

Steve Kuhn:

Friend and Teacher

1996 President's Award Winnners

*Steve Kuhn
Clem Stewart*

BY BOB KLITZ, CGCS
and ED MILLER

*Golf Course Superintendent
Williams Island C.C.*

In July 1996 Steve Kuhn, golf course superintendent at High Ridge Country Club in Boynton Beach, was presented with the Florida Golf Course Superintendents Association President's Award from the South Florida Chapter.

Steve had worked as a superintendent for 18 years in South Florida prior to accepting his current position in Palm Beach County. During his tenure in South Florida Steve was a friend, teacher, and, supporter of many superintendents in the three-county chapter.

Steve's interest in golf started in Welch, W.Va., where his parents operated a golf course. Joe Kuhn, Steve's father, was the golf professional and golf course superintendent while Steve's mother, Mary, operated the pro shop.

Although Steve was exposed to golf since the day he was born, his father never pushed him to make golf his career choice.

Steve's first friends at the club were the caddies. Steve's mother was constantly encouraging Steve to play golf with the members' children instead of playing poker with the caddies or looking for golf balls.

The easy-going, regular-guy personality that was evident in Steve's youth accurately portrays Steve's easily approachable and always accessible management style.

After high school Steve attended the University of Florida in Gainesville.

Only 30 hours short of a degree in

mechanical engineering at the University of Florida, the thought of having a career that kept him cooped up indoors over a drawing board and under the glare of fluorescent lights began to wear on the young man.

His love of the outdoors, the beauty of the trees and mountains and flowers were indelibly embedded in every part of his being.

"This is for me," Steve thought. "It's what I want to do for the rest of my life!" And it's what he has done. Steve changed his major, won a Florida Turf Grass Association scholarship and went on to graduate with a degree in Ornamental Horticulture.

One of the lifelong motivators for Steve has been a never-forgotten remark by Florida turf legend, Dr. Granny Horn, who said, "I want to know more about bermudagrass than anyone who has ever

lived."

It remains a guiding factor in Steve's constant quest to improve the quality of the golf course, and is prevalent in any discussion he has about turf.

Right after college, with no working mentor to guide him, he became the golf course superintendent of the Killearn Country Club in Tallahassee and hosted the Tallahassee Open in 1971. In 1975, Steve was appointed superintendent of the California Country Club in North Miami Beach. He spent almost eight years there before moving on to two prestigious, member-owned clubs - Westview Country Club in 1983 and Woodmont in 1986.

With a solid reputation in every phase of golf course maintenance and management, Steve was then appointed the head superintendent at the Doral Resort, with its four golf courses, including the famed



Steve Kuhn was an overwhelming favorite choice as candidate for the 1996 President's Award from the South Florida Chapter. Photo by Ed Miller.

"Blue Monster."

While working at Doral, Steve prepared for nine PGA Tour tournaments.

Hurricane Andrew

His most vivid memories at Doral were recovering from the disaster of Hurricane Andrew in the summer of 1992. Steve and his crew had three months to get ready for the winter season. Andrew had uprooted over 3,000 trees.

In addition to tons of debris removal, 55 tractor trailer loads of sod were required to cover all of the damaged areas. During this massive cleanup effort, the routine maintenance practices still had to be performed - weed and insect con-

'Spend the majority of your time on the golf course. Visibility is important.'

trol, aerification, overseeding, and planting 120,000 annuals.

It is a tribute to Steve's resourcefulness and planning that all this was accomplished in time for the opening of Doral's winter season.

Steve's professional affiliations include service on the board of directors of the South Florida GCSA and the Florida Turfgrass Association, and membership in the FGCSA, GCSAA and Palm Beach GCSA.

He is the consummate professional - always learning, always sharing - always

teaching! He takes great pride in motivating individuals to become excited about working in the golf course industry and serving their associations.

Former assistants currently working as superintendents include Ed Miller at William's Island C.C. (current president of the SFGCSA); Gilly MacGregor at Westview C.C. (director of SFGCSA); Eric Knudson at Ocean Reef Club (joining SFGCSA board in 1997); and Eric Von Hafen at John's Island Country Club West.

In his early years in the field, fishing and outdoor sports consumed every non-working moment, but during the Doral years, he was obsessed with the great responsibilities of caring for one of the world's best-known golf resorts and had little real time for himself.

Now at High Ridge Country Club in Palm Beach, Steve has had the chance to spend more time with his wife Faith and children, Lauren and Stephen. "It's never too late for that," says Steve.

In the spring of 1996 the SFGCSA Board of Directors met to discuss possible candidates for the President's Award nomination.

When Steve's name was mentioned the reaction of the board members was overwhelming.

Steve has viewed our golf courses, listened to our successes and tragedies on the telephone, played golf on our courses, and discussed strategies at chapter meetings with almost every member of our board.

When Steve was presented with this award at our annual meeting, several superintendents thanked him publicly for his support. Congratulations, Steve, and thanks again from all of the members of the SFGCSA.

Steve's Personal Philosophy

- Spend the majority of your time on the golf course. High visibility is important to crew and membership.
- Be a key figure in training of personnel.
- Personally use all equipment on a regular basis, not just the fairway mower.
- Be competitive. Look at everyone else, then at yourself. Make improvements. Do not settle for being average.
- This is a "service" industry. "Serve" the members. The members are your boss. "Serve" your crew by providing them with the tools and equipment they need to succeed and excel. Treat everyone with respect.
- Have goals. At the beginning of each year set goals for yourself and your operation. At the end of each year evaluate your progress, then go out and make the next year even better.

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