

Clem Stewart receives President's Award

BY TERRY WOOD

Royal Wood G & CC

I remember the first time I had any contact with the Everglades Golf Course Superintendents Association. It was the spring of 1980, and I was employed as a salesman for an irrigation wholesale company.

At the second meeting I attended, I was paired with Clem Stewart and two other superintendents for a round of golf at North Port Country Club in Port Charlotte. We had a good time, and the thing I still remember is what a gentleman Clem was. The entire foursome treated me very well and made me feel welcome in the association.

Clem and I recently sat down for a talk and he told me a brief history of his life in the golf course business. Clem was born in Pinehurst, N.C. in 1933. He came from a large family, and two of his sisters were married to golf course workers.

That helped him to start working on a golf course at the age of nine, emptying grass baskets. His first real job was in 1952 at Pinehurst. Then in 1956 he took his first superintendent job at Reynolds Park Municipal in Columbia, S.C.

In those pre-civil rights days, Reynolds Park was for whites only. Four years later Clem was in charge of adding nine more holes to the nine hole Winston Lake Park course in Winston Salem, N.C. This was a course for blacks. Turf knows no color!

After five years Clem decided to seek greener pastures, I mean fairways, in sunny Florida. This landed him at the Naples Beach Hotel and Golf Club for eleven years.

Then Clem decided to move to the big city of Fort Myers and maintain the golf course at Seven Lakes for another stint of 11 years. In 1990 he worked at Naples

1996 President's Award Winners

Steve Kuhn

Clem Stewart

Shores and has been at Imperial Wilderness since 1992, in charge of the entire property.

There have been a few changes in this industry in the last 44 years.

Clem recalls the non-motorized push mowers used to mow greens. Then a big improvement came along — the reel-powered mower. This was not that popular because it was just that much heavier to mow with and transport.

At one time Clem was a scratch golfer, and he still gets great enjoyment from the outdoors... He loves to work with the soil.

He also recalled early in his career that he had six holes to maintain at a particular course. He would water, mow the greens and tees, and repair ball marks.

Some of the other improvements besides mowers were irrigation systems and the overall quality of grass varieties. But the one thing that happened that most surprised him was the introduction of the golf cart. Clem never thought he would see the day that something would replace the caddy!



It was in 1968 that Paul Nevers, Bob Sanderson, Dwight Wilson and several others invited Clem to join in the formation of the Everglades Golf Course Superintendents Association.

This was right up his alley, because Clem had also helped to form the Piedmont (N.C.) Chapter in the mid 1950s and was once the vice president of the Carolinas Association.

In 1972-73 Clem was the president of the EGCSA and has been a member of the GCSAA since 1957. Clem and Paul became great friends, like brothers, golfing in the Carolinas and Georgia in the summers and making that annual trip to Augusta for the tournament.

Paul will be deeply missed by Clem and the rest of us as well.

At one time Clem was a scratch golfer, and he still gets great enjoyment from the outdoors and the many nice people he has met over the years in this business. He loves to work with the soil.

His garden includes broccoli, corn, tomatoes, beans, cauliflower, greens, squash, onions, lettuce, cabbage and carrots. Clem and his wife, Barbara have four sons, Wayne, Ronnie, Randy and Chris, and one daughter, Terry.

In closing, Clem's advice to everyone is, "There has got to be an education in anything you do."