

Where Are They Today?

OSCAR BERGMAN

By JACK KOLB
MGCSA Life Member

During the MTGF Conference and Trade Show this past December I was privileged to "Man" the "Antiquity Booth." Knowing my propensity as an historian, many Superintendents who stopped by would relate stories about old equipment, personalities of the past and photographs that went back decades.

Keith Scott of Oak Ridge Country Club, St. Louis Park, had brought a portrait of a photograph taken in March of 1953 which was featured in the April issue of *Hole Notes*. I did not join the Association until August of 1953 but with Gordon Miller's help we were able to name all the key people. Since we had attacked that assignment with such relish, Keith sent another dozen pictures from the past.

One of the smiling faces that showed up frequently on the photographs was a gentleman by the name of Oscar Bergman. Oscar is one of those private gentlemen who goes through life in a quiet and unassuming manner.

Sometimes we wait too long to recognize the virtue and character in people. It is somewhat like buying flowers for those who no longer can smell them. It behooves us to toss bouquets and kudos to the living while they can enjoy them. In Oscar's case I found him living in the family home located on Park Avenue north of Lake Street. His hearing was very bad so I had to communicate through his wife and she could not give me needed information such as dates.

Oscar Bergman's career in Golf Course work began at Minneapolis Golf Club under Vic Larson, the gentleman on whose farm the golf course was built. Herbert Cohrs was a part of that crew. A family living on the north edge of Minneapolis Golf Club by the name of McNulty was in the construction business. There were

two McNulty sons, Robert and John. Oscar could not give me dates, but these two young men constructed a full 18-hole golf course to the north of the present day Minneapolis Golf Club called Westwood Hills. Where they got the term Hills I will never know as the land was rather flat, low and boggy.

Oscar Bergman's brother-in-law was Pat Johnson. Pat Johnson was named superintendent at Westwood Hills. Oscar was soon working for Pat Johnson and when Pat left to take over Interlachen Country Club from Erich Pahl, Oscar became top man at Westwood Hills. Westwood Hills was closed in or about 1958.

Oscar then moved to Minnetonka Country Club which was under the ownership of Rusty Smith. Rusty was a member of the Minnesota Golf Course Superintendents' Association during the 1960s. One interesting anecdote — Rusty was pushing over trees with a large tractor on the golf course and when he did not return at the proper time, Oscar found him nearly crushed to death by a tree which had fallen back onto the tractor. I recall many months after the accident Rusty was still wearing a "facial cage" with rubber bands and metal hooks to pull his facial bones back into place. Upon the sale and new ownership of Minnetonka Country Club, Oscar moved to Parkview Country Club under the ownership of Ray Rahn. Oscar retired after many years of service at Parkview.

Although his memory is failing now, Oscar amazed me back in 1967 when I was at Minneapolis Golf Club. We still had the manual system of watering (the golf course) and I needed "bib covers" for some of the hose connections. Oscar volunteered to help salvage some of the old covers on what used to be Westwood Hills. We

were wading in a five-foot growth of swamp grass, phragmites and cattails. Oscar would say "this used to be number four green" and he would walk right up to the location of the old bib (which was completely covered with growth). Those of you who are not familiar with "manual night watering" should appreciate night time orientation (depending on how dark the night). Working on a golf course at night is akin to working in space. There is little to orient yourself, yet a good "night water man," like a blind man, without exception found his way from one water valve to the next.



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