



THE SHAW BOYS: *Golf's Fraternal Foursome*

By Lori Ward Bocher

Where there's one there's two...or three...or four. We're talking about "The Shaw Boys," of course—the only golf foursome at WGCSA meetings that consists entirely of brothers.

"We're easy to list as a foursome," Pat points out.

"And Jim wins all the prizes," Charlie adds.

The Shaw Boys are, in order of birth: Dan, assistant superintendent at Chenequa Country Club, Hartland; Jim, superintendent at Chenequa; Charlie, superintendent at Naga-Waukee Golf Club, Pewaukee; and Pat, superintendent at The Bog, Saukville.

If you're looking for a common thread, a reason why four brothers would end up in the same profession, it's not because they followed in their father's footsteps—he delivered milk. It's not their educational backgrounds—none have a turf degree. No, it's their family work ethic—at first their father's, and then their own.

I met with The Shaw Boys early in August. We sat around the table in Jim and Dan's office at Chenequa. The comradery was obvious. So was the sense of gratitude to an industry that has provided their livelihoods and given them a chance to be together as brothers.

The Shaw Boys grew up in Oconomowoc where their father, Bill, delivered milk for Hawthorne Melody and their mother, Marge, worked for Independence Bank. Both parents are retired now.

"It all started in 1963 when Dad took Dan and me to Oconomowoc Golf Club to sign up as caddies," Jim explains.

"When you're 12 years old, you can get two jobs—as a caddie or on a paper route," Charlie adds. "And our dad made it clear that we would get a job."

"That was our first introduction to golf," Dan recalls. "Before that, we didn't have a clue as to what happened on a golf course."



The Shaw brothers—Pat, Jim, Charlie and Dan.

Dan and Jim were good workers, and they started building the family reputation at the golf course. After only three weeks as a caddie, Dan was offered a job in the club house. And as Charlie and Pat grew older, the club was eager to hire more Shaw Boys.

"Charlie and I benefited from Dan and Jim having laid the ground work with their good work ethic," Pat admits. "The club was willing to hire us as fore caddies before we were even 12 years old."

"We've done every job there is to do on a golf course," Jim points out. Quickly, the others start listing the jobs they held on the course and in the club house. Even their two sisters, Jane and Kathy, worked at Oconomowoc Golf Club as waitresses. For 12 years in a row, Jim, Charlie, or Pat held the night water-man job there.

All four brothers worked for Harvey Miller, who is still the superintendent at the private Oconomowoc Golf Club. "He was our mentor, our teacher," Jim points out. "We learned turf management from him, not at school." They all enjoyed their summers on the course. But, at the time,

they never dreamed that eventually they'd all be working as golf course superintendents. They just slowly found their way back to the links.

Dan, the oldest, was the last to join the golf course maintenance profession. After graduating from Oconomowoc High School in 1969, he spent a semester at a technical school and another semester at Milton College. Then he took a job at the Carnation plant in Oconomowoc where he worked in maintenance for 18-1/2 years.

In 1991 he started working for Jim at Chenequa, and he was promoted to assistant superintendent in 1993. His strong maintenance background and past golf experience made him a natural for this new career.

Jim, who graduated from high school in 1970, has the longest tenure as a golf course superintendent. He continued to work for Harvey Miller while attending the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee where, in 1974, he received a degree in biological aspects of conservation. "Note that it took four years to get through college," Jim says as he pats his brother Charlie on the shoulder. "You'll see what I'm talking about in a minute."

Upon graduation from UW-M, Jim was hired at Chenequa as the assistant superintendent knowing that the superintendent was retiring in six months and Jim was expected to take his place. He's been the superintendent at Chenequa since August 1975.

So, how about it, Charlie? What did that pat on the back mean? Charlie graduated from high school in 1972 and then attended the University of Wisconsin-Madison as an Evans Scholar. "I studied a little of everything. I think my major changed every semester," Charlie explains. "I have a lot of credits in nothing." After 3-1/2 years, he left school and returned to the golf course of his past.

Charlie was the assistant superintendent at Oconomowoc Golf Club from 1975 to 1979. For the next nine years he was superintendent at Wanaki Golf Club, a public course owned by Waukesha County. And in 1989 he was transferred to Naga-Waukee Golf Club, which also is owned by Waukesha County. He's currently a WGCSA director.

Pat graduated from high school in 1978 and from Carroll College in 1982 with a degree in math and physics. He started a masters program at UW-M, but soon felt a strong desire to be out-of-doors. So he worked for Jim at Chenequa from 1983 to 1985. Then he was hired as superintendent at Muskego Lakes Country Club from 1985 to 1987. From 1988 to 1993 he was superintendent at Tuckaway Country Club. And since 1994 he's been at The Bog, a brand new course.

Why the latest move, away from Tuckaway? "The opportunity to be involved in the building of a golf course," Pat answers. "The opportunity for expanded responsibilities, for both the course and the club house."

"Sounds to me like he wanted more money," Jim chimes in.

All four brothers seem very happy with the golf course profession. "We don't want to be in an office. We want to work outside," Jim says for all of them. "We don't do the same boring job day in and day out. Something different happens every day—good or bad."

"Mostly bad," his brothers quickly interject.

"And we get to work with our hands," Pat adds.

What are the advantages to work-

ing in the same profession, I wonder? The brothers quickly answer.

"We all get the same time off," Jim says. "We share the same knowledge and the same problems."

"There's a certain compassion," Pat believes. "We understand each other's dilemmas and problems."

"There's a lot of sharing of information, especially about equipment," Charlie says. "When we go to the national trade show, we walk the floor together."

"We share shortcuts to maintenance, too," Dad adds.

The disadvantages? There's a moment of silence, rare with this talkative group.

"I honestly can't think of one," Pat states. More silence as they ponder this question.

"Every time we do get together as a family, the discussion is job related," Charlie finally says. "We just can't leave it. I think it drives our spouses crazy more than us."

"We rarely get together as a family because we're all so busy. It's so hectic," Pat chimes in.

All four brothers get together most frequently at the monthly WGCSA meetings where they play golf as a foursome. "That way we don't have to follow the rules of golf etiquette. We can just be ourselves," Charlie admits. "When we do play as a foursome, we don't want the other members to think we're doing it to be cliquish. We do it because it's a chance for us to be together."

"Before I worked at the golf course, I rarely saw my brothers because I worked the night shift," Dan adds. "With me being the last one to get into golf, now all four of us can get together and see each other."

"We rarely show up alone at the WGCSA meetings," Jim says. "And

we all play cards. The other members want to get in on our card games."

When The Shaw Boys were growing up, Oconomowoc was considered a separate town west of Milwaukee. Now it seems close to being swallowed up by Milwaukee's urban sprawl—just like Hartland, Pewaukee, Saukville, and many other small towns in Waukesha, Washington, and Ozaukee Counties. "Our new golf course is actually part of that urban sprawl," Pat says of The Bog. But the growing population means more play at the old courses, too.

"There's not only increased play, but increased expectations," Pat points out.

"TV golf had a lot to do with the golfer's expectations," Dan adds.

"We used to mow greens at 9 of an inch. Now 1/8 of an inch is too slow," Charlie says.

"We've gone from crews of four or five up to crews of 16 to 30 now," Jim continues. "But the biggest change I've seen is that there are no metal spikes on many private courses and some public courses."

Shortly before visiting with The Shaw Boys, I had read my daughter a book, "We're Different, We're The Same." An appropriate question for four brothers in the same profession seemed to be, how are you different and the same?

"We all take care of golf courses, but we're all different in the way we run each facility," Pat answers. "That's somewhat due to the differences in the golf courses, but it's also due to our different personalities."

Chenequa Country Club is a private course with 16,000 to 17,000 rounds of 18-hole golf in a season. The Bog is a daily fee course with about 25,000 rounds a season. And

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Naga-Waukee is a public course with about 60,000 rounds a season.

"We're crowded all day, every day," Charlie points out. "It's jammed."

The Bog, which is marketed as an upscale course, charges \$108 for 18 holes of golf. At Naga-Waukee, the charge is \$25. Jim jokes, "Golf is free at Chenequa—for the price of a membership."

Their personalities are both the same and different, too. "All four of us are stubborn and somewhat opinionated," Jim admits.

"But it's rare when we have the same opinion," Pat adds.

"I don't think any of us is very serious," Charlie points out. His brothers quickly label him as the most care-free of their fraternal foursome.

"I'm the most intense," Jim admits. "I live the job more than my brothers."

"Each of us has different outside interests," Dan says. "We have different things that we do in our spare time. And we're all very family oriented."

Dan and his wife, Christine, have four children, ages 22 to 15. Dan likes to golf and to umpire and referee for various sports.

"And he's the neighborhood handyman," Pat interjects. "He's always doing something for a neighbor."

"And it's all for free," Dan adds. "I just enjoy being outside and working with my hands."

Jim and his wife, Patti, have two children, ages 16 and 13. Jim likes to golf, bowl and referee basketball. "And I like to watch sporting events," he adds. "I'd rather sit inside and watch TV than to be outside in the sun."

Charlie and his wife, Lori, have a 9-year-old son. He also has a 17-year-old daughter from a previous marriage. Charlie enjoys fishing, softball, and canoeing.

Pat and his wife, Debbie, have three children, ages 9 to 3. Pat spends his spare time watching football and coaching his kids. "With the job changes, we've built two houses along the way. That hasn't left much spare time," Pat points out.

Dan, Jim and Charlie enjoy ice

fishing. And all four brothers go deer hunting together each year. "The thought of all four of us carrying guns together is scary!" Pat admits.

"I also like to hunt for golf balls," Jim adds.

"The white nugget," Dan interjects.

"From little on, we've all liked to do that," Jim continues. "It's not for the ball. It's for the hunt. It's the challenge of proving that you can find them no matter where you go."

"I don't think any of us has ever bought a golf ball," Charlie chimes in.

And so our conversation draws to a close. "I think it's pretty neat that we can be in the same business and be as close as we are geographically," Pat says.

"That closeness also allows us to help each other out, and not just on the golf course," Charlie adds. "Whenever one of us has some roofing or painting or moving to do, the others are there to help."

"I think I can speak for all of us when I say that the golf industry has been very good to us and our families. We owe an awful lot to golf," Pat concludes. ♣



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