

Golfers' wives lead rough lives

By M.B. Dillon Ward
staff writer

Saying "I do" to a professional golfer can be as blissful as sinking a 40-foot, \$100,000 putt. Some glamorous marriages have blossomed from what budded in the mixed grill as a romance fit for meaty gossip columns. For such cosmopolitan couples, dining and living in the White House or in the first-class cabins of internationally bound 747s can become as mundane as a trip to the movies.

Claudia Bove was an 11-year-old lemonade vendor on the 16th tee of a Wethersfield, Conn., golf course when she met Lee Trevino, then 29. A long friendship weathered Lee's first two marriages, and the two have toured together since they were married in December 1983.

Karen Levy was a Florida beauty queen attending a Tallahassee golf tournament when Hubert Green asked her out in 1971.

"I was dating someone at the time, so I thought it was really rude of him to ask me for a date. I thought he was cocky and rude until 1977 when we renet and I found out he hadn't realized I was going out with someone else," said Karen, a former flight attendant whose husband won the 1977 U.S. Open.

As a first-grader in New Albany, Ind., future U.S. Open champion Fuzzy Zoeller sat across the aisle from Dianne Thornton.

"Students had to go to Mass in the morning, so we brought our breakfast to school," recalled Mrs. Zoeller, who tells one of golf's more unusual love stories. "Our parents shopped at the same bakery and bought us doughnuts to bring to school."

The foundation of a marriage thus was built as two 6-year-olds discussed who was devouring the better doughnut.

BEING A PRO golfer's wife can mean facing situations less pleasant than cocktail hour with Monaco's Prince Rainier at the Hotel de Paris under a retractable glass roof.

"Some of the wives say it really bothers them to have to stay home (because of finances or children)," said Florida's Karen Green. "When Hubert has been here

and leaves, it's very difficult. I have to shift gears and become the head of the household. If my child has to be rushed to the emergency room, if the plumbing breaks or the car doesn't work, I have to be the mother and the father," added the mother of three who plays "pitiful golf," teaches CPR and works at her son's school.

"The rough times are the times Fuzzy has to be away from home," agreed Dianne Zoeller, who keeps up with three children while managing a cattle and quarterhorse farm in New Albany.

Nor is the alternative all that easy, say pros' better halves.

"The thing that's hard about the whole lifestyle is that either you're with your husband full time — you go to work with him when he's golfing — either you do that 24 hours a day, or you're not there at all, and he calls you once a day," said Claudia Trevino of Dallas, Texas. "It's all or nothing, and that's hard."

"You have to be patient enough to realize you are appreciated as a wife, but you are a cheerleader. It's definitely their world," added the former medical assistant.

"Anyone in the limelight has a hard life," said Dianne Zoeller, a graduate of Missouri's Columbia College. "It doesn't matter where we are, people are all over your husband, and we're pushed to the back. If he wins, he's the god of that week. You have to know girls are going to be after him. But he's still dad. You have to trust him. It's all we can do."

When the sport's "high risk" relationships survive their early years, the pressures can decrease.

Christine Peete, whose youngest, Kallanetta Kristina, is 10, said "the only thing that (is) hectic is running the office (Christine is Calvin Peete's manager) and occasionally going out on tour. The packing and unpacking in hotels week after week is the most hectic."

"But I enjoy it because I'm a people person," said the Fort Myers, Fla., resident, a non-golfer who "talks a good game."

"Golf is such a gentleman's sport it gives you the opportunity to meet real, genuine people."



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