

Dudley Smith

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**SILVER LAKE
COUNTRY CLUB**



Dudley Smith (R) and wife Marlene.

I have the distinct honor of introducing you to Mr. Dudley Smith, past president of the Midwest Turf Foundation and secretary of the Musser International Turf Foundation. Dudley is the superintendent of Silver Lake Country Club. Dudley's tenure of 42 years at his current position is impressive, even more so when you consider that this was his first and only superintendent's job.

Working as an intern at West Point's golf course was how Dudley spent his summers when he wasn't attending classes at Penn State. When he finished his formal education, he set out for the assistant superintendent position at Hercules. The job was supposed to materialize into a superintendent's position, but never did. Dudley, being an East Coast graduate, set out to make new friends. He landed at Silver Lake, a public track on the South Side of Chicago. Keep in mind that in March of 1959, things were quite different. Let's suffice it to say that the gentlemen of the Midwest Association were not as quick to roll out the red carpet as they would be now.

Dudley and his wife Marlene have three sons, Rick, Tom and James Wilson. Rick is the superintendent at Glenview Park District, Tom is the assistant at Deerpath and James is a carpenter. When I spoke to Dudley, he had recently participated in a parade in his hometown of Frankfort by driving his antique Model A. In addition to the Frankfort Antique Car Club, Dudley is also involved in the Lions Club. Each year, Dudley takes charge of a charter bus that takes local Penn Staters back where they belong to cheer on one of the best college football traditions in the United States.

When asked what the profession's greatest rewards are, Dudley replies, "the youth." He is proud of the numerous young men who have come into the golf profession via the shop at Silver Lake. The tone of his voice makes it apparent how proud Dudley is of the Silver



Weeping cherry in sand trap island on hole #14, North Course.

Lake family. When time permits, Dudley and his former assistants get together for picnics where they enjoy telling stories and catching up.

Silver Lake is now comprised of what began as two different courses. One was a daily fee course, which is now known as the South Course. Euclid Hills was a private club that belonged to the Shriners and is now known as the North Course. When World War II began, Euclid Hills went belly-up and the two courses were combined, forming Silver Lake Country Club. In 1962, an executive nine-hole course was built. In 1963, the new nine opened and work began to give the old courses a facelift. Buzz Didier was the architect for the new nine and for the remodeling of the existing 36 holes. During the 1980s, the greens at Silver Lake were a beautiful stand of Toronto Bentgrass, but not for long. As Butler National was losing the battle with C-15 decline, so too was Silver Lake. Dudley purchased Penncross sod and resurfaced all the greens. The greens at Silver Lake became dual citizens as Penncross from Canada made its way to Orland Park, Illinois.

Thanks to the tremendous job of Dudley and his staff, Silver Lake has evolved to be quite the distinguished place to hold outings. In fact, it is difficult for the walk-on golfer to get a tee time. With outings scheduled nearly every day, Silver Lake's 45 holes receive about 100,000 rounds per year. Among the biggest challenges at Silver Lake is the turnover in crew, according to Dudley. Training new employees and the constant influx of "green" help are tremendous hurdles. When a Sunday morning sees 1,000 rounds, it is important to have a seasoned staff.


This fall, the staff at Silver Lake will be busy sodding areas with bentgrass. After the heat of the summer, Dudley marked the areas of weak *Poa* that have been requiring hand-watering and intensive care year after year. These marked areas were then stripped and removed to prepare them for sod. Also, Dudley and company recently overseeded the fairways at Silver Lake with a turf-type bluegrass blend. The seed was put in place via a slit seeder and hopes of germination-friendly weather.

This winter, Silver Lake's big project will be demolishing their "barn" and erecting a new maintenance facility, which will include a office for David Kohley, Silver Lake's assistant superintendent, as well as a pesticide and fertilizer storage room, rinsate pad and a spray rig storage room.

In the past, Silver Lake has hosted the USGA Public Links Championship, the qualifying rounds for the U.S. Open, National Lefthanders Championship and many CDGA junior tournaments.

Dudley Smith has been the recipient of two of the turfgrass industry's most distinguished service awards. The first award came from the Illinois Turfgrass Foundation in 1994. The second was from Midwest Turf Foundation/Purdue University in 2001, where Dudley served as president of this group in 1973 with Dr. Daniels.

For the past 10 years, Dudley has served as the secretary of the Musser Turf Foundation. He will now be passing that baton to Bruce Williams.

We look forward to the October meeting at Silver Lake. Come out and enjoy the beautiful course conditions that Dudley and his staff enjoy providing. 



Spring photo of crabapples at dogleg on hole #12, a par 5.