

A Luxury You Can Afford

A secretary for the superintendent. It's becoming a necessity.

by **STANLEY J. ZONTEK**

HOW MANY businesses do you know with an operating budget in excess of a quarter million dollars per year or more that do not have secretarial support? Maintaining a golf course is a business, and there are increasing demands on golf course superintendents for their time. All too often, superintendents spend time in the office doing routine office work instead of being out on the golf course supervising employees and ongoing maintenance projects.

This turf tip is inspired by three different golf course superintendents who maintain three different categories of golf courses. In each case, the superintendent employs a full- or part-time secretary.

Case Study #1

S. Daniel Pierson, CGCS, is the golf course superintendent at Wilmington Country Club in Wilmington, Delaware. His course is a 36-hole private facility. Beyond the 36 holes of golf, Dan is responsible for maintaining 20 tennis courts, the clubhouse grounds, tree and sod nurseries, and supervising ongoing golf course renovation projects.

To Dan, having a full-time administrative assistant is not a luxury; it is a necessity. With an operating budget in excess of \$1.5 million and 50 employees in the summer and 28 in the winter, having an office manager allows Dan to supervise all aspects of his job while delegating the routine paper work.

Dan says, "My most important employees are my managers, mechanic, and Dede Houston, my secretary. Dede, as is probably the case with most operations of this nature, truly is our office manager and coordinator. Come to think of it, let's put Dede as number one!"

Case Study #2

Stephen Potter, golf course superintendent, maintains Woodholme Country Club in Pikesville, Maryland. His course is an 18-hole private facility with an operating budget in excess of \$750,000. The goal at Woodholme Country Club is to provide the members and their guests with a quality



Dan Pierson and his secretary, Dede Houston, work as a team at Wilmington Country Club (Delaware). This is a big operation requiring a tremendous amount of administrative time, which can best be done by an office manager.

experience at all levels — out on the golf course, in the clubhouse, on the tennis courts, and at the swimming pool. For Steve, his full-time secretary, Chrissy Green, frees his time so that he can do what he feels he does best, maintain the golf course.

Says Steve, "There are so many telephone calls, sales calls, letters, and reports to write that I would go crazy without Chrissy. As time goes by, I have begun to appreciate that without this administrative help, the workload this job demands would result in my spending more time in the office, both during the day as well as the evening; this is time better spent with my family."

Case Study #3

The final example is from David "Ben" Abel, superintendent of Glenrochie Country Club in Abingdon, Virginia. While the demands of the superintendent's job seem to be ever increasing, budgets in rural Virginia are much more modest. The operating budget for Glenrochie Country Club barely exceeds \$380,000. Nonetheless, Ben can afford a part-time secretary.

How can a golf course with such a modest operating budget afford even a part-time secretary? "Lisa frees me up to spend my time out on the golf

course where I can make the best use of my club's money. While she works only five hours per day, this is when I need her the most to answer the telephone, do time cards, sort mail, organize the office, and work on the computer. She even improves my morale! I am never behind administratively."

"At first, I was not sure I could justify the expense of her position. Now, I would never eliminate it. Having a secretary is not a luxury; it is a necessity." This became readily apparent when Lisa Johnson resigned. Says Ben, "In the interim between her leaving and my hiring Susie Clatterbuck, I had to do their work. It really showed the value of their position at Glenrochie Country Club."

In order for today's golf course to be effectively managed, the superintendent needs help, and that help often-times is an administrative assistant. It is not a luxury anymore; it is becoming a necessity.

STANLEY J. ZONTEK is the Director of the Mid-Atlantic Region, visiting courses in Delaware, Maryland, Pennsylvania, Virginia, and West Virginia. Stan has served as Director of both the Great Lakes and Northeast Regions, and joined the Green Section staff in 1971.