

DISTINGUISHED SERVICE AWARD

Ray Hansen rises to FGCSA pinnacle after only eight years in the state

BY MARK JARRELL, CGCS

It hardly seems possible that Ray Hansen has only been in Florida since 1986. In his eight short years in Florida, his accomplishments on behalf of the Florida GCSA were considered so significant that in 1994 his peers awarded him their highest honor — the Florida Golf Course Superintendents Association's "Distinguished Service Award."

Ray characteristically down plays his contributions with a shrug of the shoulders and a remark like, "When you see something that needs to be done, you do it!" Those of us who have had the pleasure of working with Ray on the FGCSA Board and various committees recognize and credit him for his leadership in seeing that projects are initiated and followed through to their conclusions. Leadership is a rare quality, and Ray Hansen has it in spades. When Ray assumed the presidency of the Florida GCSA in August, 1990, the Florida Green cover story about him was appropriately titled, "He Gets the Job Done," and all who know him agree with this assessment.

His proudest accomplishment is the Florida GCSA's USGA spec green at the University of Florida's IFAS research station in Fort Lauderdale. This green is the direct result of another of Ray's inventions — the South Florida Turf Expo. Without the money generated by this Field Day, it is questionable whether or not enough funds would have been available to build the green and sustain its maintenance.

Ray's other contributions to the Florida GCSA include serving as our Voting Delegate at the GCSAA Conference and Show for two years; six years as Chairman of the Fort Lauderdale IFAS Advisory Committee, and various other statewide committees.

For all he's given to us in Florida, it appears Ray's time here is limited. In November, he resigned his position as



Ray Hansen (left) receives the 1994 FGCSA Distinguished Service Service Award from Paul Crawford at the Crowfoot Open banquet.

Golf Course Manager at Delaire Country Club and is actively seeking a job in the "snowbelt" to allow him the freedom of four months off in the winter for travel.

Once Ray leaves the state, it's possible that we'll see him back in Florida often during those long winters. He recently sold his home in Key Largo to his son, Kurt, and although his boat is on the market, it permanently resides with Kurt in the Keys. Deep sea fishing is one of Ray's passions, though a recent six-week trip to the Rockies for flyfishing may indicate a shift in priorities for shallower pursuits.

Ray also enjoys snow skiing, but the subject that lights up his eyes is Penn

State football. Ray graduated from Joe Duich's Penn State turf program in 1960 and has owned season football tickets for 35 years. He had plans to go to the Rose Bowl, and I expect by the time you read this article, Joe Paterno's team will have wasted Oregon and laid a claim to at least a share of the national championship, if not the title outright.

Nothing could cap 1994 for Ray any better. When asked what winning the Florida GCSA Distinguished Service Award meant to him, he replied, "It's the most important award I've ever received, right up there with going to the Rose Bowl!" (There was a twinkle in his eye



President's Award

Bill McKee —

Pennsylvania's loss is Florida's gain

BY ROBERT G. KLITZ, CGCS

In July 1994, the South Florida Golf Course Superintendents Association chose Bill McKee of the Oak Tree Country Club to be the recipient of the President's Award. Bill has been working in South Florida for over 20 years and also had about eight years of experience in Pennsylvania. The purpose of this article is to give the other members of the organization some insight into a key figure in the South Florida community of superintendents.

As incoming President of the SFGCSA, I was given the honor of presenting this

award to Bill at the Crowfoot Open in August. Prior to the formal presentation, it was my pleasure to inform Bill that he had been selected by his peers for this prestigious and highly coveted award. When I told him that he had been chosen unanimously by the SFGCSA board, his emotional reply was, "Is everyone else dead?" After that response, I realized that I was not only going to have some good material for the Crowfoot "roast" presentation, but I might even be able to use some of the more tasteful material in a Florida Green article.

The illustrious Bill McKee was born and raised in Butler, Pennsylvania. Bill

started working at the Butler Country Club when he was 15 during summers while attending high school in nearby Saxonburg. After graduating from high school, Bill continued to work at Butler C.C. during breaks from college. Bill received a four-year degree in Pre-Law History from Grove City College in western Pennsylvania. While working on the golf course during a break in his final year of school, Bill realized that playing golf is listed in a golf course superintendent's job description but not in a lawyer's job description. Now I know Bill didn't just fall off the turnip truck, but did it take

Ray Hansen honored by peers with DSA

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when he said it!).

Ray's Penn State ties are very important to him, and he has given back to the college by serving as President of the Penn State Alumni Association for the past two years. He credits Joe Duich and his informal classes as having the most influence on his career.

Ray's nearly 40-year career in the golf business has been very diverse. He started as a caddie at Ridgewood Country Club during high school in Fairlawn, New Jersey, also spending summers maintaining a pitch-and-putt course. This sowed the seeds, but a two-year stint in the Army, followed by two years pursuing a physical education degree at Panzer College, preceded his formal turfgrass education at Penn State.

His first job out of college was selling golf course supplies for a company called Person's Mill. He then accepted the job as superintendent at Essex Country Club in West Orange, New Jersey, where he had spent his summer internship while attending Penn State. Here he had the

unique opportunity of managing 18 holes of public and 18 holes of private golf course, at the same 36-hole facility. Four years later he became the general manager, responsible for the entire project. Ray considers this his most satisfying position.

Still, four years later, another challenge presented itself, and Ray left to build and manage the two sister resort communities of Lake Naomi and Timber Trails in the Pocono Mountains, including the construction of an 18 hole golf course. Though he enjoyed the challenges provided there, acting more as a city manager than a golf course manager, Ray was ready to move on when he finished putting his kids through college (Ray has a daughter, Cheryl, in addition to son Kurt). He arrived in Florida in January of 1986, surprising friend and PSU classmate, Tom Burrows. Four days later he secured the superintendent's position at Ocean Reef Club on Key Largo. He stayed there for four years then moved up to Delaire CC in Delray Beach staying there for four years until his resignation this past November.

Reflecting on his many years in the golf business, Ray feels the best thing about being a superintendent is the satisfaction of providing a quality golf course for peoples' enjoyment, and the worst thing is trying to do the necessary renovation work in the summer with members around.

Having experienced both warm and cool-season golf courses, Ray sees no particular advantage of one over the other—the differences more or less offset one another.

His advice to anyone contemplating a golf course management career: Serve an internship under a qualified superintendent and work your way up slowly. Not surprisingly, he considers the plethora of turf graduates competing for too few jobs as the biggest problem our industry currently faces. When asked how he'd like to be remembered, Ray answered, "As a superintendent that gave something back to the profession."

There can be no more tangible proof of that than the 1994 Florida GCSA Distinguished Service Award!