

What It Was Like To Receive The WSGA Hall of Fame Award



By **Monroe S. Miller**, Golf Course Superintendent, Blackhawk Country Club

It was a surprise like few others I've had in my life. Enough people have asked me about the Hall of Fame Award that it seems sensible to record the details, at least as I remember them.

Bob Schlicht and I sat at the same table during a wedding reception a few years ago and he spent a lot of the time patiently answering my questions about his father Karl (Kully). Bob and the rest of the Schlicht kids grew up at Blackhawk, literally, where their father was the golf pro for 30 years and the pro/greenkeeper for 21 of those years.

The Schlicht family lived in a house on the golf course and as a

result they remember so many details of their father's career. When I think of how busy I am, I cannot fathom those career ancestors of ours who also did the golf professional's work. One of those I have read a lot about was Arnold Palmer's father, Deke. Arnie's done a large favor for us by writing of how his father handled the responsibilities of both positions.

The more I contemplated Kully Schlicht's career in golf in Madison, the more it seemed logical to submit his name and career details to the Wisconsin State Golf Association Hall of Fame committee for consideration.

The committee met in late May, so

when I received a call from the HOF committee chairman, Dr. David Cookson, I assumed it was to tell me Mr. Schlicht had been chosen for the WSGA Hall of Fame. It seemed unlikely that he would call to say that he hadn't been selected.

Imagine my surprise when Dr. Cookson told me of my incredibly good fortune. To this day I still haven't recovered from that surprise. And I'm going to continue to see if Kully Schlicht's name has a place in the Hall of Fame.

A couple of the papers noted the WSGA choices, and the cards and letters started to arrive, along with phone calls, e-mails and visits. Rod Johnson's call was the



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first. It was pure pleasure hearing from so many friends.

An event usually takes place at the State Amateur, but that didn't exactly apply in my case. So it fell to our BCC club manager, John Altschwager, to deal with that, a good thing since he is a real pro at his job and I am close to being anti-social.

A recurring comment through the summer was delight that a golf course superintendent was selected. The thought is that the first choice opens the door for other superintendents, and that is my fervent hope. There are so many who are qualified.

All summer long it seemed someone was always bringing this up in conversation. It was so pleasant, especially during a summer that was so miserable with its lack of precipitation and endless heat.

The thought of the late summer reception caused some worry on my part. I fussed over not knowing people's name, the late season timing (when superintendents are all tired), not knowing what to say, and more. It turned out, as it often does, that my fears were unfounded.

The reception was on the last Sunday in August. It was hard to know the best time when considering people in our business - we are ALWAYS busy in the summer, especially one like this one was. I could have understood if none of my colleagues were at the clubhouse.

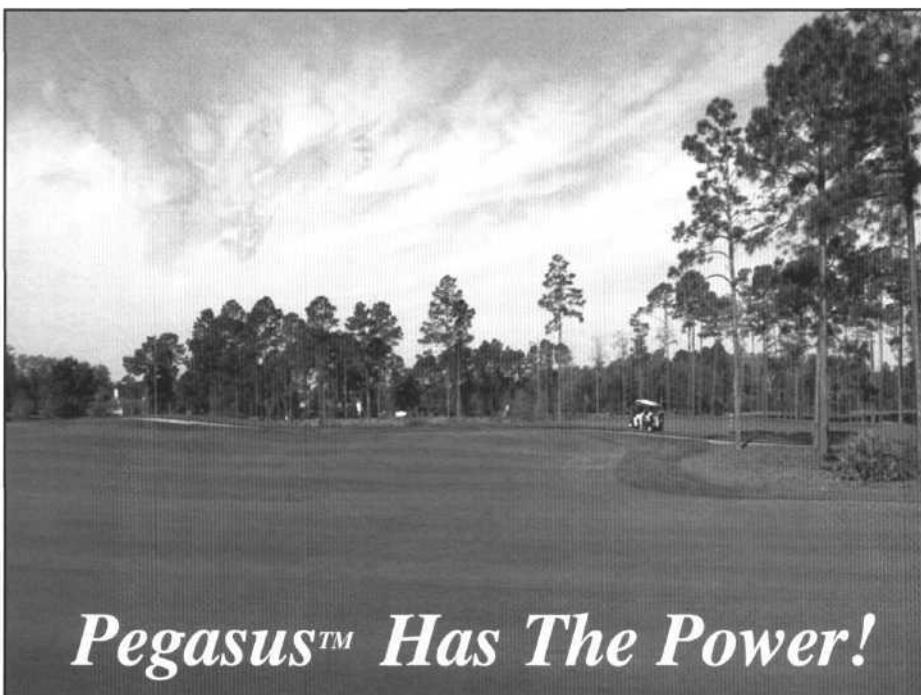
Wrong on that count! So many came such distances, often with spouses, to be there. Many former Blackhawk employees were in the building, from as far away as St. Louis (Steve and Debbie Millett), Raliegh (Bob Erickson), and Mike Bogroff (Traverse City). Bill and Pat Roberts drove up from Chicago, and all quarters of Wisconsin were represented.

I was allowed to invite 20 guests, so my family was there and so were the green committee chairs (and their spouses) I have worked for

over my career, if they were still around. The number wasn't great since we tend to have fairly long terms, but they covered the bulk of my years at Blackhawk. I was flattered to be in their midst at once. Ralph Loy, who was green committee chair when I was hired, drove

up on his own despite his age of 97!

The presence of Professor Jim Love was wonderful. He is second only to my father as men who have influenced my life and he is one of a kind in intellect, personality and interests. Profs Koval, Kussow and Jung were also there, as was Elton



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I also have a long history with Dr. Cookson and With Gene Haas, so you can understand why it was so meaningful to have a program that featured them. I will always treasure the great caricature Gene gave to me!

And then there was our chapter president, prominent on the program. What fun it was to sit back and listen to his remarks, although he cut my heart out a couple of times! But he spoke only the truth, which is

what Marc Davison always does.

Nearly everyone on our 2005 golf course crew came up to see what all the commotion was about. More than anything I enjoyed seeing them all scrubbed and polished and well dressed; I hardly recognized them! One of the kids asked me where the Hall of Fame was located and if it cost anything for admittance! It isn't the same as the HOFs we are most familiar with - Canton, Far Hills, Springfield or Cooperstown. But the

honor is just as high to me as any of those places.

Many of our members took the time to attend, as did a number of WSGA officers and directors, and Tom Schmidt.

I had the chance to see nearly everyone during the five hours or so that it lasted, and that was the best part. I wish I could mention everyone by name, but room doesn't permit. During the time between Dr. Cookson's call and the reception, I have thought a lot about the career I have had for so long. I have thought about all golf has given to me in terms of opportunities. I have felt sorry for those people who work only because of what they might earn, rather than working for the love of the work itself, like so many of us have. Those poor souls measure their success and that of others in monetary terms; they have missed so much in life.

That is why I consider myself to be one lucky man to have been a golf course superintendent. The Hall of Fame award is evidence of that good fortune. ♣

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