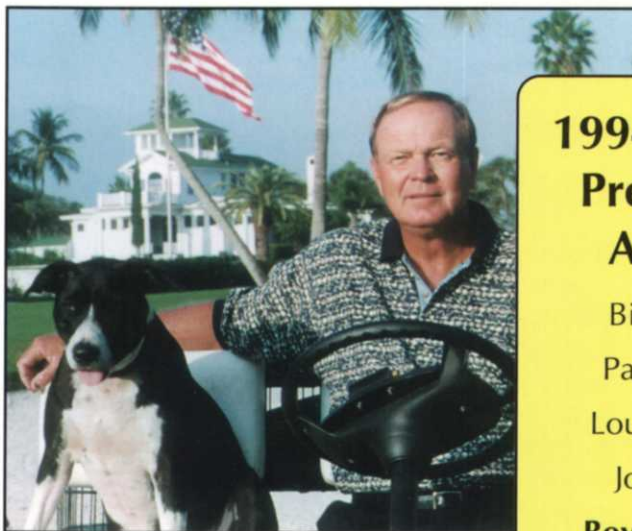


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President's Award



Royce Stewart and Divot at the Gasparilla Inn.

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Royce Stewart —

Leadership by Example

BY JOEL D. JACKSON, CGCS

If you worked on a golf course managed by Royce Stewart, you had a sense of belonging to a family. There is always a closeness, a togetherness of the staff. One of his best traits is his ability to foster a teamwork attitude among co-workers.

How does he do it? Quite simply, he walks the talk. Royce is the epitome of leading by example. As Jack Harrell, Sr. of Harrell's, Inc. put it, "Every day, he's always out there stirrin' amongst 'em." Tommy Morrow, former employee and current superintendent at Turtle Creek in Tequesta, adds, "Royce would often eat lunch and take breaks with the crew. He created a comfortable atmosphere of trust that eliminated the possibility of tension."

Tommy continued, "I started in the golf business at the age of 18 or 19 under Royce at the El Conquistador Country Club in Bradenton. I can remember being given a weedeater and a gas can and walking the course trimming as I went. I learned from Royce that being a superintendent was more than growing grass. As I look back on it now, it was the aspect of professionalism that he portrayed by his

actions. I must have recognized that he used a good formula for success, because I find myself working and eating with the crew like he did."

Royce displays another key behavior of a good leader. He shares information. For Tommy, that information changed his career path. "One day, as we were all taking a break together, Royce shared the results of the FGCSA Superintendent Survey with us. I had learned from Royce the value and potential of a career as a superintendent. It was easy to identify that the higher paying jobs were on the lower east coast. So, I chose to pursue my career from the "suncoast" to the "gold coast", but it was only because Royce cared about his people that I was able learn about the possibilities that existed."

Royce is very proud that five of his former employees have succeeded in becoming superintendents. Besides Tommy, there are David Jackson, Gary Mull, Jon Roxburgh, and Clinton Smith that spent time learning the trade from the "old master." Clint had this to say about Royce, "I was there at El Conquistador along with Jon and Gary. Royce

Experience is also a good teacher

took the time to answer questions and teach us about the business. He's the man I learned it all from. He's as fine a gentleman as you will ever want to meet. I just want to thank him for all he's done for me." Staff development is another key skill of a good leader.

Just as these young men had Royce as a mentor, Royce had mentors and counselors along the way. Royce cites his father-in-law, the late Jamie Jackson, and Jack Harrell, Sr. as having the greatest influence in his early development in the golf business. In 1965, he helped Mr. Jackson build and operate the Skyview Lakes Golf Course in Lakeland, Florida. Royce recalled, "I helped build it, install the irrigation, grow it in, maintain it, and work in the pro shop. I wasn't the superintendent, just a jack-of-all-trades. My father-in-law taught me a tremendous amount about golf course management. He is the person most responsible for my becoming a superintendent. He showed me that this profession could lead me to meet many fine people and all the while providing a decent living for my family, financially."

"My other mentor was Jack Harrell, Sr. I have known Jack since I was sixteen years old. He has been a great friend and a tremendous influence on my life personally and professionally. I have always admired his honesty and integrity. He has offered very wise counsel to me for many years." And so it was that when Royce took his first superintendent position at Seminole Lake Country Club in Pinellas County in 1970, he and Jack used to talk turf management when Jack made

Royce Stewart

1965-69 Skyview Lakes Golf Course, Lakeland, FL

1970-77 Seminole Lake CC, Seminole, FL - Superintendent

1977-83 El Conquistador CC, Bradenton, FL - Superintendent

1983-90 Imperial Lakes CC, Lakeland, FL - Superintendent

1990-present Gasparilla Inn, Boca Grande, FL - Superintendent

his calls. There are many of us who still "consult" with Jack, Sr. when we want a honest answer to a question.

Experience is also a good teacher. While time itself is not a benchmark for wisdom, after 28 years in the business, Royce has learned many lessons. I asked him to share one that he has found to be helpful. He said, "For new superintendents, do your job to the best of your ability and your knowledge. If you have a problem, don't be afraid to ask people for help. You can get into much more trouble by moving ahead into something that you really don't understand. People will actually have MORE respect for someone who is honest enough to admit they need help and are bold enough to seek it. I try to let all of our employees know that **THERE ARE NO STUPID QUESTIONS!** Do not hesitate to seek advice."

The great part about being in the position to receive the President's Award is that you've got lots of highlights and memorable moments to recall. Royce

began, "The Gasparilla Inn is a favorite retreat for former President George Bush. He has been here three times as the guest of the owner, Mr. Bayard Sharp, since I've been here. The first time was while he was still President. They flew in on the Presidential helicopter and landed on the 4th and 5th fairways. The helicopters were so heavy they left 6-inch deep indentations in the turf. I guess we can overlook that, considering who it was."

"The security was incredible in advance of the visit and while the President was there. There were even sharpshooters on top of the pro shop. Every morning at 7 a.m., he would jog the perimeter of the course. During his stay, he would spend half the day playing golf and the other half fishing. Mr. Bush was very nice and I was able to have my picture taken with him."

"Another of my fondest memories was during my stay at Seminole Lake C.C. We hosted the LPGA's Orange Blossom Classic three times. The Classic was one the early tournaments for the LPGA. It was a fun experience. And now, I have the pleasure of the great feeling that comes with being associated with the other recipients of the President's Award. I am privileged to be part of this group. It has been a very fast 28 years, 24 of which have been as a Superintendent."

Royce Stewart has left his indelible mark on those who know him best by setting an example worthy of following. He is a man of integrity, who has demonstrated that actions, indeed, speak louder than words.

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