

Mendenhall remembered for long GCSAA service

Continued from page 1

and style. Two days later, he was stricken.

"Chet was the most devoted man I knew where GCSAA was concerned," said longtime friend Art Snyder of Tucson.

Snyder perhaps felt the loss of Mendenhall, who died Sept. 25 at age 96, more deeply than any course superintendent. Snyder and Mendenhall had the same birthday, Sept. 13, and with their wives had shared many a mutual dinner celebration. Snyder is three years younger.

Mendenhall never missed a local meeting, Snyder recalled. He remained loyal to his profession and enthusiastic to the end.

Mendenhall, a native of Kingman, Kan., in 1926 attended a meeting of greenkeepers in Toledo, Ohio. This led to formation of the National Association of Greenkeepers of America, now GCSAA.

Mendenhall had been GCSAA's last surviving charter member.

Steve Cadenelli, GCSAA president, recalls Mendenhall's valedictory address vividly.

"He spoke eloquently at the dedication of our new building. I came to know him well. He was a marvelous man who made great contributions to our industry. All of us in golf course management were better off for Chet's dedication and insight. His stirring talk was a fitting touch to our 65th anniversary."

Added Cadenelli, superintendent at Metedeconk Country Club in Jackson, N.J., "Chet's passing comes as a shock and brings a sense of great loss."

Jerry D. Zidow, superintendent at Papago Golf Course in Phoenix and president of Arizona's Cactus & Pine Superintendents Association, echoed Cadenelli's thoughts.

"Few superintendents were so admired. Chet earned the respect of his peers, as numerous awards attest. It was delightful to see and chat with him at meetings. I would like to have known him better."

"We in Arizona felt honored that he chose this state for retirement. He was a stalwart in the golf com-

munity."

Mark Clark, course superintendent at The Country Club of Green Valley, termed his neighbor a "gentle and remarkable person."

"Chet would drop over to the house to borrow a mower to cut his lawn, and we'd chat about old times. We went on several trips to supers' meetings. I was fascinated with his accounts of 'greenkeeping' way back when. I hated to reach our destination, bringing to an end these colorful and delightful yarns."

One ear he couldn't capture was son Marion, owner-superintendent of Indian Valley Golf Course, Cincinnati. Chet unsuccessfully urged work slowdown for Marion, 75. Marion said only that he was following in his father's footsteps.

Ernie Jacob of Pittsburgh, who won the first superintendents golf championship at Hartsville, Ohio, and later was a tournament runnerup, recalls with pleasure and fondness "about 30 tournament rounds" with Mendenhall.

"Chet was a gentleman first, a player second. He was a fine man off as well as on the course. His input at meetings was valued."

Though election to GCSAA presidency in 1948 might be considered the highlight of Mendenhall's career, a partial listing of other honors perhaps best portrays the scope of considerable talents saluted by his peers.

These include:

- 1948 — GCSAA Past President's Award.
- 1959 — Central Plains Turfgrass Foundation Award for outstanding service.
- 1965 — The Heart of America GCSA DSA.
- 1967 — Honored by GCSAA for dedication and development and professional management of fine turf.
- 1983 — Heart of America



Chester Mendenhall

'Chet was the most devoted man I knew where GCSAA was concerned.'

—Art Snyder

GCSA: The Mendenhall Award for extensive time devoted to the turf and golf industry.

- 1986 — GCSAA's Distinguished Service Award.
- 1990 — USGA's Green Section Award.

Such career chronology for one raised on a farm in Oklahoma is amazing.

Mendenhall struck out for fame, if not fortune, in 1920. He landed a job with the Wichita (Kan.) City Parks and Forestry Department as superintendent for a new city park. The city decided to add a golf course. Mendenhall's introduction to this arena and the sport led to a life-long enchantment with all facets of the game, especially the behind-the-scenes activity.

Improvisation was necessary in those early days. Water was a problem when Mendenhall tackled construction of the Wichita course. He decided to build sand greens.

Horses pulled gang mowers over fairways and rough until Chet acquired a Fordson tractor. He converted it to a turf tractor by bolting an old set of rims to the outside of the wheels, thereby widening it for stability in the sandy soil.

Mendenhall became greenkeeper at Wichita CC in 1928. While there, he kept buffalograss fairways to one inch and greens at a quarter-inch with the help of gang mowers.

Innovator/inventor Mendenhall, who preferred the "tinkerer" label, was having trouble with the South German bentgrass. Much thatch posed a putting problem.

Chet designed rakes to lift the grass in front of mowers to cut away some thatch. Using a tin cylinder filled with concrete, he made a spiker to aerify compacted soil. He obtained what was believed the first

aerifier in Kansas, cut off the drawbar and mounted the machine on the three-point hitch of his Ford tractor.

Chet switched to greenkeeper at Mission Hills Country Club in Kansas City in 1934. Chief maintenance problem there was loss of bluegrass and bentgrass fairways to drought. Chet installed a quick coupling snap valve irrigation system. He planted zoysiagrass on all tees. This experiment proved most successful.

Mendenhall retired from Mission Hills in 1965, at age 70, but couldn't

reconcile to an easy chair. He plunged into golf course design and construction, and for the next 12 years designed and supervised construction of several courses in Missouri and Kansas.

Finally, at 82, it was time to slow down and enjoy sunny life in Arizona.

In addition to his widow (first wife Margaret died in 1970) and Marion, Mendenhall is survived by Earline (Theis) of Santa Fe, N.M., Leland of Yakima, Wash., and Paul of Nevada, Mo.



Or Do You Want A Sure Thing?

Luck should have nothing to do with the condition of your greens, tees and fairways. You need a sure bet like Tee Time fertilizers in combination with NUTRALENE®.

The Andersons' Tee Time fertilizers with slow release nitrogen, Nutralene®, are formulated using our unique micro-granular process. You're assured of effective, uniform performance *even on closely mowed turf.*

Ask us about:

- Tee Time 22-0-22 with 65% Nutralene for greens and tees.
- Tee Time 25-5-15 with 50% Nutralene for tees and fairways.

These and other "sure bet" Andersons' golf course products are available now at your nearest Tee Time distributor.

For more information, call toll free: 1-800-225-ANDY (2639)

the professional's partner®



®TEAM is a trademark of DowElanco
©1991, Tee Time is a trademark of The Andersons

Snyder, Jacob oldest among founders

The death of Chet Mendenhall at 96 leaves longtime friend Art Snyder, 93, of Phoenix, who shares the same Sept. 13 birthday, as the oldest member of the Golf Course Superintendents Association of America.

However, Snyder is not GCSAA's senior member. That distinction belongs "by about five minutes" to Ernie Jacob of Pittsburgh, who is a "mere 84."

Jacob and Snyder were both voted into membership in 1929. Applications were processed alphabetically.

Jacob received membership number 568, Snyder 573. Mendenhall's number was 264.

William S. Mellon of Lancaster, Pa., who caddied with Snyder at

Oakmont Country Club in Pittsburgh, and who died earlier this year, held No. 443.

Snyder plays almost daily at Skyline Country Club in Phoenix, with son Jim, who succeeded him there as course superintendent.

Snyder in 1973 became the only superintendent ever elected to the Arizona Golf Hall of Fame.

Jacob has been sidelined by illness the past two months, but



Arthur Snyder

hopes to return to play soon at the South Hills Country Club course in Pittsburgh where he was superintendent for 37 years. He was made an honorary member there upon retirement in 1974.

Jacob now lists a 22 handicap, a far cry from the scratch tag he bore when qualifying for the National Open at Winged Foot Country Club in Mamaroneck, N.Y., in 1929, and winning the first superintendents' golf tournament in 1938.

Jacob and wife Berdie have two sons — Paul, recently retired after 26 years as a TWA pilot, and Glenn, a captain in the U. S. Navy, and stepdaughter Margaret Bunting.