



## DISGUSTED WITH AUGUSTA

I am disgusted with Augusta—the Augusta National Golf Club, to be exact, a Georgia cultural cul de sac where powerful men secretly grovel for inclusion in an exclusive golf club petrified of pink.

The image of Bill Gates, who legend has it tried for years to get in, or any real guy for that matter, begging and whining for admission to anything other than wedlock, should turn off any real woman, for good.

This club is so exclusive that the only US President allowed in was Ike—no Bushes yet, even though every hole is named after a plant or shrub. Hole 3 is Flowering Crab Apple.

So, what did the grouchy feminists expect from an antediluvian group whose chairperson is named “Hootie” (one tongue slip away from Hooters) when they decided to target the hosts of golf’s most prestigious tournament, The Masters? Just what they got—no play even if you can pay.

Imagine the fear-gripped locker room chatter among the Old Augusta Boys, whose average age is in the mid-seventies, after Margaret Burk, president of the National Council of Women’s Organizations, demanded they let women in—no more T & A humor on the links, out with tacky green jackets and matching polyester plaid pants, Cobb salads in the dining room, plastic surgeons on the roster, oh my.

It could also mean joining other former male bastions in calling a stop to an American tradition of excluding women from the informal halls of power, where bad jokes and bourbon soaked conversations resonate into the formal corporate board rooms and Congressional chambers.

The sudden challenge by feminist groups and the “over-my-dead body” response from Chairman Hootie, left the 300 or so elite and accomplished members looking like Trent Lott’s staring into headlights, even though three were about to receive awards from a prestigious national women’s business group for diversity efforts in their companies.

After an uncomfortable silence from members who are required by club rules to keep the secret society secret, bad things started happening from within the ranks when *USA Today* published the membership list, complete with resumes and ages.

Thank goodness American Express Chair Kenneth Chenault, one of the few baby-boomer members, and Sanford Weill, CEO of Citigroup, joined Lloyd Ward, United States Olympic Committee CEO, to support inviting women in so I did not have to burn my business credit cards.

Former CBS chief Thomas Wyman and Bush Treasury Secretary Appointee John Snow quit altogether last week, while others complained about the embarrassing outing brought on by The Hoot’s bad manners in invoking the right to spend another 69 years discriminating against the other, and now made obvious, better half.

So far the rare view inside this mole-ish clique of business and sports Who’s Whosey-What’s-It’s is pretty much a dud—most of these guys need Pilates classes so they can actually see the golf ball when they tee-up, something they might have to think about if women were around.

The Augusta mess would have been just another news-ak flap of the week if so many women were not still Windexing their fingerprints off the Pyrex ceilings built by the octogenarians on the Augusta National membership list.

Female Jack Welch’s with fat CEO retirement perks are scarce.

But, there is Martha Stewart, who by virtue of her singular ability to make tons of money, barely escape a jail sentence for insider trading and still clear the dishes after dinner makes her the perfect candidate to break the Augusta gender barrier.

And that is what really makes me disgusted with Augusta.