



## A Brief Biography of George Santana

By Gary K. Carls CGCS

On June 6, 1932 a group of 20 greenkeepers from Northern California met at the Presidio Golf Club in San Francisco and formed the Northern California Greenkeepers Association that later became the GCSANC. They were among the first group of superintendents to form a chapter that would work to provide opportunities for their members to meet and share information. One of the members attending this meeting was George Santana of San Jose Country Club.

Those early years were the important to building the strong foundation for the association we have today. George Santana was first elected to the board of directors in 1934 and was elected president in 1936. As the depression and World War II hit many courses struggled to survive. Supplies, staff and equipment were all in short supply, as everything was concentrated to the war effort. This was also tough times for the association. A few members like George Santana helped hold the association loosely together until the end of the war and the return to a fairly normal life in the area. In April of 1946 a reorganization meeting was held at Green Hills Country Club in Millbrae with Stanley Pitcher

leading the effort as the new association president. In the coming years George Santana rarely missed a chapter meeting.

George Santana left his position at San Jose CC in 1946. In 1947 George and Aubrey Babson built a golf hole at the Livermore Veterans Hospital for the patients. He later worked at Almaden CC in San Jose directing course construction. George Santana returned to the GCSANC BOD in 1958-59 while he was working at the El Rancho Verde Golf Club (*Alma GC*), a course that he owned and managed. He also was involved in the design and construction of several golf courses in the bay area including Santa Teresa GC in 1962. In 1964 George was named the chairman of the Northern California Turfgrass Council. In 1974 in recognition of all his contributions to his chapter, George was made an honorary life member of GCSANC.

The respect he had earned from his fellow superintendents was always evident when George Santana was around. Cliff Wagoner CGCS said that George earned that respect from his fellow superintendents by setting a great example and always encouraging them

to better themselves. He was very down to earth and always went out of his way to help whenever he could. Jim Ross recalled how George was the first superintendent to come over and introduce himself and offer assistance when he started working at La Rinconada CC in the early 60's. His first comment when I asked him about George was "what a nice guy." My first memories of George Santana were when he and his group would make occasional visits to play at Los Altos CC in the mid 80's. He remained an excellent golfer in his later years and was known to have shot his age on several occasions.

In 1987 George Santana was the first recipient of the GCSANC Distinguished Service Award in honor of his years of service and dedication to the superintendents of Northern California. When George passed away in 1992 the award was renamed the George Santana Distinguished Service Award in his honor. His great dedication to our profession and the fine example he set for all of us is why this award is the highest honor a member of our chapter can receive. Without the strong dedication of many of these early founding fathers GCSANC would never have become the strong association that it is today.

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