

Three of MAAGCS Old Guard Retire

Ben Stagg

This winter, MAAGCS loses three of its longtime superintendents from its active ranks. Bob Miller, CGCS; Lee Dieter, CGCS; and Ben Stagg celebrated their mutual retirement with those in attendance at the 1996 MAAGCS Annual Membership Meeting in December. I have been asked to reminisce a little about Ben. Although I can only begin to describe what Ben's professionalism and friendship have meant to me and other superintendents for the past twenty-plus years, allow me to touch upon some of the highlights of Ben's career as a superintendent.

Ben started his turf career under the watchful eye of George Cumm in 1969, at Ocean City Yacht and Country Club. In the fall of 1969, he decided to get his feet a little wetter by accepting the superintendent position at Nassawango Country Club, a new course under construction. Ben was responsible for the installation of the irrigation system, the grow-in stage, and the management of Nassawango's golf course for five years. In the fall of 1974, Ben accepted the position of superintendent at Hog Neck, another new course in Easton, Maryland. He started at Hog Neck during its construction, was responsible for the grow-in phase, and has been managing the course until his retirement in January, 1997.

All the while managing golf courses for the past 25 years, Ben has also contributed much of his time back to the industry and the profession. Ben has been a member of GCSAA and MAAGCS for 26 years. He served on the MAAGCS Board of Directors for eight years and held the offices of Secretary, Vice President, and President. Ben is currently, and has been for the past five years, the chairman of GCSAA's Annual Prayer Breakfast. I am fortunate to be a charter member with him of the ESAGCS

Lee Dieter, CGCS

March 2, 1961, Washington Golf & Country Club hired Lee C. Dieter as golf course superintendent. To try to list everything Lee has done or been involved in would fill a book, but I will try to fill a few of the divots Lee has left behind.

The Early Years

Lee's interest in turf and horticulture began as he worked in his Dad's landscaping business in Erie, PA. When he finished high school he worked in a grocery store and found that was not what he wanted to do. Lee and his dad decided to enlarge the landscape business, so Lee enrolled in the horti-



Lee Dieter, Benn Stagg and Bob Miller at MAAGCS 1996 Annual meeting

culture program at Penn State. He was influenced by Dr. Burton Musser, who believed that the only good turf was grown on a golf course, so Lee joined the new turf program. He received a GCSAA scholarship in 1958 and graduated with the first turf class in 1959.

Lee's first assistant position was at the Kahkwa Club in Erie, a Donald Ross design. His next position was with Date Canovan at South Wales G&CC in Warrenton, VA as assistant golf course superintendent. Shortly after coming to Virginia Lee married Rita, also from Erie, who has been his strongest supporter for all these years.

Bob Miller, CGCS

Who among us served as a pro and a superintendent simultaneously? Who has been the Superintendent at Suburban Club for thirty-four continuous years? Who has earned the respect of all who have worked with him for his expertise and dedication in his profession? Bob Miller, that's who!

This year Bob will be retiring from his position as Golf Course Superintendent and long-time employee from The Suburban Club of Baltimore County in Pikesville, Maryland. But don't think that Bob will be sitting back in his easy chair as a full-time retiree. This well known and highly respected member of the Mid-Atlantic

Association of Golf Course Superintendents will be directing his bountiful energies toward new endeavors and challenges.

Bob Miller has a work ethic that is boundless and an ability to master many jobs simultaneously. For example, did you know that from 1959 to 1963, he was both the golf pro and golf course superintendent at the Talbot Country Club on the Eastern shore of Maryland? To this day, it is tough to find anyone who can beat him at a round of golf. But if by chance you do play golf with Bob, you will also come away with the unique experience of

being a better golfer as well as learning a lot about the status of the condition of the golf course. As everyone knows, reading a green properly allows one to achieve that much desired low score. Looking at a golf course from the standpoint of a professional golfer has always given Bob an extra advantage.

When Bob started at Suburban in 1963, there were only 4,500 golf courses in this country, and his total annual maintenance budget was \$30,000 annually. Compare those figures with the fact that one new golf course is opening up every day here in America, and it is estimated that there are more than 15,000 golf courses today. Most modern golf courses can

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 (Eastern Shore Association of Golf Course Superintendents), which was started in 1976. Ben also served as President of the Eastern Shore Association. Ben has served four years on the Maryland Turfgrass Council, in addition to being its President as well. Another responsibility Ben took care of (a responsibility dear to many of our hearts) was arranging for the crabs for MAAGCS' Annual Picnics—the running total is probably on the order of 200 bushels.

Throughout Ben's career, he has never been afraid to share ideas or thoughts on Turf. Many techniques were developed by Ben through trial and error, and he would always be willing to share the successes or failures, the why's and the why-not's. Ben would always be willing to just sit down and talk Turf. In the early years of the ESAGCS, our monthly meetings consisted mostly of just that: superintendents sitting down, drinking a cold one, and talking Turf. Times have changed for a lot of us over the last 25 years, but I am sure that Ben will continue to be truly professional in his new endeavors and will always be a friend to us in the turf profession! MAAGCS and I would like to wish the very best to Ben and his wife, Hilda.

Lee Dieter (continued from page 6)

Washington Golf

Washington Golf & Country Club had the first tee-to-green cart path system in the area. The irrigation system has been replaced twice, all of the bunkers have been totally rebuilt, all the tees have been renovated at least once—and some even twice—and half of the greens have been rebuilt. The fairways have been re-grassed to different varieties including bluegrass, bermudagrass, and ryegrass. Lee feels that he and George Thompson were instrumental in promoting the acceptance of ryegrass in this area, even though they were told by Dr. Jack Hall that the ryegrass would not persist. Lee has probably planted thousands of trees and shrubs and still knows the botanical name for each one.

Association Involvement

Lee has served on many committees for the Mid-Atlantic Golf Course Superintendents Association including being newsletter editor and serving as President in 1973 and again in 1987. He is Past President of the Greater Washington Golf Course Superinten-

dents Association and the Virginia Turf Council where he also served as Director of the Virginia Turf Foundation. Lee has received several distinguished service awards from the Virginia Turfgrass Council. He has also served on several GCSAA committees and is presently on the historical committee with such notables as Dr. Joe Duich and Dr. Watson of TORO. Lee is an avid collector and has over 3,000 collectable and out-of-print books related to golfing or turf as well as numerous golf clubs, trophies, and works of art.

Family

Through all of this Lee and Rita have raised four boys: Mike, Fred, Chris and Mark and have three grandchildren. They are both very active in their church and their community. They even find time to play golf, which Rita has come to enjoy a lot.

Lee

After 36 Summers in Northern Virginia, 35 club Presidents, 6 General Managers, 4 Golf Professionals, 16 Greens Chairmen, and only Heavens-knows-how-many committee meetings, Lee has more than earned the title: CGCS - RETIRED.

Bob Miller (continued from page 6)

spend upwards of \$30,000 just in redoing one green complex. Over these 34 years, Bob has maintained a high degree of professionalism in a business that is known for its challenges both with regards to the business side of golf course care AND golf course member relations.

Dedication is only a word unless one is talking about Bob Miller. Every

day—all year long, year end and year out, one could find Bob at Suburban—planning short and long term golf course maintenance. Over these many years Bob has worked with numerous greens committees as they jointly plotted the direction that has maintained the Suburban Club to hold its position as a top-notch golf course. He has earned the club's consistent respect and gratitude. Since the club was established in 1901, Bob is only the fourth superintendent to serve Suburban—a tribute to his knowledge and professional ability.

At the same time Bob always has time for fellow members of our profession. Many times a telephone call from another superintendent would end with his famous expression, "Come on over, we'll go get a slice of pizza and talk about it."

Over the years, Bob has also maintained his interest in many other areas of activities. Many of you know that he owns B&G Tennis Supply Co. which serves the mid-Atlantic region. With complete assurance, one can truly say that Bob will be directing his attention to ventures and adventures as he leaves his position as superintendent of Suburban.

Bob Miller is a top-notch golf course professional superintendent, and we all can aspire to equal his consistent dedication and expertise. The mid-Atlantic Association of Golf Course Superintendents and his many hundreds of friends and well-wishers know that his future activities will be as rewarding and meaningful as has been these last 34 years.



Superintendents Speak Out

After returning from the GCSAA International Conference and Show in Las Vegas what would you consider the most important aspect or helpful bit of information that you will be able to place into your daily work as a professional superintendent?

Steve Potter, CGCS
 Woodholme C.C.

"The innovative superintendent sessions were full of small tidbits of information that are extremely useful in everyday problem solving as well as future planning"

Jim McHenry
 Caroline C.C.

"It gives you flexibility, establishing a

network of friends that are a great source of information when you need assistance"

Don Dietrich, CGCS
 Maryland Golf & C.C.

"The availability of expertise in equipment, chemical or irrigation in a close proximity allows me to get the facts and questions answered that might have otherwise have taken me weeks to find out"

Bob Wren
 Fawnlake C.C.

"Going to the national has always set a benchmark for me as the start of the season and sets the tone for the year."