

GCSAA Award Honors Hans Schmeisser Memory

Three Distinguished Service Awards were presented at the 52nd International Turfgrass Conference and Show by the GCSAA. This is our profession's highest honor. The awards were given to Dr. Ralph Engel, research professor in Turfgrass management at Rutgers University; Geoffrey Cornish, golf course architect of more than 170 courses; and Hans Schmeisser, Florida golf course superintendent for over 50 years. He died October 26, 1980, age 88.

The nomination of Schmeisser was a joint movement of South Florida and the Palm Beach chapters. He was the superintendent of Forest Hills Golf Course, West Palm Beach. Even at his advanced age he was still very active in both his local chapters.

To review Schmeisser's career is a journey back into Florida golfing history. Born and educated in his native Germany, he trained in horticulture, after serving in World War I. Upon moving here he worked with Baron Collier to landscape Everglades City. The year was 1929. Several years later he built a resort golf course there. Remember this was 50 years ago! At the time there was less than a dozen courses in the entire state. During the years from 1948 through 1980 he was involved with design, building or rebuilding of over 25 courses with many famous architects. He had been a turf consultant for many clubs throughout the south. People that knew him will remember his high professional standards which are guidelines for all of us today. He was always experimenting with new ideas, grasses, and equipment. He used 2,4-D in experiments six years before it was marketed. In 1951 he was the first to use hybrid turf Bermuda on a golf course. Ray Jensen, noted past president of Southern Turf Nursery, credits Schmeisser with the invention of the fairway sprig planter. Jensen says, "In 1957 he invited us to plant a par three golf course in Lakeland. He had designed the course. This job opened up the opportunity to spread vegetative hybrids to the far corners of the world. Prior to the Lakeland experience our method of planting sprigs was by hand or with a one row tobacco planter. When I told him I had doubts about getting that much grass into the ground, he said not to worry, he would show me how to get it done. When we arrived on the scene, Schmeisser introduced me to the first straight disc planter. When we finished the job, he told me to go home and build my own machine". Dr. Glenn Burton, 1958 Distinguished Service Award recipient said, "I can think of no one who would have a better total record than his." Tom Mascaro, 1976 Distinguished Service Award recipient, said, "I took my first greens aerator to Schmeisser because he would immediately tell me if it was good or not." Jor Konwinski, FTGA president, says. "The integrity, success and professionalism of the golf course superintendents way of life is a result of men like Hans Schmeisser." Bill Wagner, state association president, said, "Pioneers in exploration are often remembered by a body of water or a

land mass; pioneers in science are made famous thru a medicine or chemical; pioneers in space will always be recognized for their daring exploits; but pioneers in a slow developing industry such as ours are most often forgotten. As gradual improvements unfold and cultivate the evolution of a profession which starts out as a relatively obscure job and builds into a position of endless responsibility." ■



Otto Schmeisser accepts award for father Hans.

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