



Fred Opperman.

These are excerpts from a letter authored by Fred Opperman in response to a request from Brian Bossert, CGCS, during the latter's research phase for the feature article on the Illinois Golf Hall of Fame (March 2005). Fred's reflections concern his unique position, having worked with all three superintendent members of the Hall of Fame.

*You hit the jackpot as far as a person who has worked with those three "Hall of Famers." I believe that I may be the only one to have worked for, with and alongside of all the three men.*



Bob Williams.

I first started with Bob Williams in the spring of 1961 as one of 10 college students at the Bob O'Link school of budding future superintendents. I returned in the spring of 1962 and by the fall of that year was the assistant superintendent at Elmhurst C.C. What impressed me immediately was the organizational skills that Bob had. Everything was written down. Details of how a job or function

was to take place and happen. Daily, monthly and yearly records kept to substantiate his reports to the BOD. His manners with the crew were always excellent and there was never a doubt on what you were asked to do or how a project was to be accomplished. When you worked for Bob, it was always black and white, meaning there were no gray areas. Bob asked the best of you at all times and you were told in private that you hadn't lived up to the standards that he had set. His dress at the time was the same as the members', which was very unusual at that time. Most superintendents were "working superintendents" during the early '60s and before. What was the greatest impact? Bob set the standard for the superintendents of today.



Oscar Miles.

Oscar and I worked together at Bob O'Link in '61 and '62. Oscar and I had a month of night-watering together in 1962, so we got to know each other pretty good. I have always respected Oscar in his organizational abilities and being one of the best "grass growers" in the Chicagoland area. Oscar was no doubt one of the first to jump on the computers as a tool for managing a golf course and his


courses have shown the dedication that he 100% puts into it. He should be given an honorary Ph.D. for his accomplishments in turf and the way he has advanced the profession. Greatest impact? Oscar has a tremendous drive to produce only the finest course possible.



Ray Gerber.

Ray Gerber . . . your report isn't long enough to get into this dedicated person. When Ray retired in 1970, I replaced him as superintendent at Glen Oak. My training in "greenkeeping" was just beginning. Ray never had the "school book learning," but believe me, he was a sponge for learning and experiencing the art of "greenkeeping." Ray had the ability to listen. He did more of that than talking. His memory

was so wonderful of the past experiences and knowledge. Ray seemed to be unflappable under pressure. I respected him for his dedication to improving the superintendent and his love of the local association and GCSAA. His service to the two associations during the war years was outstanding and kept them both going during such hard times. Ray was very giving of his time and knowledge to anyone who asked. But, you needed to ask for his help and it was always given. I was always amazed as a young superintendent (30 at the time) that once I was in charge, he never questioned my decisions. But seldom a day went by that I did not ask, why this, what if or what do you think? We had lunch everyday at the club and he was always my greatest supporter. Greatest impact? Being my best friend, mentor and his knowledge of greenkeeping.

All I know is that all three of these men helped me be a better person and I am what I am today because of them and others along my life's journey. 

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