

A TRIBUTE TO JOE CANNESTRA

By Wayne Otto

Joe was a walking encyclopedia of knowledge about plant material, particularly anything pertaining to trees, shrubs and flowers. He loved birds and wildlife and would easily name a certain variety of bird that was seen. I tried many times to test his knowledge, even trick him, but Joe knew the common names along with the genus and species.

Joe was a self-taught man, learning all he could from books, publications, trade journals, and working with the man who Boerner Botanical Gardens at Whitnall Park was named after, Alfred Boerner.

Joe was a first class golf course supervisor at Brown Deer Park Golf Course, which hosted the USGA Publinks Championship for the third time in 1977. I remember much praise coming from USGA officials like Frank Hannigan, as well as congratulations on the fine condition of the golf course from the players who sought Joe out after their matches. I believe Joe had an extraordinary talent for obtaining ex-



cellence and high productivity from his maintenance crew. This was evidenced by the condition of the golf course, as well as the breathtaking flowers around the clubhouse.

Joe loved creating floral masterpieces and while he was still superintendent at Brown Deer Golf Course, came over to Ozaukee and helped us design annual flower beds. Since 1979, Joe literally did all the designing, order-

ing, planting and caring for our annual flowers, helped us maintain our trees, and supervised the locating and planting of more than one thousand trees on the golf course. (Joe always maintained that you must have vistas and not just a solid wall of trees.) He also designed and supervised the construction of ornamental concrete work and wood creations such as wood rounds for steps on a lookout on our eleventh hole and carved wood mushrooms near number two tee.

Anyone who knew Joe Cannestra loved him for his jovial personality and his tremendous knowledge. He was a very shy individual who never seemed to get the credit he deserved. Wes Eisenhower from Milwaukee County Park Commission told me one night during the USGA Publinks Championship that Joe was a maverick, meaning that he did his thing the way he thought it was best to do it.

Joe Cannestra died May 29, 1989, at the age of 64, after a long battle with kidney failure. I'm sure they broke the mold after they made Joe. Wherever he is, I know the birds are singing and the flowers are blooming more brilliantly than they ever have before. We really miss him.

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