



WSGA Hall of Fame's Newest Members

By **Gene Haas**, Golf Writer and Retired WSGA Executive Director

It was a warm, mid-summer day in July 1964 at the beautiful Blackhawk Country Club, located on the bluffs of Shorewood Hills overlooking resplendent Lake Mendota, during the Wisconsin State Golf Association's State Amateur Championship that the WSGA Hall of Fame was born. The first five charter inductees were golfing legends: Edward P. "Ned" Allis and Lynford Lardner of Milwaukee CC, Billy Sixty, Sr. of Blue Mound G & CC, Wilford Wehrle of Racine CC, and Dick Cavanagh of Kenosha CC.

The original "ground rules" required an inductee to be a male amateur, at least 40 years old, and possessing a distinctive record of contribution to the game. Within six years the field of candidates ran dry, and every past president of the WSGA became a serious candidate for election. In fact, many of them were elected.

When James R. Love served as WSGA president in 1971 and '72, he suspended the WSGA Hall of Fame Committee for the next four years in fear that the Committee would be accused of cronyism in their selections. He then convinced the WSGA Board to revise the Committee, allowing for the election of all qualified candidates - male and female, professionals, public links representatives and individuals from all segments of the golfing fraternity.

In the spring of 1975, I received a call from Jim Love asking if I would be willing to serve on the expanded WSGA Hall of Fame Committee, which would include professionals, women members and representatives from the public links and the media. Being the current president of the Milwaukee County Public Links Association and a vice president of the Wisconsin Public Links Association, Love felt that I would be a logical member - and I readily accepted.

Since being appointed to the Committee, I have found it to be a wonderful educational experience. The opportunity to serve as the Committee's recording secretary for the past thirty years, examining the biographies of Wisconsin's greatest contributors to the game, has been equally informative and personally gratifying.

Yet, it has been a difficult task. After pre-studying the biographies, and then collectively discussing the candidate's qualifications, a vote is taken. To be elected a nominee must receive at least 75% yes votes of the twenty-one member Committee. This often becomes a difficult task. In 1987, '90 and '98, no candidates were elected. At the end of 2004, there were 69 elected members of the Hall of Fame.

A review of the members elected to the Hall of Fame

since 1964 reveals that there are eighteen professionals, thirteen women golfers, twenty-two amateur golfers, fifteen administrative contributors and one agronomist - the legendary O.J. Noer, who was elected in 1985.

When the Hall of Fame Committee met in May of 2005, it again reviewed and voted upon the list of carry-over candidates - none were elected.

In keeping with procedure, biographies of new candidates were then presented and voted upon. When those votes were tabulated, two candidates were elected - Gary Menzel and Monroe Miller - becoming the 70th and 71st members of the WSGA Hall of Fame.

Gary Menzel, 60, a retired Milwaukee policeman and a member of the WSGA Board of Directors, has been an outstanding golfer for more than thirty-five years. He was elected for his accomplishments as a competitive golfer. He placed second in the 1971 WSGA State Amateur at Milwaukee CC, and then became a professional golfer for



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the next twenty-five years. He only played sparingly, due to a growing family and a rigorous work schedule. He was reinstated as an amateur golfer in 1999 and has dazzled the amateur golf scene ever since.

In 2000, Menzel reached the finals of the USGA Senior Amateur championship and was a semi-finalist in 2001. He also made the 72-hole cut in the 2001 USGA Senior Open, playing against the best senior golfers in the world. Also in 2001, he won the prestigious WPLA Ray Fischer 72-hole title at the Janesville Riverside GC. He also has won five WSGA Senior Amateur and two WPGA Senior Open titles since becoming a senior golfer. Menzel has been the WSGA Senior Amateur Player of the Year five times and continues to excel in all Wisconsin major golf tournaments.

Monroe Miller, superintendent at Blackhawk CC since 1973, holds the distinction of becoming the first full-time superintendent elected to the WSGA Hall of Fame. Monroe was born in Madison in 1946. He grew up on a farm near Fennimore, Wisconsin and graduated from the University of Wisconsin - Madison with a degree in Soil Science and the turfgrass management option. He then served in Vietnam as a military policeman in 1969 - '70. After receiving his honorable discharge, he attended grad school and working briefly at Maple Bluff CC before accepting the position as head superintendent at Blackhawk CC in 1973.

Always an activist, Miller occupied all the officer positions with the Wisconsin Golf Course Superintendents Association, serving as president in 1984 and '85. In 1984, Miller took on the added responsibility as editor of the WGCSA magazine, *The Grass Roots*. This outstanding magazine became even greater under Miller's editorial direction. It has won twenty-one consecutive GCSAA awards and is considered the association's premier chapter magazine in the country.

Many groups have recognized Miller for his untiring devotion and contributions to the turfgrass industry. He has received the UW-Madison College of Agricultural and Life Sciences Honorary Recognition Award for his efforts in establishing the Wisconsin Turfgrass Association and the O.J. Noer Turfgrass Research Facility at the UW-Madison, and the WGCSA's Distinguished Service Award. Also in 2004, he received the coveted USGA Green Section's Award, arguably the highest award given an individual in the golf turf industry.

To many of his fellow superintendents, Monroe is the "voice of the minority." He has expressed his opinion on almost every major issue in the industry, "telling it like it is," often as an editorial comment in *The Grass Roots* — which is usually applauded by his peers. His election to the WSGA Hall of Fame opens the door for others in the turfgrass industry to be recognized and honored. Monroe Miller once again has set the standard as a leader. Now, who will be the next Hall of Famer? ♣



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