

# The Who and Why of the Fred D. Opperman Editorial Award

*Why have we initiated the Fred D. Opperman Editorial Award? And who is Fred D. Opperman? The answers to these questions are inexorably linked.*

*Both the Ray Gerber Editorial Award and the Fred D. Opperman Editorial Award honor outstanding articles initially published in On Course . . . The Opperman Award is open only to class C, D, E, F and G members of MAGCS—assistant golf course superintendents, commercial members, students, etc. This makes the Opperman Award special.*

Both the Ray Gerber Editorial Award and the Fred D. Opperman Editorial Award honor outstanding articles initially published in *On Course*. The critical difference between the awards lies in the eligibility requirements. The Gerber Award is open only to Midwest-member superintendents. This makes the Gerber Award special. The Opperman Award is open only to class C, D, E, F and G members of MAGCS—assistant golf course superintendents, commercial members, students, etc. This makes the Opperman Award special.

The MAGCS membership classes eligible for the Opperman Award comprise a significant percentage of our membership and contribute mightily to the Association as well as its magazine, *On Course*. The Editorial Committee, with the full support of the Board of Directors, pioneered the Fred D. Opperman Editorial Award as a means of recognizing those valuable contributions AND encouraging future article submissions.

So who is Fred D. Opperman? For many, that's a rhetorical question. For others, it's a perfectly legitimate query. Most Midwest members know Fred primarily as the legendary longtime editor of *On Course*. In 1983, Fred took the reins of *the Bull Sheet* where the eminent Ray Gerber left off and sat confidently (but never complacently) in the saddle until May 1999, when he rode off into the Montana sunset with wife Judy for what has been a fulfilling and active retirement. That's 16 years Fred spent at the helm of this very magazine! Suddenly my three-year tenure seems rather paltry . . .

So Fred is a natural honoree for the naming of this new award because of his commitment to journalistic excellence and his innovative spirit in shepherding the transformation of *the Bull Sheet* into the present-day *On Course*. Beyond that, though, Fred has worn just about every hat a person can wear in this industry. Consider this short biography.

Born in Johnstown, Pennsylvania, Fred spent some time in the Naval Reserves (including two years active duty, one year serving aboard the destroyer USS Davis DD937) after finishing high school. In 1962, he graduated from Penn State with a turfgrass management degree. While wearing his student hat, Fred spent two summers working as a trainee under Bob Williams at Bob O'Link G.C. The fall after he graduated from PSU, Fred donned another hat, becoming assistant superintendent at Elmhurst C.C. In fall 1964, Fred moved to Riverside G.C. as superintendent, then returned to Elmhurst

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C.C. in fall 1965, where he stayed until 1970.

On May 1, 1970, Fred succeeded Ray Gerber as superintendent at Glen Oak C.C.. (Ray's retirement, of course, saw him toiling diligently as editor of *the Bull Sheet!*) In 1972, Fred became one of the first MAGCS superintendents to earn certification from GCSAA and one of the first 40 nationwide; in 1976, the Midwest's 50th-anniversary year, Fred served as president of the MAGCS. In 1983, with Ray Gerber in failing health, Fred put together his first edition of *the Bull Sheet*. When Ray died that July, Fred became the publication's official editor.

After 19 years at Glen Oak, Fred put on a different hat in 1990, going to work selling trees and transplanting services to golf courses and park districts for Williamson Nursery. He retained his editor's hat, though, and it was under Fred's leadership that *the Bull Sheet* gave way to *On Course* in 1996.

Fred joined Hinsdale Nurseries in 1993 and in November 1994 started with Arthur Clesen, Inc. as a sales representative calling on golf courses, park districts, arborists and nurseries. For Fred to wear a commercial member's hat only enhanced *On Course*, as Fred cultivated the strong and loyal advertising base we are so grateful to retain today.

Recapping Fred's resume, however, tells only one part of the story. He is also a devoted family man, married for 37 years to Judy. Fred and Judy have a son, Todd, who is a forester. Todd is married to Tonja, also a forester. On August 5 of this year, Fred and Judy became first-time grandparents with the birth of Zander.

On February 28, 1999, Fred retired from Clesen and in May 1999, he and Judy moved to Montana. Before their departure, Fred imparted to me as much as he could about the ins and outs of managing *On Course*. He also imparted to me that being the editor of *On Course* is a great priv-

ilege, and while I never doubted that, over the years I have come to feel it in my heart.

We conceived the Fred D. Opperman Editorial Award to honor outstanding editorial contributions made by membership classes excluded from contention for the Ray Gerber Editorial Award. We named the award in honor of a superintendent, an editor, an MAGCS past president who also happened to wear the hats of many membership categories eligible for the namesake award . . . and is an upstanding human being.


Fred, we humbly thank you for lending your name to the Midwest's new editorial award. Assistant superintendents, commercial members, students—send in your articles! *On Course* is **your** magazine, too.



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