



## L.R. SHIELDS 1912 - 1982

by Craig Spottswood

Bob Shields was a big man. He was big in his stature, big in his abilities as a golf course superintendent, big in professional and civic organizations, and big in his generosity to spread his knowledge and friendship.

Bob's coming to a meeting commanded immediate respect for that meeting. Bob's participation on a committee, board of directors, or as an officer assured the membership that the best capabilities were in control of the organization. Bob's endorsement of a supplier or product was never refuted, but rather a valued bit of information. Bob's earlier years as an officer and president of the Mid-Atlantic were valued as structural building years of the association.

During Bob's terms of office long range planning was enacted to help make this chapter of Golf Course Superintendents the strongest and most respected in the nation. When we sent him off to the National in '65 to head up the Golf Course Superintendents Association as President we were confident of installing the best President the National ever had.

One of Bob's driving ambitions was continued education and research within the turf industry. He instigated the forming of the 2 year turf program at the University of Maryland. Bob's continuous meetings on this effort were often frustrating. I was working for Bob back in '65 and remember the times he'd return to the club from a meeting with the "powers that be", grumble a few words to the men and say to me "come on, let's go flying." Sometimes we would circle the golf courses and other times I'd find myself eating lunch with George Gumm at Ocean City.

The school was slow in forming and after 2 years of Bob's diligent work I was the first student enrolled in the Institute of Applied Agriculture in 1965. I never knew Bob to be so proud as that day when the school became a reality. Our pictures were featured in the Post and Star newspapers.

The old saying — first impressions mean a lot — certainly held true for Bob, for if ever a man met his acquaintance, however briefly, he would undoubtedly never forget that meeting. We were all individually affected by his power of persuasion, guidance, leadership, and loyalty as a friend.

To exemplify the image from first impressions I recall Paul Barefoot telling me of their trip to the New Orleans GCSAA conference when they stopped at a Georgia gas station in Paul's car with D.C. license plates. Bob was calmly sitting in the back seat when the station manager rushed over to complain to the "Senator" about the ferocious red fire ants in Georgia. The man saw the D.C. tags and figured he had a U.S. Senator to hear his problems! We all called him Senator for a long time after that conference.

We all hold close to our hearts our own personal experiences with this man. To reminisce all of my memories would fill a book with tales.

Bob's support of professional and civic organizations is exemplified by his active participation in these groups. His record of meeting attendance undoubtedly excels that of any other Mid-Atlantic, PGMS or Civitan member. In the Mid-Atlantic he supported all of our activities, chaired committees, was repeatedly active on the board of directors, held all officer positions and served as newsletter editor in the 50's. He was effective in all these positions because he easily motivated people. You would never encounter a meeting with this man without seeing a warm glow in his eyes and a big smile. He made you feel important and proud to serve with his organization.

Bob liked people. He was happiest when around his peers; fellow superintendents, grounds managers or civitan members. Briefly I would like to cover some of his accomplishments since coming to the Mid-Atlantic back in the 40's. Compiling this was no easy job. Bernice Shields came to my rescue with a life history she had prepared for a Civitan "This is your life" commemoration Bob received several years ago.



- 1946 — First golf course job at Annapolis Roads Country Club with brothers Roy and Ray.
- 1948 — First superintendent job — Sligo Golf Course, then the only Maryland Park and Planning golf course. First office Mid-Atlantic GCSA, secretary-treasurer.
- 1950 — Rebuilt the greens at Sligo, designed and built a maintenance building.
- 1951 — Joined the Rockville Civitan as a charter member. Elected President of the Mid-Atlantic GCSA.
- 1952 — Attended his first GCSAA conference as a Mid-Atlantic delegate in Chicago. Never missed a National conference since this date. Became superintendent at Woodmont at their new location in Rockville. Re-elected President of the Mid-Atlantic GCSA.
- 1953 — Newsletter editor of Mid-Atlantic. Served in this capacity for 10 years.
- 1956 — Designed and build the south course at Woodmont.
- 1958 — General chairman for the GCSAA conference in Washington, D.C. Introduced the then Vice President Nixon to this group at the Shoreham Hotel. Elected President of the Mid-Atlantic for 3rd term.
- 1964 — Awarded medal for service as a U.S. Golf Association member. Elected Vice President of the GCSAA. Helped establish the two year turf program at the University of Maryland — The Institute of Applied Agriculture. (Note: 90% of the first graduating class have held office in the Mid-Atlantic GCSA)
- 1965 — Became President of the GCSAA after serving on the Board for five years. He was installed into office at the Muhlenbach Hotel in Kansas City; stayed in President Truman's official quarters where the Potsdam Agreement was signed. Slept in Truman's bed — always wondered whether on Bess's or Harry's side!
- 1966 — Speaker at PGA School, also was made a Kentucky Colonel for his accomplishments in life as a born Kentuckian. (Headed to the GCSAA in 1973, Bob's car broke down in Kentucky — his Kentucky Colonel card gave him enough clout to drive away in a new car on a postdated check:)

- 1971 — Elected Mid-Atlantic Superintendent of the Year by fellow golf course superintendents.
- 1973 — The Board of Regents of the University of Maryland gave Bob a Certificate of Merit for his outstanding contributions in the development of turf.
- 1960's thru 1970's — Frequent speaker at many programs at turf conferences and related events. Also wrote many articles for turf publications.
- 1970's — Worked with the turf industries of the state to develop a Turfgrass Council. Once a reality, served on the Board of Directors thru 1979.

As a final note I would like to add that this man, more than any man I've met, has promoted the position of the golf course superintendent from the status of a greens-keeper to a recognized, educated professional. Everyone associated with the green industry will miss the presence of this leader.

## **WANTED: Mid-Atlantic Newsletter Editor**

The Mid-Atlantic Newsletter will need a new editor starting January 1983. Anyone interested in the job or information about the job, please contact the present editor ASAP.