



Bill Powell

## Industry Loses an Icon

BILL POWELL ENDURED RACISM IN BUILDING CANTON, OHIO, GOLF COURSE **By Larry Aylward, Editor in Chief**

**T**he golf industry — and the country — lost an icon on New Year's Eve. William "Bill" Powell died at 93.

Powell, "Mr. P" as they call him, was the first and is the only black American to design, build and operate a golf course in the United States — Clearview Golf Course in East Canton, Ohio. But a lot of folks would never have endured what Powell had to endure to get it done.

Powell, who was captain of the golf team at Minerva High School, fought in World War II. But upon returning home from the war, Powell had to fight discrimination. The area's golf courses — the ones he had played while a member of Minerva's golf team — wouldn't let him tee it up because he was black. But Powell didn't back down. "I'll just build my own course," he said.

It wasn't easy to secure the funding, though, because white-owned banks refused to grant him a loan to buy a dairy farm that he wanted to convert to a golf course. The U.S. government also refused him a GI loan, even after he had just served in WWII.

Still, Powell didn't give in. He teamed with two black American doctors whom he was teaching golf to invest in the venture. Clearview's first nine holes opened in 1948. Powell bought out his two partners in 1959 and added nine more holes in 1978. Clearview is on the National Register of Historic Places.

Last year, Powell received the 2009 PGA Distinguished Service Award, the association's highest annual honor.

"William Powell's dream to build a golf course where players regardless of the color of their skin would be welcome was a task that he met under great duress, hardship and personal sacrifice," said PGA of America President Jim Remy. "Yet, Mr. Powell displayed exceptional courage, grace and the finest character while persevering toward his goal of opening Clearview Golf Club."

Not many of us can emphasize with what Powell went through. But we can sure learn from it. We can act on it, too. ■



### Stanley Cup Stops By Oakmont

John Zimmers Jr., the golf course superintendent at Oakmont Country Club near Pittsburgh, is a huge sports fan. So you can bet Zimmers (right in the utility vehicle) was excited when the Stanley Cup trophy, won last year by Zimmers' beloved Pittsburgh Penguins, made a stop at the Oakmont maintenance facility last fall. Zimmers said his former grounds chairman/club president, Robbie Hoffman, has an interest in the Penguins franchise and was able to secure the trophy for a day. Zimmers and his staff were all smiles posing with it.



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