

Month

'A Great Place for a Golf Course'

Golf industry experts and aficionados agree that Shinnecock Golf Club, site of this month's U.S. Open Championship, is one of the finest courses in the country and the world.

"You look at the topography of this land and the contour changes and how natural everything is," says Mark Michaud, superintendent of the course since 2000. "It's a great place for a golf course."

Shinnecock features 164 bunkers that Michaud and his crew recently renovated. Many of the bunkers appear on the difficult 540-yard 16th hole (pictured here). The hole can be a bear, thanks to the bunkers.

Shinnecock, designed by William Flynn in the late 1920s, will play 6,997 yards for the U.S. Open at par 70. Michaud says players who keep their balls low and know how to bounce them into the greens will have the best chance of winning the tournament.

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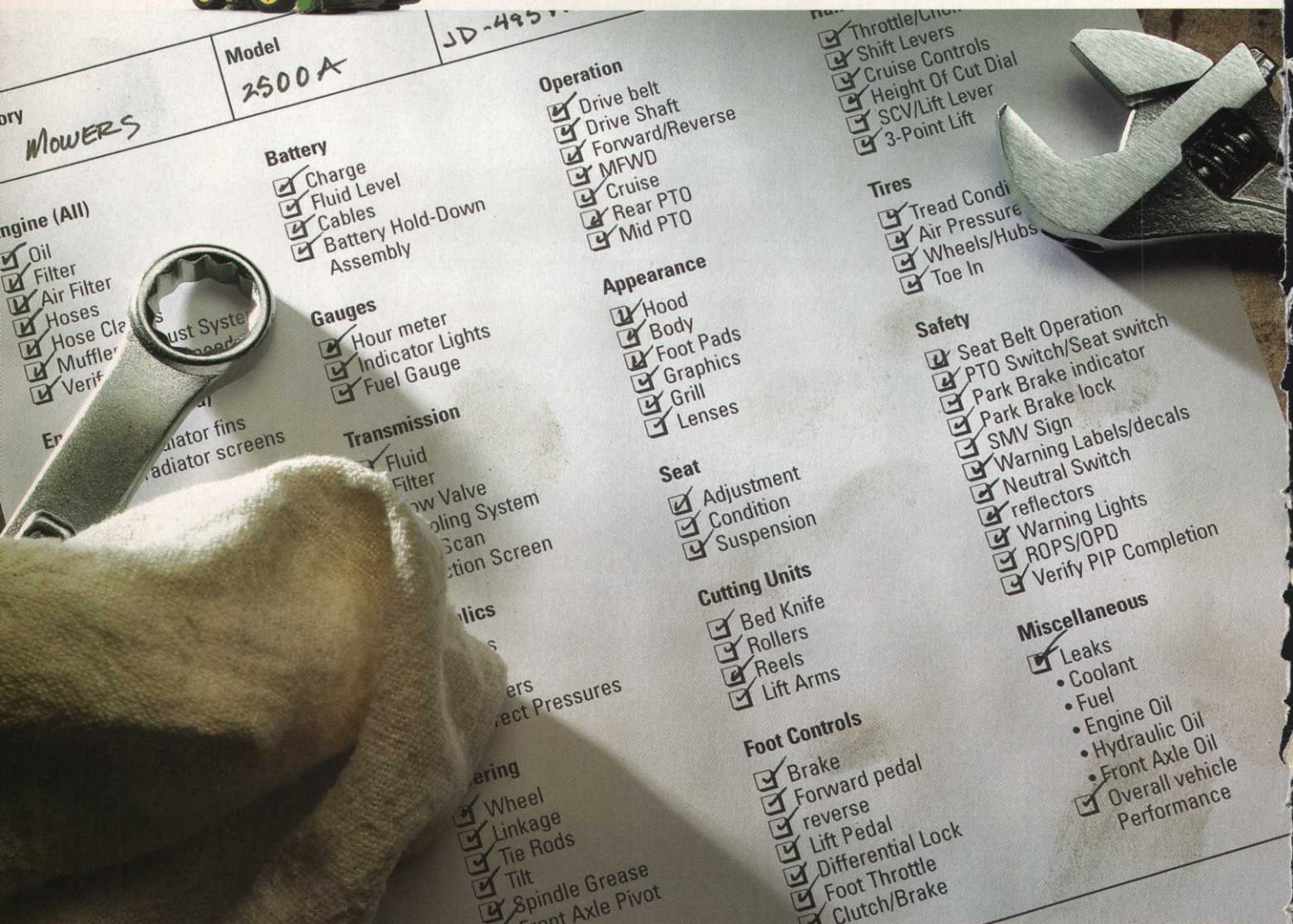
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You can slice it and dice it anyway you want. In the real world, however, superintendents don't set the tone and direction at courses — owners do. So when it comes to the environment, it doesn't matter how badly superintendents want to be good environmental stewards if they don't have their owners' support.

Golf can be a profitable business venture. But when owners take shortcuts and neglect safety, accidents can happen and thrust their golf courses (and by association, the whole golf course maintenance industry) into disrepute. Let's face it: Golf is already on the short list of evils that environmental activists want to eradicate from their perfect world. Irresponsible owners who encourage unsafe environmental policies just add fuel to that already blazing fire.

Given golf's high visibility, it certainly behooves an owner and his staff to take overt steps to demonstrate their intent to make a positive environmental contribution to the community — by deed, not just by word. If they leave the field to the activists, they're asking for trouble.

Activists only produce fear and distortion in communities. They don't produce habitats, jobs, recreational options, relaxation venues or revenues in the form of taxes. They use their tax-exempt donations to fuel their endless spin machines. It *is* spin, after all, because the science doesn't back them up. But unless owners use the available scientific evidence to create sensible environmental programs and combat the activists' messages, it doesn't do them any good.

Golf courses enjoy a range of resources. But whether a golf course charges \$125 a round or \$20 after 1 p.m., there's no excuse for an inadequate, filthy, and environmentally dangerous maintenance facilities and programs. A superintendent can't do it alone, however, because he isn't in a position to push and bully the owner into doing the right thing.

I heard a good line from Verdicon's Jeff Wharton, who recently talked about bringing a facility into compliance with local environmental regulations. He called the mentality of the owners the "If-Then Syndrome." He went on to say that many owners take the attitude

Owners Must Lead On Environment

BY JOEL JACKSON



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that, "If something happens, then we'll take action." This shortsighted position puts owners and superintendents at risk. I'd ask the owners not to shoot the superintendent messengers if they try to bring these potential problems to their attention.

Taking a proactive environmental approach to golf course operations and voluntary compliance with best-management practices goes a long way in building regulatory cooperation, public trust and public awareness of the good that golf courses can do. In contrast, negative media stories about courses that disregarded regulations can only strengthen claims by activists that golf is a bad industry. That stain spreads to all golf courses instead of just the violators.

We are on the brink of a new dynamic with owners as the Golf Industry Show looms ahead next year in Orlando. Superintendents and owners will intermingle for the first time in general sessions, receptions and the trade show, if not in the classrooms. With luck, owners will hear how things ought to be done, should be done and why. Most of the attending owners will probably be more "choir" members who already know the right paths to take. Their challenge will be to reach out to more of their peers.

I hope some of the environmental commitments that superintendents have made with regulators over recent years will rub off on the owners.

They must take leadership roles in demanding exemplary environmental conditions and compliance with safety regulations. If they do, they will reap huge returns in positive public relations and money savings.

Joel Jackson, CGCS, retired from Disney's golf division in 1997 and is director of communications for the Florida GCSA.

Here's to Dad

Six industry individuals pay tribute to the fathers who helped shape their lives

In honor of Father's Day on June 20, *Golfdom* salutes the dads of the many individuals — from greenkeepers to company CEOs — who comprise the golf course maintenance industry. In this special section from pages 24 through 36, Managing Editor Frank H. Andorka Jr. and Editor Larry Aylward asked six industry individuals to tell them how their fathers influenced them — in and outside of their careers. The six individuals featured in this section — Andrea Bakalyar, George Hamilton, Steve Mona, Larry Powell, Gregg Breningmeyer and Mike Hughes — all have earnest relationships with their fathers. *Golfdom* thanks them for sharing their stories.

Andrea Bakalyar:

I Learned to Value Community and Service From My Dad

BY FRANK H. ANDORKA JR.

Andrea Bakalyar's voice rushes over the line with the wildness of raging river rapids, so quickly her listener must pause to catch his breath. Her joy as she describes her stepfather's gifts to her is electric — a jolt of warmth and love to the soul.

"Around the neighborhood, he's known as 'St. John' — though never to his face because he'd hate it," Bakalyar says, laughing. "He will help anyone at any time with anything. He's always been there for me when I needed him, and he taught me so much. He's been a great example of how to live."

Bakalyar, superintendent at the Wee Course at Williams Creek in Knoxville, Tenn., tells with evident relish of her father's first introduction into the world of golf course maintenance. The restless Bakalyar asked her father, John Merryman, if she could work on the neighboring golf course between shifts at the dairy farm where she grew up, a family operation since the 1800s.

Merryman considered the proposition for a moment. "I don't think they let girls work on golf courses, but you can try," he told Andrea, supporting her ambitions while trying to keep her hopes from being dashed if the course turned her down.

Little did John know then that his daughter would become a superintendent, one active in setting and advocating women's issues in a predominantly male industry. When she attended college for both teaching and nursing without settling on a career — and driving her mother to distraction ("Pick a career already," she remembers her mother saying in exasperation) — John calmed her fears.

"He told me I'd find the right thing for *me* eventually if I just followed my instincts," Bakalyar says. "You can't imagine how much his confidence in my decision-making ability meant. My parents never set limitations on me."

But his impact on her career runs far deeper than just support. On the dairy farm, Bakalyar absorbed lessons about commitment, hard work and responsibility. She watched

Continued on page 36



EDWIN REIMSBERG

Andrea Bakalyar and her father John Merryman

George Hamilton:

I Learned the Importance of Education From My Dad

BY FRANK H. ANDORKA JR.

Joy, pride and pain intermingle in the silence on the other end of the phone. George Hamilton Jr. is trying to compose himself. He starts discussing that he thought his father, George Sr., would love his work as an assistant professor of turfgrass at Penn State University when he stops suddenly. A deep breath echoes, a voice catches and sobs resonate over the phone. Slowly, George Jr.'s voice returns.

"I'm sorry," he says, wiping tears away. "I miss him a lot, and hardly a day goes by when I don't think of him."

Hamilton exhales again and picks up the thread of the story where he'd left off. He says he wished his father had lived to see him get his doctorate and teach at Penn State, the school that overshadowed everything his father, a pro and superintendent at various golf courses throughout Delaware and Pennsylvania, did.

"He was above all a teacher," Hamilton says. "He took people under his wing and helped them learn the business. That's one of the reasons I became a teacher instead of a superintendent — to carry on that legacy. I hope the work I do is a testament to him."

Hamilton started hanging around the dirt-floored barn where his father worked after turning 6 years old. His father, talked turf to him in calm, quiet and unassuming tones. Those whispers snared Hamilton's heart for the industry by the time he turned 15.

In his own silent way, Hamilton's father also taught him valuable lessons about how to treat people. Whether it was an employee, a golfer or a fellow superintendent, George Sr. always treated people with respect and dignity.

"He always strove to be the consummate gentleman," Hamilton says. "He tipped his hat to everyone and said, 'Good morning,' cheerfully to everyone he met. He taught me to be kind to people and to help others. [Those were] his greatest gifts."

Though George Sr. never worked at what most people would consider a high-end club, Hamilton never heard him complain about lacking resources. When he needed a tool, he built it himself or adapted existing technology by adding his own innovations to accomplish his goal.

"That same philosophy drives my research," Hamilton says. "I build on the work of those who came before me,



George Jr. and George Hamilton Sr.

and I hope to leave something others can build on."

This year, Penn State honored father and son by establishing a scholarship and endowment fund in their names. The George W. Hamilton Sr. scholarship fund, established by George Jr. and his wife Becky with an initial endowment of \$25,000, will fund scholarships for undergraduate and certificate program students enrolled in the turfgrass science program. The George W. Hamilton Jr. fellowship, initially endowed at \$150,000 by an anonymous donor, will further the educations of a master's of science or doctoral student in turfgrass science.

"I learned the value of teaching young people from him, and it felt so good to give some of that back by naming the endowment after him," Hamilton says, his voice catching once again. "I take my job so seriously because of the commitment I learned from my dad — and I will be forever grateful for his guidance." ■

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Steve Mona:

If It Weren't My Dad, I Wouldn't be in the Career I'm in Today

BY LARRY AYLWARD

If it wasn't for his father, Steve Mona says he would not be the CEO of the GCSAA.

"He introduced me to golf," the 46-year-old Mona says of his dad, Frank. "I don't think I'd be in this position if it weren't for him having done that. I credit him for how I wound up in my career."

Frank introduced Steve to golf when he was 12. That's when the Mona family moved from New York to northern California. Frank joined the Castlewood Country Club in Pleasanton, Calif., where the Monas lived. Steve spent his summer days honing his game on the course.

"One of the main reasons my dad joined the course was to introduce us to golf," says Steve, who's the oldest of four children.

Frank, who turns 80 in July, still plays golf about four times a week in Palm Desert, Calif., where he lives. Steve says he and his father have played some memorable rounds together, including at Augusta National and Winged Foot Country Club.

The superintendents he represents respect Mona because he's so approachable. Mona says he learned that skill from his dad.

Steve remembers his father treating everyone with respect at Griffith Laboratories, the food seasoning manufacturer where he worked. His father had the top job at one of the company's facilities, but Steve says you never knew it.

"He had a great relationship with everybody," Steve says. "He treated everyone like they were the president of the company. I told myself, 'I have no business thinking that I'm better than anybody or my position is better than someone else's position.'"

Mona says his father led by example. He rarely sat Steve down and told him what he should do. He showed him through his actions. "That's how I picked up on a lot of things that are now part my character," Mona says.

His father's humility always impressed Steve, and he strives to live a modest life himself. "My dad hardly ever talked about himself," Mona says.

Mona says Frank held a demanding job, but he was a family man at heart. He wanted to be part of his children's lives.



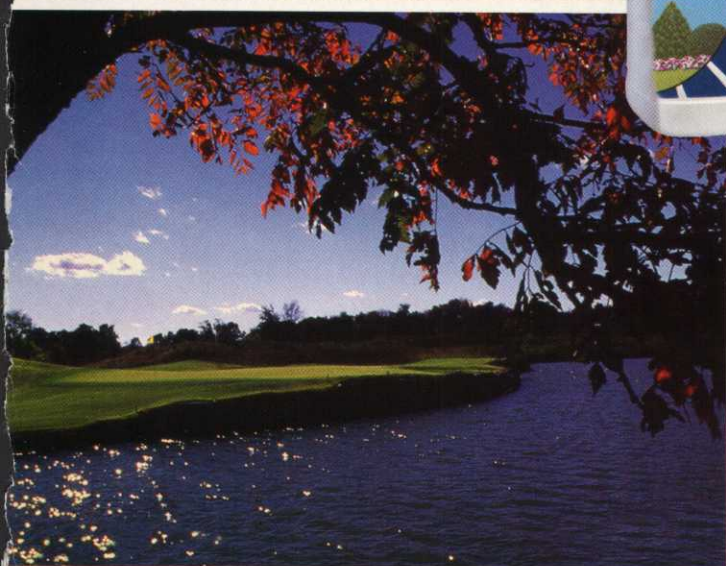
Frank and Steve Mona

Steve remembers his dad taking him and his brother along when he played golf with his buddies at the club. He also remembers his dad's friends didn't bring their teen-age sons along. Steve remembers how proud he felt that his dad wanted him there.

"My dad was sending a message to me about his belief and confidence in me — and that he wanted to spend time with me," Steve says softly.

Mona says his father also taught him about work ethic. Steve says he doesn't remember his father ever missing a day of work.

Like father like son. Steve says he's missed one day of work in his 24-year career — and he went home sick at 4 p.m. ■



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Larry Powell:

My Dad Taught Me About Principles and Perseverance

BY FRANK H. ANDORKA JR.

Larry Powell, superintendent of Clearview Golf Club in East Canton, Ohio, chooses his words carefully and deliberately. The words come in short bursts, separated by pauses as he decides how to discuss his father's legacy. His caution stems partly from the humility his parents instilled in him at an early age, but there's another factor at work. He realizes his father not only made significant contributions to him, but also to the entire industry. The historical importance of his father's role weighs on every word, and Larry clearly wants to get it right.

Powell's father, William, returned from World War II in 1946 to find the golf courses he scorched as the captain of Minerva (Ohio) High School's golf team closed to him because he was black. When he decided to build his own course in reaction, white banks in the town refused to loan him money for the project.

Still, William never allowed the struggles to kill his dream, so he built Clearview with private funds from two black doctors in the area. Larry says the resulting course remains the only black-built, black-owned golf courses in the country. The enormity of what his father endured to create the course impressed Larry, who says he grew up admiring the principles and perseverance that marked the struggle.

"My parents didn't shield me from what was going on in the business or in society," Powell says. "We had many discussions around the dinner table about the challenges we faced because of the color of our skin, but they also taught us not to accept the limitations of others. They taught us to persevere."

Larry Powell played golf by the time he was 5 or 6 years old. By the time he turned 8, he pushed a mower around the course. He watched his father care for the course and wondered how his father always seemed to know exactly what the course needed — almost as if it spoke to him.

"He taught me how to flow with nature instead of fighting it," Powell says. "His instincts about the course are usually right, and I've learned to trust myself the same way."

William, who worked a second job as a night security guard during the first 18 years after the course opened, also



William and Larry Powell

knew the importance of making every minute count. If he could think of new ways to do a task more efficiently, he did.

"I've tried to carry on his legacy of innovation," Powell says. "He was always willing to try new ways of doing things if it could save him time or money, even when other people told him he was crazy. He blazed his own trail."

But William bequeathed his son a far more human gift as well — the commitment to treat everyone equally, a lesson learned from the early struggles to build the course. Larry carries his father's vision forward with pride.

"He always told us to put ourselves in the other person's shoes before we acted," Larry says. "He never asked his employees to do something he wouldn't be willing to do himself, and he treated everyone with the same respect he expected from others. That's what I hope I'm carrying on today at the course." ■