

**T**hirteen years ago, I began my career in this business as a cub reporter for *Golf Course Management*. The day I showed up at GCSAA, I knew zilch about turf, had played only three rounds of horrendously bad golf and had never even met a superintendent. My job description was basic: stick around the office, rewrite press releases, proofread copy and try to learn enough about the profession to someday write an occasional article.

Two days after I started, GCM's legendary long-time editor, Clay Loyd, called me into his office and asked if I'd like to take a little trip. It seemed that Chicago's Butler National GC had experienced a bit of a "rain event" the week of the Western Open. In fact, most of the course was underwater. It was golf's version of the *Poseidon Adventure*. For me, it would be baptism by flood.

Just a few frenzied hours later, I stumbled into Butler's maintenance facility dazed, damp and dangerously ill-prepared. At that moment, I met my first superintendent: Oscar Miles.

Oscar was an island of calm in a sea of turmoil. He was smiling, patient, relaxed and genuine. He took the time to proudly introduce his team (and, of course, his wonderful wife, Mardelle), as helicopters buzzed by and TV guys screamed at each other. He actually laughed as he showed me dozens of carp flopping around in the shallows that used to be the No. 1 fairway. It was surreal to me, but Oscar made it seem like just another interesting day at the office.

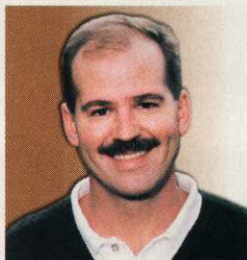
The story of how Oscar and his crew managed to salvage nine holes of "Lake Butler" and work with a nearby muni to play the 1987 Western is now legendary. It was an amazing feat by any standard. For me, it was a remarkable introduction to the profession by a truly remarkable man.

Flash forward to 2000, and I once again find myself walking into Oscar's office. This time, however, the sun is shining, only bluebirds buzz by, and the 17 ponds that dot the Merit Club are minding their manners and staying within their banks.

In the years since I met Oscar, I've played many more rounds of horrendous golf, learned

# Thank God for All of the Oscars

BY PAT JONES



THEIR NOBILITY

ATTRACTS BRIGHT

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LIKE FAITH

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just enough about turf to be dangerous and met thousands of superintendents. Oscar, however, is seemingly unchanged. He's still smiling and sincere — always teaching and always promoting others over himself.

There's Penn State memorabilia everywhere, and five computers scattered around Oscar's office. He's in the late stages of preparing for the U.S. Women's Open and has assembled a huge, incredibly well-organized notebook of plans, contingency plans and schedules.

Labor will not be a problem. Everyone wants to work with Oscar. In fact, he will have to turn away some fellow Chicagoland superintendents and "TurfNet buddies" who have volunteered. It's probably the hardest part of the job, he says.

Oscar isn't concerned about how the Merit Club will hold up to the scrutiny of network television and the critical examination of the players. Instead, his goal is to ensure that the event is a major showcase for women's golf. He also isn't interested in being in the limelight. Instead, he insists I talk with and photograph his assistants and club president Ed Oldfield.

What's the point of this tribute to a man who wants no tributes? Oscar Miles and the hundreds more like him around the country are what make this profession great. They are mentors and innovators. They share ideas and help their colleagues with no strings attached.

They have a nobility about them that attracts bright young people to the business like faith attracts priests to the altar. They have that special ability to not only create great golf conditions, but to create greatness in others.

Thanks Oscar (and all the other Oscars). This column's for you.

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*Pat Jones is the editor/publisher of *Golfdom*. He can be reached at 440-891-3126 or [patrick.jones@advanstar.com](mailto:patrick.jones@advanstar.com)*