

James Brandt — a turfgrass pioneer for 'the educated'

BY VERN PUTNEY

As with so many future golf course superintendents "way back when," James W. Brandt learned the game "from the ground up," gaining national and international status on the way.

The Jenks, Okla., native, who retired last winter after 35 years as superintendent at Danville (Ill.) Country Club, launched a near-lifetime connection with the sport as a 12-year-old caddie at the "beautiful and prestigious" Southern Hills Country Club in Tulsa.



James Brandt

At 16, he began working on the maintenance crew there under John Price and decided to make this interesting and challenging profession his career.

That long-ago choice was capped last February at the annual Golf Course Superintendents Association of America convention. Brandt received the group's 1989 Distinguished Service Award, an honor reserved for those who have excelled over a lifetime of work in the industry.

The 37-year GCSAA member served as a director in 1962 and became president in 1968.

The road to the top was long but rewarding. When Brandt was a teen-ager, most superintendent positions were filled on an apprenticeship basis.

Brandt decided a college education would better prepare him for such a career. There was no turf management program at Oklahoma State University, so he continued working summers at the golf course while studying soils, field crops and plant pathology, earning a bachelor's degree in agronomy in 1948.

After receiving a master's degree in agronomy from Purdue University in 1950, he became an assistant superintendent at the famed Tam O'Shanter Country Club in Niles, Ill., which was hosting the "World Championship of Golf" tournament at the time. He learned first-hand how a course was prepared for a major tournament.

The next year, Brandt became director of golf for the city of Indianapolis.

He was responsible for hiring all personnel to operate the six municipal courses, buying all supplies, and formulating maintenance programs for the courses.

"Probably the greatest achievement there was the purchase of spraying equipment for each course and formulating the spray programs to eliminate dandelions and plantains from the courses," he says.

When Brandt went to Indianapolis, courses were being dragged with chain link fence drags to eliminate the dandelion seed heads and were being mown with cycle bars to try to control the seed head spikes of the plantains.

While at Indianapolis, Brandt was elected secretary-treasurer of the Indiana GCSA, but longed for the day-to-day and hands-on involvement of his own golf course. The Danville Country Club post became available and he was hired in March 1953.

At that time, the only organized Illinois superintendents group was the Midwest Association, whose meetings were in the Chicago area. Attendance usually required an overnight stay.

Brandt thought a similar organization was needed in central Illinois, because climate and maintenance problems are quite different there.

So he and Joe Kelly of George A. Davis Co. in Chicago contacted area superintendents, and in June 1954 the Central Illinois Golf Course Superintendents Association was formed. Brandt was elected president. He was elected

another four terms.

The 16 charter members have increased to 143, of whom 121 are course superintendents.

Brandt in 1968 was president of the Midwest Regional Turfgrass Foundation of Purdue University, and with Ben Warren and Bert Rost founded the Illinois Turfgrass Foundation.

This body was the prime mover in furthering turfgrass research at the University of Illinois' Ornamental Horticulture Department. Brandt headed that group in 1962 and 1963.

Brandt was an early adviser to the turfgrass program at Danville Area Community College, and regularly used students to allow them to complete their student occupational experience.

For 13 years, Brandt was superintendent-general manager at Danville CC, but returned to be strictly superintendent when the position became too demanding.

Brandt received the Illinois Turfgrass Foundation's Distinguished Service Award in 1981 and the Outstanding Lifetime Service Award of the Central Illinois GSA in 1988.

He has spoken at seven International Turfgrass Conferences.

Brandt notes one big change in the course superintendent occupation. "When I applied for the job at Danville, there were only two other candidates. My successor was chosen from among 45 applicants.

"When a desirable position becomes available, there now are many well-qualified candidates."

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Seed Research cites Wian

Seed Research of Oregon recently honored Marlin Wian as its Course Superintendent of the Year.

Wian, superintendent at Llanerch Country Club, Havertown, Pa., was cited for contribution to the turfgrass industry.

Wian was singled out for "excellent success" in converting fairways from poa annua to 95 per cent perennial ryegrass. He was termed progressive, innovative and

highly skilled in turf management.

Wian used SR4100 and SR4000 "with outstanding results."

A 1981 graduate of Penn State, where father Charles works on turfgrass research plots, Wian has been Llanerch super five years.

Previous posts were at Olympia Fields CC, Chicago, Ill., and Wilmington, Del., CC.

Seed Research, a producer and marketer of elite turf grasses, is headquartered in Corvallis, Ore.

Patton Md. Turfgrass president

Diana Patton, sales manager of Turf Center, Inc., has begun her reign as first female president of the Maryland Turfgrass Association.

The 34-year-old Patton has worked for 10 years at Turf Center, a sod growing and marketing company in Eastern Montgomery County which was started by her grandfather and his brothers in

the 1930s and is operated by the Patton family today.

Patton studied extension education at the University of Maryland.

Membership in the association costs \$125 a year for growers and \$150 for related professionals. Businesses and farms can join as a single member. Interested people may contact Patton at 301-384-6300.

Japanese buy rich Riviera CC

Unidentified Japanese investors have bought the affluent Riviera Country Club in Pacific Palisades, Calif., for \$108 million.

Some members of the 61-year-old, 160-acre course have sought

contributions to a legal fund in fear that their membership rights may be in jeopardy.

Previous owners, in the meantime, have assured them no such danger exists.

Gould wins writers' award

Golf Shop Operations editor Dave Gould won the third annual golf writers competition sponsored by the Golf Course Superintendents Association of America.

GCSAA presented Gould a plaque and the \$1,000 prize at the annual GWAA dinner in Myrtle Beach, S.C., on April 3. His winning article, "How to work with your superintendent," appeared in the May 1988 issue of his publication.

Larry Kieffer of Janlark Communications in Auburndale, Fla., won second place and \$600, while Bradley S. Klein of Golf-Week took third place and \$400 in the competition.

Kieffer, a former GolfWeek editor, was cited for his article "The making of a superintendent," which appeared in Golf-Week last Nov. 19.

Klein's article "Superintendent revives rundown Ross treasure" earned him his prize.

Faculty of the University of Kansas School of Journalism served as judges for the contest.