

Hall of Fame Inductee Harold Stodola Played Monumental Role in State, National Associations

In 1985, the Minnesota Golf Course Superintendents' Association established an annual golf tournament and a prestigious scholarship program bearing Harold Stodola's name.

As a young man, Harold Stodola or Stoddie as friends came to know him, began his affiliation with golf as a caddie at The Minikahda Club and Oak Ridge Country Club, where he became caddymaster, then graduating from Hopkins High School in 1921, he attended the University School of Forestry. While attending the university, he was distinguished as the 1926 intramural golf champion. His boundless energy coupled with full involvement in all areas of academia and his personal interest and concern for others earned him the title of the "Hopkins Hurricane."

Stodola left the University in 1929 to supervise the construction of the new Keller Golf Course in St. Paul, then stayed on as greenskeeper. In 1932 Stoddie moved on to Interlachen Country Club in Minneapolis.

Stodola represented Minnesota as its delegate to the National Association of Greenskeepers Convention in 1933 and again in 1937. Also, during this time he chaired every major committee and held every office, including that of president in the Minnesota Greenskeepers Association.

In 1938 Stoddie was elected to the Board of Directors of the National Greenskeepers Association of America. He became chairman of the important Editorial Committee of the Greenskeepers Report, which was the official publication of the Association.

During the trying war years, 1941-1946, Stodola served as the president of the NGAA [this was the second longest term ever served by any president]. During this time of WWII, the cry went out to disband the national association. But the Hopkins Hurricane would have none of it.



HAROLD STODOLA, right, received the Distinguished Service Award in 1977 from Richard W. Malpass, the retiring president of the GCSAA. This is the highest honor bestowed by the GCSAA. Harold became the 28th person to receive this award.

Despite the fact that no association meetings were held during the war and that the treasurer absconded with the association's funds, Stodola's hard work and perseverance kept the NGAA intact by corresponding with all the local chapters throughout the nation. In these same years, he was greenkeeper at the Firestone Country Club, the Firestone Public Golf Course and, in addition, was in charge of the Victory Gardens in Akron, Ohio.

In 1945 Stodola returned to Minnesota in order to further his personal interest in scientific farming. This farm later became Wayzata Country Club.

But he couldn't stay away from golf for long. So, in 1957, Stoddie traveled to Phoenix, Ariz. to accept the position of assistant superintendent of Paradise Valley Country Club. Following his association with Paradise, Stoddie, at the age of 65, when most people think of retiring, returned to St. Paul to accept the position of Superintendent at Mendakota Country Club, from which he retired in 1977, but only to move down the street to Somerset Country Club where he worked part-time for the rest of his years.

In his lifetime, Stoddie received many justly-deserved honors and awards. In 1944 he was voted an honorary member of the MGCSA. In 1974 Mendakota Country Club honored him with Mr. Green Thumb award and, in 1977, also held a tournament and awards banquet in his honor. That year our state association also held an honorary banquet for him.

For his outstanding leadership of the Greenskeepers Association at both the state and national level, and his valuable contributions to the association during World War II, Harold Stodola was presented the Golf Course Superintendents Association of America's most coveted award, in 1977, at the Portland Oregon conference.

In 1985 Harold was again honored at the first annual Harold Stodola Golf Tournament, and the Harold Stodola Scholarship and Research Program was established in his honor.

Although Harold is no longer with us, his legacy remains. He loved the young people, and he instilled in them hope, concern for others, positive attitudes and a joy of living. He was a generous man with his time and talents, and he always was giving of himself for others. One of his favorite sayings was "Every day is a blessing. Be sure to make the most of it."

The young people loved him as we all did. And many of them are today involved in golf because of him and the example he set for them.

Sally and Bruce, though your father is no longer with us physically, his beliefs, his love and concern for others and his spirit of joy and well-being are always present.

The honor bestowed on him today is a wonderful tribute to a man who touched so many and did so much for the world of golf.