Walker named NGCOA’s Rossi winner

The Award of Merit is presented to an individual or group who has made significant and long-lasting contributions to the association. Recipients are nominated and voted on by the board of directors. Walker was the association’s first executive director, taking the helm in 1984 when it was being run by a management company. He negotiated a separation from the company, moved the association’s headquarters to Minnesota and changed its name from the National Association of Public Golf Courses to the Golf Course Association — all while running Fort Snelling Golf Course, a nine-hole public layout.

“Curt took over the association at a time when it was heavily in debt and basically ‘dead,’” said Peter Trenchard, NGCOA board member and founding member of the association. “He agreed to take the office to his home and ran it free of charge. He was single-handedly responsible for keeping the association alive and making it financially solvent.”

Although Walker’s first charge was restoring the association’s financial integrity, education remained a key initiative. Under his direction, the GCA developed a number of marketing manuals, as well as the “Uniform System of Accounting Practices for Public Courses.” He also helped grow the association from 250 members to more than 450.

Walker stepped down as executive director in 1989 to devote more time to his course. He remained out of association management until 1997 when he helped found the Minnesota Golf Course Owners Association, a chapter of the NGCOA. A year later, he became its executive director.

After a career of aggressive initiatives, however, Walker is humbled by the Don Rossi Award. “Given the fact that Don Rossi was the first authority figure I met in the golf industry, receiving an award named after him is daunting.”

Also at the NGCOA show, the Golf Course Superintendents Association of America received the Award of Merit