

Larry Powell:

My Dad Taught Me About Principles and Perseverance

BY FRANK H. ANDORKA JR.

Larry Powell, superintendent of Clearview Golf Club in East Canton, Ohio, chooses his words carefully and deliberately. The words come in short bursts, separated by pauses as he decides how to discuss his father's legacy. His caution stems partly from the humility his parents instilled in him at an early age, but there's another factor at work. He realizes his father not only made significant contributions to him, but also to the entire industry. The historical importance of his father's role weighs on every word, and Larry clearly wants to get it right.

Powell's father, William, returned from World War II in 1946 to find the golf courses he scorched as the captain of Minerva (Ohio) High School's golf team closed to him because he was black. When he decided to build his own course in reaction, white banks in the town refused to loan him money for the project.

Still, William never allowed the struggles to kill his dream, so he built Clearview with private funds from two black doctors in the area. Larry says the resulting course remains the only black-built, black-owned golf courses in the country. The enormity of what his father endured to create the course impressed Larry, who says he grew up admiring the principles and perseverance that marked the struggle.

"My parents didn't shield me from what was going on in the business or in society," Powell says. "We had many discussions around the dinner table about the challenges we faced because of the color of our skin, but they also taught us not to accept the limitations of others. They taught us to persevere."

Larry Powell played golf by the time he was 5 or 6 years old. By the time he turned 8, he pushed a mower around the course. He watched his father care for the course and wondered how his father always seemed to know exactly what the course needed — almost as if it spoke to him.

"He taught me how to flow with nature instead of fighting it," Powell says. "His instincts about the course are usually right, and I've learned to trust myself the same way."

William, who worked a second job as a night security guard during the first 18 years after the course opened, also



William and Larry Powell

knew the importance of making every minute count. If he could think of new ways to do a task more efficiently, he did.

"I've tried to carry on his legacy of innovation," Powell says. "He was always willing to try new ways of doing things if it could save him time or money, even when other people told him he was crazy. He blazed his own trail."

But William bequeathed his son a far more human gift as well — the commitment to treat everyone equally, a lesson learned from the early struggles to build the course. Larry carries his father's vision forward with pride.

"He always told us to put ourselves in the other person's shoes before we acted," Larry says. "He never asked his employees to do something he wouldn't be willing to do himself, and he treated everyone with the same respect he expected from others. That's what I hope I'm carrying on today at the course." ■