

# Trio Receives Distinguished Service Awards

Three men who have contributed considerably to the welfare and success of the Minnesota Golf Course Superintendents Association were presented Distinguished Service Awards at the association's 64th Annual Conference.

The recipients were Jack Adams, University of Minnesota; Gordy Miller, North Star Turf, and Jack Kolb, Turf Supply Co. Following is a personalized glimpse of each of the men.

## RUSS ADAMS

What do hockey and maintaining golf courses have in common?

Well, in the case of Russ Adams, who was presented a Distinguished Service Award at the 1991 MGCSA Conference, chasing pucks led to his 40-year career in golf course work at the University of Minnesota.

Born on February 22, 1929—the fourth eldest in a family of 13—Russ was an outstanding left wing at Minneapolis Marshall High School, where he was graduated in 1947. He probably could have played for the University of Minnesota, but there were no hockey scholarships available and Russ couldn't afford to enroll at the U of M at that time.

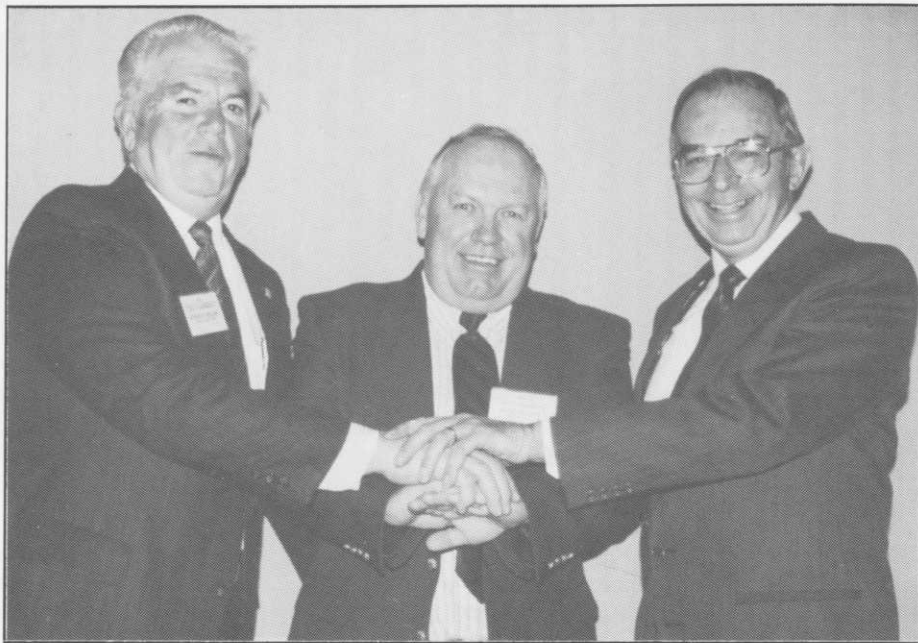
**He wound up playing semi-pro hockey** for the Minneapolis Bungalows, which won a national senior championship, as well as Sioux City and Des Moines in the United States Hockey League.

On April 1, 1951, he was hired by the Athletic Department of the University to work summer months at the golf course and winter months at the Williams Arena ice rink. This allowed Adams to continue his hockey career as well as earn some income throughout the year.

Russ continued this lifestyle until a puck hit the side of his left knee in 1979. That ended his competitive hockey career. However, he did considerable officiating, including work at six state high school tournaments.

**At the University golf courses** Russ worked under John Fuller, Herman Senneseth and Elmer Bennett before being named head superintendent on January 1, 1962. He served in that capacity for 29 years.

He joined the Minnesota Golf Course Superintendents' Association when he



**THREE DISTINGUISHED SERVICE AWARDS** were presented by the Minnesota Golf Course Superintendents' Association at the 1991 annual conference to, from left, Gordon Miller, chairman of the board of North Star Turf; Russ Adams, a retired superintendent from the University of Minnesota Golf Course, and Jack Kolb, who has retired as owner of Turf Supply Co., which recently merged with Landscape and Turf.

got the head job at the "U," was elected to the MGCSA's executive board as a director in 1967-68, became vice-president in 1969, then president in 1970. He continued as an ex-officio director in 1971, then again served on the Board in 1982-83. He retired on October 31, 1991.

Now Russ will have much more time to play golf. He once had a handicap that fluctuated between 1 and 2, later had less time to play and saw his handicap rise to the 8 he carries now. He is a past champion in both the regular MGCSA Championship and Seniors competition, and once had a hole-in-one on Number 2 after birdying the first hole at the University course. Chances are, said longtime Gopher coach Les Bolstad, that 3-under-par score for the first two holes will never be beaten.

**Russ maintains his interest in hockey** as well as football and basketball by serving as admissions supervisor for all of the events in these three Gopher sports.

He and his wife, Marilyn were married on June 8, 1963 and are the parents of two adopted children—Lee, 24, and Debbie, 22.

Last July 10 he had his second knee replacement (the first was a year earlier), but five weeks later he played in the MGCSA's Senior Championship at New Richmond, finishing runner-up to Jerry Bibby.

Russ intends to keep active in association activities, plans to attend the national conference in New Orleans in February and looks forward to more senior golf.

"My association with other superintendents through the MGCSA have been a big part of my life," he said. "The past 29 years bring back memories of a lot of good times and good friends."

His peers, thinking of Russ, would say the same.

## GORDY MILLER

For well over 60 years and three generations, the Miller family has been synonymous with the sales and distribution of turf maintenance equipment in Minnesota.

Starting in the late 1920s, Paul Miller sold lawn mowers in our region and sold one of the first gasoline-powered reel mowers to the State of Minnesota in late

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## Distinguished Service Awards

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1928 or early 1929. It was probably early 1929 as the state needed to wait until the first of the year until new funds could be appropriated.

Gordon Miller, his son, started working for his father at about age 6, delivering catalogs. He officially became employed at the age of 15.

Gordy started his career as a part-time mechanic's helper doing disassembly of mowers and washing parts. Gordy's starting wage was 15¢ per hour. Since he became chairman of the board of North Star Turf, he reports his income has "now more than doubled."

Gordy's career as a salesman started in 1948. At various times he was responsible for territories in Minnesota, North and South Dakota and western Wisconsin. One of Gordy's first sales was to Mr. Delloyd, the owner of Southview Country Club. Mr. Delloyd purchased a walking greens mower for Alex Schafer, the superintendent.

His sales career was cut short in 1950 when he joined the United States Marine Corps and was the third man ashore during the assault on Wonson, Korea. After his return in 1952, he married his wife, Char. They became the parents of eight children. Their youngest daughter, Tracy, is in high school and living at home while oldest son, Dan, is following in the footsteps of his father. In 1988, Gordy and his son, Dan, along with Kirby Burmeister, founded North Star Turf.

While Gordy plans continued employment as chairman of the board, he also plans additional travel to visit some of his other children, conveniently located in Hawaii and Phoenix.

### JACK KOLB

When Jack Kolb was graduated from high school in 1941, the United States was preparing for war. There was little time to plan a career, so Jack left a job as a Wisconsin cheesemaker near Green Bay and took up work as a shipfitter, building submarines at Manitowoc, Wis.

In 1942 Jack was drafted into the Navy and was trained as a torpedoman with the Pacific Submarine Command. Most of his Navy career was spent on Midway Island.



**DISPLAYING THREE SCHOLARSHIP PLAQUES** presented at the MGCSA's annual conference are, from left, Vance J. Warner, Brainerd, a student at Anoka Technical College; Kathy Solga, Plymouth, who accepted the award in behalf of her husband, David Solga, a student at Penn State University, and Thomas Flood, Minneapolis, also studying at Anoka Tech. Unable to attend was the MGCSA's fourth scholarship recipient, Chris Youngbauer, Verndale, another Anoka Tech student.

Upon discharge, he enrolled at the University of Minnesota, intent on being a forester; however, he felt that a certain dark-eyed young lady was not about to be a homemaker in a cabin deep in the woods. So, after a change in majors, and 240 credits later, he was graduated with a degree in Plant Industry.

Jack's first job was as a fertilizer salesman with the old Farm Bureau Service Company in 1950. The old plant still exists under the Lafayette Bridge in downtown St. Paul. It was the first Diammonium Phosphate (D.A.P.) plant in Minnesota.

In 1953, Jack was hired by Dr. James Watson and went to work for the Toro company as an agronomist.

After a few years and because the pay was better, Jack became golf course superintendent with The Minikahda Club. After 10 years at Minikahda, he moved to Minneapolis Golf Club for a few more seasons. During this time he evaluated the turf industry and the idea of Turf Supply Company was conceived. Jack left Minneapolis Golf Club on Dec. 31, 1969.

Turf Supply Company was born the next day. Not one sale was recorded for the first three months of its existence. During this time his wife, Rajah, and five children under 11 years of age operated on a very low budget. Eventually, the business grew, and the next 21 years saw many new innovations in marketing. Turf Supply Company today is very viable in the local market.

One of Jack's hobbies is writing. Several of his articles were published in the old *Golfdom* magazine. One of his treasured letters is a four-page document from Herb Graffis, editor of *Golfdom*, commending Jack for his approach on the golf course superintendent's role in the golf industry.

Today Jack and Rajah are adjusting to "grandparenting" with three grandchildren.

With the recent merger of Turf Supply Company and Landscape and Turf, Jack has relinquished his management role and is concentrating on adjusting to retirement. For the rest of his time, he says he hopes to "equal Marco Polo in worldwide travels."