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Politicians hold tee party

I.F. hosts charity golf tourney

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A charity golf tournament is one of the rare occasions when just about anyone can find himself spending four or five hours in close company with a governor or congressman.

"Before I went into politics, I remember playing with Raymond Parks and Cornell Thomas and thinking 'Wow, these guys are state legislators,' " U.S. Rep. Mike Simpson said. "At first, it was pretty intimidating."

Are there protocols non-celebrities should observe in these situations? Forms of address, for example?

"I always tell people right away to call me 'Butch' instead of 'governor,' " Gov. C.L. "Butch" Otter said. "They usually start doing it, too. After a while, it's, 'Hey, Butch, why are you lagging 18-inch putts?' and 'Come on, Butch, get back in the cart.' "

Both Otter and Simpson said they viewed public policy as a suitable topic for discussion between shots.

"Frankly, it's one of the ways I have of learning what people in the state are thinking and talking about," Otter said. "It's relaxed, high-quality face time, and people shouldn't feel they can't talk politics."

Simpson and Otter were in Idaho Falls on Saturday to participate in a fundraising outing benefiting the Idaho Meth Project. The site was the Idaho Falls Country Club, a familiar venue for Simpson, who was once a dentist in Blackfoot.

"I don't know that my presence would intimidate anyone here," Simpson said. "People might remember me as a guy who used to come up for member-guest tournaments and hit a lot of shots in the water -- and then throw his clubs in afterward."

Simpson and Otter both chose to circulate on the course Saturday rather than play. Otter's wife, Lori, did tee it up and had a comforting word for anyone who's ever completely butchered a shot in front of a VIP partner.

"I can be pretty good at not seeing things," she said. "After a while, you learn when to start admiring the landscape."