

Where Are They Now?

MILTON WILEY

By Jack Kolb

Of all the men who have at one time or another been associated with golf and the occupation of golf course superintendent, there are few who can equal the levity that Milt Wiley brought to the industry.

Milton Wiley was born in Vanderpool, Virginia, the son of a storekeeper named John Wiley. This blessed event occurred just three years prior to the crash and great depression of 1929. Now if you were a merchant of any kind in those years, you dealt with your customers on a credit basis and they paid you at the end of the month.

When the crash occurred, there was absolutely no cash available so the store was closed and a new career was sought. Back then if you were of sound character and had a work ethic, you could find work. Thus, John Wiley took his family to

Philadelphia and secured employment at the Melrose Country Club. Milt Wiley grew up on that course.

Milt Wiley's summers were spent on the golf course but, as he came into manhood, the U.S. was engaged in a war. Upon graduation from high school, Milt hauled himself down to the Marine Recruiting office and signed up for four years, promising to bear true faith and allegiance to the United States of America, that he would serve them honestly and faithfully against all their enemies whomsoever, and that he obey the orders of the President of the United States. This tour of duty was from 1943 until 1947.

Inevitably, a young lady by the name of Catherine entered his life and they were married in August of 1945; thus August of 1995 marked 50 years of marriage for Milt and Catherine Wiley.

Upon his discharge from the Marines in 1947 Milt attended Penn State University and began working with some of the great and near great in the turf industry — Dr. James Watson, Dr. Marvin Ferguson and Joseph Duitch all led by the venerable Dr. H. B. Musser, at that time head of the department of Turf Management at Penn State. Upon leaving Penn State University, Milt took a job as Superintendent at Kennet Square Golf Club in Kennet Square, Pennsylvania.

In 1951 Leo Feser, who was superintendent at Woodhill Country Club and who owned and operated Orono Golf Club, was beginning to formulate the plans for Medina Golf



Course. Leo had decided the load was too much and resigned from Woodhill. Networking through the system and to the seat of best Turf Management (Penn State University) led to the hiring of Milt Wiley for the Woodhill Country Club post. Milt served Woodhill from 1951 to 1954 at which time he resigned to sign on with a company named "Minnesota Toro Inc." located on Lake Street in Minneapolis.

In 1959 The Minikahda Club felt the inner city (Minneapolis) tax base, (before "Green Acres" tax laws) was going to force them from their "downtown" location. Thus, a group of Minikahda leaders, E. Ford Bell, Totten Heffelfinger, Harry Tuttle, John G. Kinnard, Robert Trent Jones, along with the writer and others set out to find a new location for the club. The area chosen was a large

parcel of farmland surrounding a small body of water called Hazeltine Lake. The proposal for the move was put before the membership at Minikahda and was promptly turned down.

Because of Robert Trent Jones' enthusiasm for the location and the desire for a more challenging type of golf course by Totten Heffelfinger, a syndicate was formed and options on the land exercised to build Hazeltine National Golf Club. Milt Wiley was hired as the Superintendent/Manager to supervise construction of the new course. This was in 1960.

Milt Wiley, his father John Wiley and Milt's son John Wiley all labored to bring nine holes into play in 1962 and eighteen holes the following year. Milt continued as manager of Hazeltine until 1970 at which time he was appointed distributor of Milorganite for the state of Minnesota and eventually formed the company called "Landscape and Turf."

Ill health has dogged Milt for the last several years, yet he is often seen at national meetings and, in the summer, many of the regional meetings such as the Arrowhead and MGCSA. A couple years ago Milt was given a "Distinguished Service Award" (by the MGCSA) and after struggling to climb up to the podium, those in attendance enjoyed one of the more humorous acceptance speeches of all time.

Milt and his wife Catherine spend their winters in Florida and their summer here in Minnesota. They have three children: Ginny, John and Jody.