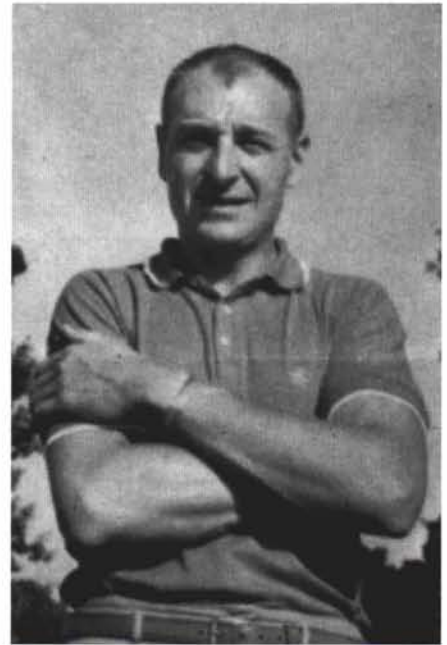


The Legacy of John Ebel, 1927-2002

John Ebel was born in Barrington, IL on July 20, 1927 and lived his whole life there until moving to Sun City West, AZ in 1996. He served in the Army Air Corp at Shepherd Field in Wichita Falls, TX from 1945-1947. After attending the University of Illinois Extension in Elgin, he was the golf course superintendent for 22 years at Barrington's Biltmore C.C. and another 22 years at Barrington Hills C.C. John was a 45-year member of GCSAA and a past president of the MAGCS (1963) and CAGCS (1974-75). In the early 1980s, he founded the GCSAA Prayer Breakfast, an event that graces the annual conference and show to this day.



John as he appeared in 1961.

John and his wife of 52 years, Juanita, raised two daughters, Wendy and Cathy, and enjoyed four grandchildren. His hobbies included landscaping, golf, hunting, fishing, bocce ball and bowling. Just prior to Thanksgiving 2001, he was diagnosed with an inoperable brain tumor. Less than a week before his passing, he joined Crown of Life Lutheran Church.

John Ebel passed away on January 26. A memorial service and inurnment will take place in Barrington this spring. The following are reflections and memories shared by several MAGCS members.

... what John exemplified most to me was the joy he found in serving the Lord.

—Brian Bossert

A few things come to mind when I think of John Ebel. The immaculate shop, complete with shiny floor, tool board and painted rake handles is a given. Having worked for John for a year, I can also add that he was a very fair and considerate employer. He knew that the people who worked for him were more important than the condition of the course that he might be judged by. You could count on his word as a promise. And what a smile; it did literally seem to go ear-to-ear.

However, what John exemplified most to me was the joy he found in serving the Lord. Because of this, John's life was no mere routine. He didn't root for God from the sidelines, but participated fully in being a steward of the hope, grace and forgiveness that is available through Christ. He took risks (and a little mocking I suspect) to pass along the word of God; risks that included putting Him front and center, speaking up and speaking truth. If you could let in a little of what he asked or suggested, you might very well be on your way to a changed life. And he didn't do it to earn credit with God, win praise from his fellows or to be labeled a "religious man;" he simply found his place in serving the Lord. It might be surprising to know that this was not always John's top priority.

Juanita, his wife, recently recounted a story John told me years ago. She made it clear to John that she was going to follow the Lord and she would support him in any manner he chose to live his life. John began living out his "Life

Verse” soon afterward. Taken from Joshua 24:15, “. . . choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve, whether the gods your forefathers served beyond the River, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you are living. **But as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord!**”

—*Brian Bossert,
Bryn Mawr C.C.*

John was one of those friends that you cherish in life. He was all giving and caring. You never once saw John that he didn't have that huge smile and welcome written all across his face. Then he shook your hand and you knew it was shook when you grabbed his “mitt.” An example of his caring was how he, after visiting the Grand Canyon and being taken on a tour of it by my son—who at the time was with the helicopter crew and a wildfire fighter—kept a picture of Todd on his refrigerator to pray to keep him safe. That was John. If you had an adversity in life, you would have received a phone call from John and follow-up calls to see how you were doing.

Then there was John, who was known all over the Chicagoland area for having the cleanest shop of anyone. The Chicagoland Superintendents Association used to have their January/February meetings at the Barrington C.C. shop and we all came away wondering how a person could keep his shop and equipment so neat and clean. “A place for everything and everything in its place” was his motto.

John was also instrumental in getting the Prayer Breakfast established at the annual GCSAA Conference. At first, it was just a get-together for breakfast and prayer spread by word of mouth. Then speakers were brought in and the crowds got larger. Finally, the GCSAA got involved by putting it on the official program and a place and time slot were allotted.

Rest in peace, John. Enjoy those greener pastures where there are no Stimpeters.

—*Fred Opperman, Retired*



Photo courtesy of Fred Opperman

Recently, John and Juanita Ebel enjoyed the splendor of the Grand Canyon.

There never will be a Chicagoland Superintendents Association monthly meeting, ever again, as there used to be when John Ebel hosted the December meeting at Barrington Hills C.C. The cement floor was painted and WAXED. Every hand tool was mounted on a freshly painted wall with its outline painted behind it. There was not one speck of dust on ANYTHING; even the tractor tires were brightly painted. John was unique in many ways, but this meeting was totally one-of-a-kind. He was a credit to MAGCS at all times.

—*Carl Hopphan,
Illinois Turfgrass Foundation*

John Ebel will be remembered as a professional in every way. He was a neighbor and friend. I can honestly say he was one of the good ones—a great guy that anyone would be proud to call a friend. He surely will be missed by all of us that knew him. He always presented an attitude that was upbeat, which made him a delightful person to be around. John will be remembered dearly by many of us.

—*Mike Bavier, Inverness C.C.*

My first recollection of John Ebel goes back to 1987, when I first started calling on John as his new Jac Turf salesman. I remember walking into his shop and noticing how immaculate the shop appeared. From the tools organized on the pegboard to the cleanliness of the shop floor, I surmised this man was something special. Of course, I noticed a lot of “red” equipment also, but that wouldn't stop me from stopping by to see John a regular basis.

We became good friends and John was very open with me, as he was with everyone else, about sharing his faith. If I had to choose a Scripture that characterized John, it would be Romans 1:16, which says, “I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes: first for the Jew then for the Gentile.” John truly believed this and was never bashful when it came to sharing and living out his faith. His faith prompted him to organize the first GCSAA Christian Prayer Breakfast in 1982. He later asked me to serve on its committee. I know that for John, it was a labor of love and certainly an event that John looked forward to every year.

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I know that everything John Ebel did, from maintaining his course and his shop to organizing the Prayer Breakfast to maturing in his marriage relationship, he did "as unto the Lord." He answered to a higher call than the one set by a green chairman. He did so, so that anyone would see something special in John and therefore give John an opportunity to share the "hope that he had within."

I'm sure that we will be honoring the memory of John Ebel at this year's GCSAA Prayer Breakfast. If we had the time, the entire program could be filled with testimonies of how many lives have been touched by John. But this would be contrary to what John would want us to do. His legacy was to submit his will to our Lord's, to give God the glory, all with the deepest sense of humility.

—Phil Taylor, *Textron*

I remember John as a man with his priorities in order. First, he was a servant of the Lord. Second, he served his family. Finally, he served his work.

In his service to God, he was the messenger for bringing the Prayer Breakfast to the GCSAA convention.

In his service to family, he was the loving husband to Juanita and the adored father to Wendy and Cathy. He was an inspiration to all those who knew him by his joyful demeanor and kind heart. He always had time to talk to me about almost any matter and never seemed to be inconvenienced by an unexpected visit.

At work, I remember that he was extremely well-organized, that his shop was immaculate, that every superintendent on the north side wanted his trade-in equipment because he rebuilt every piece every winter. John always did his homework, and was prepared for every project and endeavor that the club

undertook. He had the respect of the membership at Biltmore and Barrington Hills and the respect of every golf course superintendent who knew him.

Finally, he was my father's best friend. Our families shared times on vacations in Florida. I shared time with John pheasant-hunting in the fields of South Dakota and duck-hunting in a blind on the Illinois River. I will always remember the great times we had together.

—Jim Reed,
A.S. Altum & Associates

My first encounter with men like John Ebel occurred when I became assistant golf course superintendent at Medinah Country Club in 1962. When I went to my first MAGCS meetings, I would stand in awe of the leaders of our Association, like John, too afraid to approach them. John would always make a point to shake your hand and make you feel welcome. I respected him from the first moment I met him. He carried himself with a quiet dignity, without being standoffish. As a result, I really grew to know and love John over the 40 years of our friendship. He became my spiritual mentor, who could always pick me up when the difficulties of life got me down. He always showed me his strength with his smile and spiritual demeanor. I thank God for putting John in my life. He led me in my Christian walk and I pray I will see him again.

—Walter W. Fuchs, *Retired*



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