

Hopphan Inducted in the Illinois Golf Hall of Fame



On Friday, October 23, 2009 Carl G. Hopphan was inducted into the Illinois Golf Hall of Fame. He was nominated by the Chicago District Golf Association (CDGA) and the Illinois Turfgrass Foundation for this honor.

Carl was the golf course superintendent at Aurora Country Club, the club of his hometown for thirty-one seasons before he moved to Evanston Country Club for another twelve years. During this time, Carl was the President of the MAGCS for two seasons in 1979-81. He was instrumental in working with the CDGA Board of Directors to hire a “family doctor” for the golf courses in our area. To fill this new position the CDGA and the University of Illinois hired Dr. Randy Kane in 1983.

Upon “retirement” from his profession, Carl began to help the Illinois Turfgrass Foundation with its mission of raising funds for turf research and education. Carl has always been a strong believer in formal education, an opportunity he never had for turf, except “for a few seminars” along the way.

In 2001, the CDGA opened its new headquarters, the Midwest Golf House and started work on Carl’s next project, the Sunshine Course. The course was developed for a dual purpose. The first was under the careful planning of Dr. Randy Kane as a turfgrass research center. The course would mimic real world conditions and be built with different turf species, cultivars, sands and soils, all in the name of science. The second purpose was a place to grow the game of golf and progress the mission of the CDGA’s foundation that “brings the benefits and resources of the game of golf into the lives of beginners, juniors, individuals with disabilities, minorities and the economically disadvantaged throughout the Chicago District”.

Carl jumped in with both feet and was responsible for the acquisition of many features of the Sunshine Course utilizing his industry resources and contacts. While Carl asked for donations of goods and services, he often told of the future of the Sunshine Course as a “living laboratory”, a place where the golf course superintendent could come and learn about the latest techniques, tools and products.

Upon the major completion of the Sunshine Course, Carl felt the course was in capable hands of the CDGA and it’s turfgrass team (at the time, Dr. Randy Kane, Lee Miller and golf course superintendent, Doug Pool). Being Carl, he still wanted to help and began to focus on those who would benefit from the course itself. He joined ranks with the CDGA’s Foundation and continues to help with course programming and fundraising today.

Carl accepted his induction into the Hall of Fame in memory and to the dedication of his late son Tod, who was killed in an accident on his way to work at Elgin Country Club as the Golf Course Superintendent.

In true Carl fashion, all his accolades have been passed on to others; however, we are the ones that benefit from knowing and having him as a part of our profession. Carl still continues to give back to the game and touches many lives through it.

Three others were inducted with Carl—Steve Lesnik (chairman of KemperSports), Chip Beck (PGA professional), and Frank Jemsek, (owner of Cog Hill Country Club). Congratulations to the 2009 Illinois Golf Hall of Fame Inductees. **-OC**

