

Technical Advisor

*Not long ago Missy Crisp was a middle-school math teacher on Long Island with no connections to the United States Golf Association. Today, **Alan Bastable** reports, she's the technical expert on its Executive Committee*



MISSY CRISP WAS STUNNED WHEN SHE GOT THE call. It was March 2001 and the 60-year-old resident of Mill Neck, New York, had been asked to accept a nomination for election to the United States Golf Association's Executive Committee. "It came totally out of the blue," she confesses.

Not that she wasn't qualified. In fact, Crisp's credentials were exemplary. Although she was a new face to many at the USGA, she had made big waves in other golf circles. While serving on the Executive Committee of the United States Senior Women's Golf Association (which holds no relation to the USGA) from 1999-2002, Crisp used her technical savvy gained from 20 years' experience running a computer consulting business to customize a tournament scoring program. And after joining the Board of Directors of the Women's Metropolitan Golf Association in 2000, she proved she could manage multiple responsibilities by serving as the WMGA's Chairwoman of Publications. With this role came a wide range of duties from maintaining the Association's website to editing its newsletter.

Further, and perhaps most important, she was a known commodity to Bill Campbell, then the chairman of the USGA's Nominating Committee (both Campbell and Crisp are members of Seminole Golf Club and the Jupiter Island

Club, both in Florida). Campbell, the 1964 U.S. Amateur champion and two-time U.S. Senior Amateur champion, allows that while it uncommon for someone with no prior USGA experience to be elected to its Executive Committee, it is not unprecedented and often is encouraged because the new appointee generally brings a fresh perspective and new ideas to the table. "Occasionally, a rare talent comes along, and that's just what Missy is," says Campbell. "Her résumé speaks for itself: This lady has talents to burn."

While Campbell was the first to broach Crisp's name as a potential candidate, it quickly became apparent, he recalls, that she was also on the radar of a couple of other committee members. So Crisp was quickly nominated and soon thereafter elected, becoming just the fifth woman to sit on the USGA Executive Committee (she is currently one of two women on the 15-member committee).

It was another remarkable episode in a remarkable career that began, for all intents and purposes, on the day Crisp quit teaching middle-school math.

THAT WAS IN 1983. TWO DECADES EARLIER CRISP AND HER HUSBAND Peter, whom she'd met just before her senior year at Vassar College in Upstate New York, married and moved to Mill Neck, a small town on the North Shore of Long Island. Crisp majored in political science, but originally focused on

physics and mathematics. So when she heard a local middle school was looking for a math teacher, she seized the opportunity. Her career at the Green-Vale School in neighboring Glen Head would span the next two decades.

By the time the personal computer went mainstream in the late 1970s, Crisp's husband, a venture capitalist, was a director of a promising start-up company called Apple Computer. This, Crisp says, allowed her to familiarize herself with this new technology "at an early, early stage." Like an investor buying up shares of a red-hot IPO, Crisp soaked up as much information as she could about computers and programming, compiling a library of knowledge about a subject that was foreign to most. She was eager to help her students do the same, but resources for teaching computer-related subjects did not yet exist. "You couldn't buy books, you couldn't buy programs," Crisp recalls, "you couldn't buy *anything*."

So she developed her own computer literacy curriculum for the school and set up a computer department. "Soon parents began querying me about how I might be helpful to them," Crisp says, "and that kind of convinced me that, after 20 years, I should leave teaching and set up my own computer consulting business."

Crisp bid farewell to GreenVale and founded Crisp Computer Corporation, a consulting firm which provides a variety of services to businesses and individuals, from hardware and software installation to customizing applications and programs for specific needs (she honed her business acumen at Hofstra University on Long Island from which she earned an MBA in 1988).

Soon she was working with local municipalities and villages on the North Shore. "I developed an accounting program that was consistent with the New York State guidelines for the villages, as well as a database program to track their property and tax management needs," Crisp explains. That subsequently led to the local police departments' hiring her company to consult on the computerization of their response systems.

While working on that project, Crisp met with management from Admit Computer Services, another Long Island company which develops and markets public-safety software. "That led to me joining up with them and merging my municipal operation with their police and public safety operation," she says. Today she remains a part-owner and CFO of Admit, which is now New York State's largest provider of public safety software.

Dennis Labriola, the founder of Admit who has known Crisp for 15 years,

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credits her with much of the company's success, particularly during its infancy. "She was instrumental in preparing the initial product line," he says, adding that she was so well connected in the community that she helped open some doors. "She also provides us with high-level guidance," he says, "and when she comes into the office, she always has a smile on her face and a word of encouragement for the gang."

Crisp continued to offer her encouragement and support for education, too. Not only did she return to the classroom—a four-year stint teaching an adult education computer class at C.W. Post College on Long Island—but for 12 years she served as both the chairwoman and president of the Board of Trustees at Miss Porter's School, the boarding school she'd attended in Farmington, Connecticut. She also is a former trustee of both Hamilton College in Clinton, New York (from where two of her three daughters graduated), and Clarkson University in Potsdam, New York.

"Missy is very smart—and smart about a lot of things," says Burch Ford, the head of Miss Porter's, who has worked closely with Crisp on a variety of school issues. "She understands business, finance, technology, non-profits, philanthropy—so many different fields. And above all she's incredibly energetic. Whatever the task, Missy is up for it."

Even farming. In 1977, Crisp founded Earthworks, Inc., an organic farm on Fishers Island, off the coast of Connecticut, where her family had a summer home. She felt it was an opportunity for her daughters to take on some responsibility during their summers and to learn the basics of running a business. "They would help with planting, weeding, watering, and even some selling," she says. Of course, in typical Crisp fashion, the operation, which lasted seven years, also had a philanthropic arm: The family donated all the proceeds to the Island Health Project. "The farm was a way of sending a message to our children," she adds. And a hobby she adored so much that she began taking landscaping classes at the New York Botanical Gardens. In 1980, she earned a certificate in landscape design.


Golf has been in Crisp's blood since she can remember. Born Emily Ridgway (as an infant she was nicknamed "Little Missy" by the family's housekeeper), Crisp grew up in Short Hills, New Jersey, where she was introduced to the game at age five by her father. Though her family belonged to Baltusrol Golf Club, just minutes away in Springfield, she played most of her golf on Fishers Island. Clearly the island's traditional windswept links suited her game. She went on to win 14 club championships there.

Today, Crisp and her husband, who is now retired, split time between their homes in Mill Neck and Jupiter Island. They play their summer golf at Fishers Island and the Piping Rock Club on Long Island, where she also is a former club champion, and their winter golf at Seminole and Jupiter Island. True to form, Crisp has served on the Board of Directors at Jupiter Island, and on the Ladies Golf Committee at both Jupiter

and Seminole. But her focus these days, she says, is on her responsibilities with the USGA.

Though Crisp served on eight USGA sub-committees in her first year, she perhaps made her greatest impact, not surprisingly, on the committee that oversees the Golf Handicap and Information Network (GHIN), a complex USGA program which provides handicapping calculation services for regional and state golf associations. (The Metropolitan Golf Association helped launch GHIN in 1981, and today it serves more than 60 associations, 9,700 clubs, and 1.9 million golfers throughout the United States.) "We've had some hardware and

MGA's GOLFWORKS student-intern program and Mosholu Golf Course, The First Tee facility in the Bronx run by the MGA and the Met PGA. "Mosholu is a model program for the USGA," says Crisp, who was on hand at the facility's opening last June, "in that it is well run and it attracts youngsters who would not otherwise be able to experience the game. It works because it has strong leadership and role models."

Ask Crisp how she manages it all, and she offers a succinct answer. "You find the time," she says. Indeed, whether it has been for her family or her business, for education or for the game she loves, Crisp has done just that. Burch Ford of Miss Porter's sums it up best. "Missy has managed to keep a lot of balls in the air," she says. "But unlike many of us, she has also managed to catch them all on the way down." 

"Missy asks the right questions," says USGA President Reed K. Mackenzie, "and that saves us a lot of money."

software glitches," Crisp says, "and I think I've helped GHIN work its way through some of those issues."

So helpful, in fact, that she has been appointed chairwoman of the GHIN Committee for 2003. It's unusual to give such responsibility to a second-year committee member, points out USGA President Reed K. Mackenzie, but Crisp is more than capable. "I've never hesitated to give her any assignment," he says. "Missy is bright, motivated, and enthusiastic. And, of course, she's knowledgeable about software and its applications, and is able to get us in touch with people in the industry. She asks the right questions, and that saves us a lot of money."

In her inaugural year, Crisp also served on the Foundation Grants Committee, which awards USGA grants to deserving golf programs. Two such beneficiaries in the Met Area have been the

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