



Where Few Women Choose To Travel

By Lori Ward Bocher

In an industry practically void of women, Christine Faulks stands out like a flag on the green. But it's not just her gender that sets her apart from the crowd. Her spark, her enthusiasm and her entrepreneurial skills have helped her succeed where few women choose to travel.

"I like people. I did a lot of traveling when I was younger so I'm able to adjust to situations easily. And I truly believe in what we're doing. So it's easy."

What she does, along with her husband, Bob, and brother-in-law, Randy is operate Faulks Bros. Construction, Inc., a diversified construction and supply company located in Waupaca, Wis. She is president of the Greensmix division, the nation's largest blender of rootzone mixtures for sport surfaces.

"Basically, what we're doing at Greensmix is filling a prescription," Christine says of their ability to create precise blend of sand and organic amendments and micronutrients for the construction or renovation of golf course greens and tees or other sport surfaces.

"We're unique in that we can travel around the country and we can absolutely guarantee that our blends will meet the specifications," she adds. "We're taking the liability off of the general contractor and putting it on our shoulders."

Before Christine came to Faulks Bros. in 1986, the company had already been supplying sand for golf course construction and topdressing through another division, Waupaca Materials. At first, only straight sand was used. Then golf course superintendents began to request a blend of sand and organics to improve percolation and reduce compaction.

"We saw the trend, the change," Christine recalls. "We were in a favorable position because we were already supplying materials to the industry."

So they developed the technology to mix sand and organics at their Waupaca plant.

"But sand will only ship so far," she continues. "Trucking-wise, it's not cost



Christine Faulks

effective to ship more than 150 miles. We had developed the technology to make mixes that met exact specifications, but we had saturated our local market. So we decided to take it on the road."

That's when Greensmix was born. With their own fabrication and maintenance shop, they designed a state-of-the-art soil blender that can blend up to four ingredients simultaneously at rates approaching 400 tons per hour. In 1988, Greensmix began operating with one blender. Today they have five.

Christine is grateful for the help they received from several golf course superintendents. "When we thought about starting Greensmix, Monroe Miller was one of the people we bounced our ideas off of," she says. "We got a lot of really good input from him."

"Jim Latham was also a big help," she continues. "We took our brochure down to him after we had it designed. He looked at it and gave us some feedback. Then, after we built our first blender, we took it to Oneida (Green Bay) and showed it to Randy Witt and to Stevens Point to show to Jeff Bottensek. These people were just super helpful."

People. That's what Christine likes most about working in the golf course

industry. "They're friendly, polite, educated," she says. "And they work outside. I think people who work outside generally have a very positive outlook on life."

As president of Greensmix, Christine works mainly with golf course contractors and builders. And, through Waupaca Materials, she supplies golf course superintendents with topdressing sand and other materials.

How did Christine end up in the world of sand and gravel and golf course construction? Believe it or not, through the male-dominated industry of ready mix concrete.

Born in England, Christine's father was a tool and dye maker who believed that his family should see the world. She spent the first 14 years of her childhood in her native England and in South Africa before moving to Milwaukee.

As a teenager new to the U.S., she was quick to lose her British accent. "When you're 14 years old, it's so important to fit in," she recalls. "You assimilate." Years later, she became a U.S. citizen.

During the 1970's, Christine worked part time for a company that sold chemicals to the concrete industry while attending the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee. She graduated in 1978 with a degree in English.

"After college, I was going to write a book," she recalls. "But I soon realized that wouldn't work. So I joined a ready mix concrete company in a PR capacity."

When her employer, Central Ready Mix of Milwaukee, needed someone to develop and run a lab for testing sands, gravel and other ingredients used in the ready mix business, Christine accepted the challenge. She took classes from and is certified by the American Concrete Institute. She also holds certification from NVLAP through the Department of Commerce. And she has published several articles about quality control and testing procedures for construction materials.

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Christine worked for Central Ready Mix until 1986 when she joined Faulks Bros. Construction in sales and new product development.

In the male-dominated industry in which Christine works, does she feel like she stands out when she's the only woman in a meeting or at a conference? "Not any more," Christine answers. "Ten years ago I would have said 'yes.' But because I've been the only woman in the room for so many years, I don't notice it any more."

When asked if she plays golf, Christine vary diplomatically answers, "I have a very nice set of clubs. I golf a little, but not as often as I'd like to."

When she does golf, she views the course differently than most golfers. "I see so many courses before they're opened for play that I think back to the way other golf courses looked before they were constructed," she says.

Christine and Bob also enjoy boating on the Chain O' Lakes near Waupaca where they have their home. And they are active members of the Parfreyville United Methodist Church where Christine is chairman of the mission committee. "Any extra time we have, that's where we spend it," she says.

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The Wisconsin Golf Course Quiz



ESSAY CONTEST

By Monroe S. Miller

Now that the pressure of school is off, even though the heat's on, it occurred to the instructor that this may be the perfect time to sponsor an essay contest.

Well honed writing skills are important to the successful golf course superintendent, and they are becoming more important all the time.

To that end the "QUIZ" feature this issue is sponsoring an essay contest. The subject is one you choose, limited

only to the topic of Wisconsin golf course management.

The essays will be judged by the Editor, WGCSA President Rod Johnson and Professor Wayne Kussow.

The winner will have his/her essay printed in this feature and will receive a free subscription to *THE GRASS ROOTS* for a year for anyone of choice.

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