

The Ultimate "Golf Widow"

by Peg Czerkies

I knew what I was getting myself into. It was 1978 when he went straight from the prom to Cog Hill without first going home to sleep, and I knew. You see, it was already 3 a.m., and he couldn't be late for work. In another two hours, he should be changing cups, mowing greens, etc., and otherwise beginning to learn this trade that would consume life eternally. As a golf course superintendent's wife, I consider myself lucky in a lot of ways. It takes an ambitious man to put in the kind of hours that he does. Sending him out to spend the day doing something he hated in order to support his family would be a tremendous guilt trip on me. Instead, he is doing what he loves to do and is constantly rewarded by the progress he sees. From April to November, he is there to see results, seven days a week.

As you know, any wife of a superintendent has to deal with her husband sacrificing family time in order to be at his golf course making sure everything runs smoothly. It's not only his job on the line, it is also his name in the business. Any of you who have gotten married in the summer and now have to spend all of your anniversaries at home, know what I mean! If any of your children were born in the summer, I hope you had loving, caring people around to help out. Getting your husband to take time off during the golf season for ANYTHING (besides

actually getting to play golf), it totally impossible. That family camping trip when the kids are out of school is virtually nonexistent, unless you're taking them yourself. This is not a bad idea. We have built some really great memories over the years.

The fact is, if I want to have a life in the summer, I'm on my own, because my husband is always going to be at work. There is a positive side to his work schedule, though. Because his day begins and ends so early, he is able to spend time with the kids.

We wives see very little of our husbands during "the season". You really have to work hard at creating quality time. Unless you're one of those wonderful women who gets up before the crack of dawn to make breakfast for her man, the first time you see him will be after work. This can be dangerous. He is tired, grumpy and stressed out. He wants to eat, take a shower, and he's hoping he can get "Seinfeld" in before he falls asleep. Don't let this "end of day" image become who he is to you. He must be pleasant sometime during the day, or he wouldn't have a job. Here are a few tips I have discovered.

I suggest shocking him in the morning with a fresh pot of coffee and a smiling face (caution: I don't do this very often. If I spoil him, I'd be locked into getting up every day). He won't



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Golf Widow

continued from page 15

know what to think, and we might even strike up a conversation. If I want to talk to him at all, I never turn on the weather channel. He would be glued to it like he was the Super Bowl. Superintendents watch it obsessively; with their weather radios, weather computers, and every scientific toy on the market, nothing replaces the weather channel. "It changes every ten minutes, you know!" The only thing that challenges the weather channel on TV is sports. It is also the only thing that makes me thankful that he has chosen the weather channel to watch instead.

If breakfast doesn't work, or if it works so that that I want more time with him, I like to invade this world for lunch. Seeing him in his element is quite an experience, especially if he has a crew to boss around. You can also learn some Spanish that they don't teach in high school. I can see first hand what kind of insanely busy day he has facing him every time he wakes up. Not that I don't appreciate that now, but seeing it really helps me to be a little nicer to him when he comes home. He really doesn't just ride around the golf course in his cart all day.

These are the ways I get to see the different facets of my husband's personality and confirm that during this hectic season of work, there is, in fact, still some beauty left in the beast. I wouldn't recommend getting into his world too often; it is still his turf (no pun intended). They work so hard during the golf

season, it is amazing to me that they still know who we are at the end of it all. When people ask if my husband works in the winter, I tell them "just barely, he only works forty hours a week then!"

There is a definite difference between a "regular" golf widow and a superintendent's wife. Golfers don't go back at night to make sure the course is still there. Our husbands do. When golfers are not on the course, they are at work. Even when our husbands are working, they are on the golf course. At least, ordinary golf widows can learn how to play, or just drive the cart, and maybe spend some time with the man they married. We can do that too, I believe it pays to learn how you can include yourself into this time spent working.

For example, if he has to go back at night, I see what I can do to help. Helping him with the routine tasks lets him know that his work is interesting to me, and it can be fun. I'll ask him to demonstrate his irrigation system for me. He seems to be very proud of his water pipes. If we're lucky, we get to see some non-paying, freeloading, after-hours, walk-on golfer get hit with 20,000 pounds of water pressure. Life's little rewards are all in his day's work. If you really want him to admit he needs you, get his Border Collie to fall in love with you. Man's best friend is she who can handle his dog!

OK. I was hired. I fell in love with this dog faster than he fell in love with me. The Park District hired me to travel to various parks and chase geese with Mick, the dog. It was either I take the job, or let some stranger work with him in the parks, thereby

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Golf Widow

continued from page 16

confusing my precious pup even further with three people to have to take orders from. I really has been great, though. If you have ever seen these dogs work, it is quite a rush. When picking up my dog from the golf course to do my park route, I have learned a few things about life in the golf course workplace:

1. Most of the money won on a golf course is not betting on your game. It is betting whether or not it takes that novice golfer less than 10 shots to make it to the green.
2. You don't have to speak Spanish to communicate with your crew. Slow, broken English with a heavy Ricky Ricardo accent will do nicely.
3. The most vile and contemptuous creatures on earth are those pesky honkers (geese, not golfers). They make a mess every eight minutes, and they know how to play head games with your dog.

Being an "ultimate golf widow" sometimes has advantages. It teaches me to be independent. I also love knowing that my husband's job is to nurture a little piece of the earth. I have learned to appreciate his work through the beauty of the golf course. It is incredible the way the moon can shine through the trees and beam onto the strip of green velvet that is the fairway,

and the gift of a perfect green cannot be described. All this means that Mother Nature is on her throne, and Kevin is happy. His golf course truly is his Emerald City, and he is the Wizard. The Wizard: you know the man responsible for all the magic, yet still the man behind the curtain who on one pays any attention to?

When I think of what he goes through during a season, it makes it much easier to let him go on his convention alone. He need time to be on his own without having to answer to anyone but himself. He's earned it! It's funny though, when I go with him, the convention is work, work, work. It's only when I stay home that he seems to have the really big fun. It was easy to be resentful of him when we had very little ones at home. Again, this is where I had to make my own fun. Now, my kids and I usually head north to ski at convention time! It's much better to trade stories when you get back together than to hear about all the fun you missed.

The game of golf has been very good to us. At 17, I fell in love with a blonde kid on the high school golf team. It was then that I knew that I would someday be married to a golf course superintendent. I pray that his career doesn't turn him into an old man before his time. I knew what I was getting myself into when, on your first date, he turned to me and asked, "Want to see where I work?" I've always known, and I have not regrets.

Credit *On Course*, July, 1998

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President Cup Champions Mike Evans(center) and Larry Ringer (right) of Country Club at Woodmore are presented the trophy by Walter Montross, CGCS



Host Superintendent Steve Potter, CGCS of Woodholme Country Club



Mike Legere, CGCS and Dave Anderson, CGCS contemplate how to make a hole-in-one in order to win a new car.

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