes the customers — and not she — should make most of the decisions regarding Shadow Valley's business. That philosophy stems from wanting to separate her business from the competition. One time while on vacation in St. George, Utah, Hutt says she and her husband went to a driving range about 4:30 p.m. The operator said he was closing because he wanted to go home.

Says Hutt: "When people call us and ask what time we open, I tell them, 'An hour before you want to get here.' When they ask what time we close, I answer, 'An hour after you leave.'"

Hutt realizes that marketing is personal. She prefers one-on-one marketing and often takes a nondescript approach. For instance, a golfer comes in the clubhouse after playing 18 holes on a hot summer day. Thirsty, he walks up to the counter, lays down \$2 and orders a cold beer. Hutt gives him the beer, pushes the money back and tells him the drink is on her today.

"I do that all the time," Hutt says. "I tell everyone on my staff to do that. I would rather buy 1,000 golfers a cold beer each on a hot day than put a \$500 ad in the newspaper that says come and play Shadow Valley."

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