



## IS GOLF COURSE MANAGEMENT A CAREER OPTION FOR WOMEN?

By Lora Ripp



It is not uncommon for young people who have spent their childhood on a farm to consider a career in agriculture as they approach college age. That was certainly true for me. And since agriculture covers a very wide range of career possibilities, there are many surprises as one uncovers these varied options. For me, golf course management was one of those very pleasant and appealing surprises.

After my introduction and entry into the world of golf course management, more revelations awaited me. I was amazed to learn of the time spent preparing a golf course for play each day. The equipment required to operate a golf course was fascinating and unexpected. I knew very quickly that I wanted to learn all that I could about how golf courses are run, how equipment was maintained and how golf courses were renovated. It was an exciting career choice for me.

I also figured out very early that this field of pursuit is one that has been traditionally dominated by males. It is intriguing to think that the 20th century womens' movement has not yet caught up to golf course management. Where are the women in the "management" of golf course management?

It may be that females are too busy making their way through other fields, but I don't think this is more than a small part of the answer. Because of experience as a female in this profession, I am convinced that a good bit of the answer lies in the area of interest. Women have made great strides in the fields of law, medicine, and business because they have had keen interest in them.

I know that in order to eventually become a golf course superintendent, especially as a woman, a person must first and foremost have an intense interest in the profession. With so few women expressing that interest in golf course management each year, it is difficult for a handful of them to almost single-handedly take on a system,

change attitudes and prove their own personal ability and dedication, despite their female sex. Women are often not taken seriously.

Even when women do express interest in the profession and try to establish a foothold, they are at times not treated equally. Green committee chairmen, club officials and owners are not yet, at least in some cases, quite ready to turn their golf courses over to female golf course superintendents. On the other hand, women working on golf course crews are occasionally given *preferential* treatment. This isn't true in every case and certainly preferential treatment has not been my experience. And I would not have wanted it to be, either.

I have done my share of the not-so-popular jobs on a golf course, and sometimes I feel that I have done more than my share just trying to prove myself and my abilities. It is a bad feeling always having to prove yourself, trying to make everyone else realize that you are an equal, given the chance.

A major breakthrough in the involvement of women in the management of golf courses will come when we find a way to create more interest in the profession. To do this we must let women know that the doors are open for them and that there are many golf course superintendents who are willing to give them the helping hand they give to anyone whom they feel possesses the qualities needed for the job.

I know there are some men in the field, though, who do believe that it is a male dominated system and that it should stay that way. This alone fascinates me because I am not sure why they still think that way. These are the 1980's—a time for equal opportunities for equal abilities! I admit I believe that there are jobs that women are just not physically built to do, but this is not one of them. In this case, it is simply an attitude problem.

So what is there to do now? Well, for those who think it is time to give

women an opportunity, let them know that you are willing to help them out and do everything within your power to do so. And for those who believe, albeit wrongly, that women are just out to make them miserable, it's time to open your mind and give them a chance. Let's see what women really are capable of doing.

Women hoping to pursue a career in golf course management have the same interest and feel the same enjoyment and challenge in the profession as anyone else. All we want is the chance to show our capabilities.

*EDITOR'S NOTE: THE CAMPUS CONNECTION is a new feature for the GRASS ROOTS, one that you'll be seeing in each issue. The WGCSA has long realized the value of education and has a long tradition of generous support, both at the local and national level. The Turf and Grounds Management Program at our land grant college in Madison is nearly thirty years old. Many WGCSA members are graduates of that program and even more WGCSA members have, over the years, provided the practical training necessary for students in that program. THE CAMPUS CONNECTION plans to keep WGCSA members updated on the students in the program, what their hopes and dreams are, and in a general way serve as a communication vehicle among all of us. Each feature will have a different student author and widely varying topics. We sincerely believe it benefit these young people in other ways—a chance to sharpen their communication skills, the obligation of deadlines and the experience of dealing with a tough and unforgiving editor!*

*Our first column was written by Lora Ripp. Lora is a senior at the UW-Madison where she is majoring in Soil Science with a specialization in Turf and Grounds Management. Dr. Wayne Kussow is her advisor and she is presently working at Cherokee Country Club for Michael Semler. Lora was awarded the 1987 WGCSA James R. Love Scholarship.*