

## Chuck Stark: Meet Gold Mountain's unsung hero

Chuck Stark, Columnist Published 2:25 p.m. PT Feb. 14, 2018 | Updated 2:25 p.m. PT Feb. 14, 2018



(Photo: Contributed)

[f](#) CONNECT [T](#) TWEET [in](#) LINKEDIN [2](#) COMMENT [E](#) EMAIL [M](#) MORE

It's easy to take Gold Mountain Golf Club and its beautifully manicured 36 golf holes for granted. It takes a lot of people to make that happen, but the unsung hero of this facility is greens superintendent Ed Faulk, who retired a couple weeks ago.

He stayed behind the scenes, quietly going about his business for 34 years, giving as much care to the original and still popular Cascade Course as he did to the more acclaimed Olympic Course, which has hosted the U.S. Amateur Public Links (2006), U.S. Junior Amateur (2011) and NCAA men's regionals

(2008 and 2015).

"When we first opened Olympic, I told the men's club we weren't going to shirk the Cascade for the Olympic," he said. "We have the same size crew on both and we tried to treat 'em equally. The Cascade has always been our bread and butter."

Faulk grew up in Sequim, and was one of four brothers who worked on weekends and after school with his dad, the superintendent at Dungeness Golf Course (now The Cedars at Dungeness).

After a four-year tour in the Air Force, Faulk returned home and wanted to enroll in an aviation mechanic program at South Seattle Community College. He was put on a waiting list at the college and ended up back in Sequim, working with his dad.

Aviation's loss turned out to be golf's gain.

"I wanted to continue working on aircraft, but when the opening finally came up I was entrenched at Dungeness," he said. "I was having fun and just loved doing it."

“Operating equipment, dealing with chemicals, fixing plumbing, fixing electrical stuff,” he said. “It’s not repetitious at all. You’re always working on something different every day and I enjoyed that.”

Faulk left Dungeness in 1979 to work at Port Ludlow, one of the Northwest’s top resort courses, and came to Gold Mountain in 1984. He replaced John Alexander as superintendent just before the Olympic Course opened in fall of 1996.

The way he went about his business earned him respect and admiration from those he worked with at the city of Bremerton-owned course that is now managed by Columbia Hospitality.

“He was just passionate about what he did,” said Daryl Matheny, the former pro who took over as general manager at Gold Mountain six years ago. “He’s a great leader, a great friend and what I keep coming back to, he’s a team player who always put the facility first.

“If I had an odd job at the clubhouse I couldn’t handle, Ed would be the guy I would call,” Matheny said. “If I have a leak in the bathroom, I’m calling Ed. If I have shingles falling off, I’m calling Ed.”

Scott Alexander, Gold Mountain’s former director of golf, worked side by side with Faulk for 28 years. Alexander operated the golf part of the business and the restaurant; Faulk showed up before dawn, checking the weather, working on payroll and putting together a plan of attack for a crew that mowed the grass, raked bunkers, fixed hydraulic leaks, and just about anything else you can think of.

“In 28 years, I don’t think we ever one time had an argument,” Alexander said. “He was just the easiest, low-key great guy to work with. He knew his craft, and he never really wanted any recognition for anything. He just went about his business and the budget he worked with was a lot less than some of the other nicer courses around. He could stretch a budget, and that was important.”

Easy Ed kept such a low profile that Alexander guessed there were superintendents at other courses and golfers at Gold Mountain who didn’t know who he was.

“He just did his job, almost unnoticed if you know what I mean,” Alexander said. “People did notice because the course was great, but he’d just slip in and slip out and do it.”

Faulk made sure the Olympic Course was ready to host a national championship when the U.S. Public Links came to town in 2006. The greens, the rough, and aesthetically, the course was perfect.

“With all the years I’ve been here, seeing him in action, his shining moment as far as I’m concerned was that first USGA championship,” Matheny said. “It was his first real big test and you could tell he was stressed the week before event, but the way he interacted with the USGA and the greens committee when they arrived ... He knew the golf course was perfect and he could step back and take a breath and enjoy it with everybody else. He proved what I knew already; he was a capable guy and knew what the hell he was doing.”

The USGA’s Ed Staebler, director of the 2011 U.S. Junior Amateur, couldn’t believe what Faulk and his crew of 10 were able to do during that event, which was won a young Jordan Spieth.

“To be able to serve up on a platter a golf course that is in this good of condition, and to be able to bring the putting greens to the speed we want and the firmness we want, and it’s 11 people, is astounding,” Staebler said at the time.

The USGA was accustomed to courses using crews of 35 or 45 people during a championship week. They had a crew of 100 at the U.S. Open held at Chambers Bay in 2015.

Faulk’s crews worked double shifts during big events —mowing the greens in the mornings and fairways and tees in the evenings, in addition to filling every divot on the course each night for the USGA tournaments.

That’s a USGA requirement. Gold Mountain’s regular customers didn’t get their divots filled on a daily basis, but Faulk made sure they felt like they were playing on a championship, pristine courses.

He learned a lot working for John Alexander, who is now the superintendent at Fircrest Golf Club in Tacoma.

“John was like, ‘Let’s build a new tee,’ and I’d bring in some new drawings and he’d go, ‘Yeah, let’s do it.’ I had a ball working for John,” Faulk said. “The most important thing he taught me was to see things more from a players’ perspective. I looked at more of the big picture. I learned that from him.”

Faulk lives just 20 minutes away from Gold Mountain, and — surprise, surprise — he was clearing brush on his lake-view property earlier this week. He and his wife, Nancy, are preparing to sell their home at Erickson Lake and move back to Sequim, where they've bought an old farmhouse with 2.5 acres of property. He doesn't have any plans to get back into the work force right away.

"That first year or so we want to get the house the way we want it," he said. "It has a pasture and barn and a big shop, which I like. We might get a critter or something to keep the field down so we don't have to mow it."

If he gets bored, he might consider doing something down the road.

"But my wife says no more golf courses. She doesn't like the hours," he said.

Except for a windy November day in 2010, when Gold Mountain lost 125 trees and the facility looked like a war zone for about a month, Faulk enjoyed every minute.

"That's the only sick feeling time I had," he said, "but it was kind of fun cleaning up the mess ..."

*Chuck Stark is the former sports editor of The Sun. Reach him at [chuckstark00@gmail.com](mailto:chuckstark00@gmail.com).*