

The news the passing of Robert Williams took me back to 1979 when I showed up at his office door looking for a job. I had knocked around in a couple of dead-end jobs since graduating college five years earlier, and while driving a bus on a beautiful day it occurred to me that being involved in the care and feeding of a golf course might be a lot better than what I was currently doing.

In 1979 there wasn't a lot of information out there about golf course management, but I somehow unearthed Ray Gerber's name and gave him a call. I pretended to be a reporter looking for information about the people responsible for conditioning golf courses. Mr. Gerber gave me Robert Williams' number saying that Bob would be the best spokesman for the profession. Using the same pretext I called Mr. Williams and he agreed to see me and answer my questions.

I put on my best polyester sport coat and showed up at the Bob'O'Link Golf Club maintenance facility and proceeded to "interview" Mr. Williams about the nature of the work he and his staff did. About five minutes into it he sniffed out my deception, but continued to weave a glamorous picture of honoring the game and its traditions, consorting with rich and powerful gentlemen, (Bob'O'Link was and still is a gentlemen only club), and practicing applied science in the pursuit of impeccable playing conditions. He had me hooked, and seeing that, asked if I might be interested in working for him. I accepted immediately, gave notice to the bus company and began working for him shortly thereafter.

With Mr. Williams you started at the bottom, (or at least I did), and he watched me shoveling divot mix for minute before taking the shovel from my hands and instructing me on the "Bob Williams" method of shoveling. There was a "Bob

Williams" way of doing everything, and it usually was the most efficient way. He was a patient teacher, but did not suffer fools gladly, and excellence was expected.

I soon came to learn that "honoring the game and its traditions" really meant straight flagsticks and a tidy tee box accomplished without loitering.

"Consorting with rich and powerful gentlemen" really meant getting your butt behind a tree and keeping quiet until the golfers has passed.

"Practicing applied science in the pursuit of impeccable playing conditions" really meant spraying greens with a Bean sprayer with a handgun set at 275 PSI with a "flick of the wrist" at the end of each swath to insure the even application of the spray material."

It was a wonderful time. Thank you Mr. Williams, God Bless and rest in peace.

– Fred Behnke, CGCS, Mount Prospect Golf Course

If you wish to honor the memory of Mr. Williams, donations can be made to the [Williams Leadership Endowment, c/o The Environmental Institute For Golf](#), 1421 Research Park Drive, Lawrence, KS 66049-3859. The endowment recognizes Bob and his son Bruce for their contributions and commitment to mentoring golf course superintendents to become leaders in the golf course management profession and instilling these qualities in superintendents. Presently, this endowment funds the chapter leadership conference held each year at GCSAA headquarters in Lawrence of which MAGCS has been and continues to be a direct beneficiary. -OC

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