

# Memories of the Midwest Hospitality Room: We've Come A Long Way

*I want to start off by thanking all those contributors to the 2003 Midwest Hospitality Room, held in Atlanta during the GCSAA Conference and Show this past February. The room was always full of members and their guests; it is the place where everyone comes to meet, whether as a prelude to going to dinner or as a means of getting together. The Board has done a great job in providing a place where we can enjoy food, drink and the companionship of our fellow members.*

*There was so much wrong with those first rooms; they were hot, you could never find anyone it was so crowded, and the ice machines for four floors below and above us were empty. But the fun we had will never be forgotten.*

I am old enough to remember many hospitality rooms, in many different towns and hotel rooms. I couldn't wait to attend my first convention in Houston, Texas. The year was 1969. My wife and I spent our own money, and we couldn't afford to stay at the headquarters hotel. Our inaugural trip to the big fancy hotel for our first hospitality evening was something special. The officers

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*Bob Johnson serving up the drinks in the era before we started hiring bartenders.*



and directors of the Midwest were the bartenders and hosts. The room was a large room (two double beds), the beer was in the bathtub and the hard stuff was on the table next to the bed.

A few years later, with my expenses paid for, I could stay at the

headquarters hotel. It was easy to go from our room down to the hospitality room, which had now been upgraded to a one-bedroom suite. That was great. We now had a couch and chairs for the ladies to sit on. We also had a bar where the officers and directors could dispense the beer and

other beverages. Although the room was larger, it was still crowded, smoky and still hot.

A few years later, I had been elected as a director of the Midwest Association of Golf Course Superintendents. What a great honor. My first job as director was to be in charge of arrangements, which also included the Midwest Hospitality Room at that year's convention. What do I do? My answer: Talk to Bob and Albie (Bob Breen, Sr. and Albie Staudt). They know the routine. What most members didn't realize was that Bob and Albie, who were the big helpers behind the scenes, also occupied the room that was used as our hospitality room. Okay, now what? Just meet the two of them at 3 p.m. in the hotel lobby. We would go down the street to a local liquor store and do our version of "Let's Make a Deal," and see if they would deliver. Rumor had it that some years, there would be that Midwest member who would volunteer (ha! ha!) to drive to the convention site with a trunkload of supplies, liquid and other. Nothing illegal about that.



*The Hubers with Frank Krueger—the early hospitality “suites” were notorious for low ceilings, smoke-filled air and VERY ugly wallpaper.*



*Greg Thalmann and Don Cross in the 1995 San Francisco rendition. Still a hotel room, but with the newly-acquired hired bartender.*



*A common scene in our early rooms—guests retreating to the halls to breathe some fresh air and enjoy precious elbow room.*

If the beer and liquor were purchased from the hotel, it would have been much too expensive, and we had to do everything to keep expenses in line. Go out and buy potato chips, pretzels and other snacks for the night's bill of fare. Once the supplies had been purchased, that was the easy part; now we had to sneak up the back way, so the hotel people wouldn't see



us, and insist that we use their liquor and bartender. The first night was a big success, two more nights to go, and two more days to secure supplies.

We have now progressed a few more years. Mike Bavier had lost two elections for GCSAA board, but the third time was the charm. We now had champagne, still in the bathtub, but we also had a bartender, and we didn't have to work so we could simply enjoy as officers and directors. There was so much wrong with those first rooms; they were hot, you could never find anyone it was so crowded, and the ice machines for four floors below and above us were empty. But the fun we had will never be forgotten.

The Midwest Hospitality Room has gotten bigger and better. There is a spacious room with three or four bars, a table full of food, plus at least two carving stations. Each night has a different theme with the table decorations to match. The type of food changes from night to night, so there is something for everyone's taste. The cooperation that we have gotten from our vendors has been nothing but spectacular. A debt of gratitude is owed to our vendors who help put on one the best hospitality rooms at the convention. THANKS!!!



*The bigger, better hospitality suites have one drawback—when they close, the party usually heads to the nearest bar where the likes of Ed Braunsky can be found on the karaoke stage. Yikes!*



*Another common sight back in "the day" – Albie Staudt planted on the one and only available couch while cavorting with OPWs (other people's women, in this case Jan Schmitz and Rose Crockett).*



*Al Fierst with Janet Good, who played a big role in arranging our hospitality suites (until—and he swears to this—he dumped her).*



*The Bruce Williams family enjoying the sumptuous food spread at the '96 Orlando room, complete with carving stations, several tended bars and SPACIOUS accomodations.*