

# Honorary Member Gratitude

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## SLOTE & LINKS

255 California Street, Suite 1300  
San Francisco, CA 94111-4925  
Phone: 415-393-8001 Fax: 415-294-4545

January 10, 2013

Mr. Rodney Muller, President  
Golf Course Superintendents Association of Northern California  
c/o Empire Ranch Golf Club  
1620 E Natoma St  
Folsom, CA 95630

### Re: Recognition as Honorary Lifetime Membership in GCSANC

Dear Mr. Muller:

This afternoon, I got a call from Emmy Moore-Minister who informed me that my dear colleague, Richard Harris, and I have been named Honorary Lifetime Members of the Golf Course Superintendent's Association of Northern California. As Emmy may have imparted to you, my schedule is so hectic these days that I can't join you next Monday when you announce this special distinction at your meeting. Hence this letter. I wanted to convey to you and the membership how deeply touched I am by your thoughtful gesture.

As a 20-year member of the USGA Green Section, I have come to know, admire and appreciate the work done by golf course superintendents all over the world. I have a particular bias for my home turf (no pun intended) as I feel we not only have the greatest collection of golf courses anywhere right here in our own backyard, but in Northern California we also have the greatest group of superintendents who work so hard to preserve and sustain these precious places.

The work of a superintendent is one of the hardest jobs there is. You've got to guess the weather every minute of every day, and Mother Nature never calls in sick or takes a mental health day. You have to battle budgets and fussy (often uninformed) golfers and management personnel. And no matter how well you groom the course, there's always someone to contend the green was too fast; or too slow; or the rough too high; or too low; or something else perhaps that butterfly making noise in the next meadow- that wasn't just perfect.

You know exactly what I'm talking about.

But they never pat the superintendent on the back when he aerates a green to keep it healthy; or when he sands the fairway to enhance the turf bed; or when he trims or removes a diseased tee to provide light and air movement; or cuts his hand repairing a piece of equipment so the club or course can squeeze another few years out of it. Yet all of this, and so much more, is part of the job.

I have also come to love speaking on these issues and trying, in my own way, to teach golfers and non-golfers alike the important work that golf course superintendents perform. People need to hear

this message and I am happy to be a foot soldier in that effort. I love telling folks that when there was a severe drought in Georgia a few years back, who did the state call on for advice on how to manage water? They called on the golf course superintendents, of course, because they, as much as anyone, know that reality inside and out. In every respect, you folks are the truest environmentalists of all.

But I know this award is not really about my efforts to spread the word. It is, in every fitting respect, a treasured recognition for the work Richard and I have undertaken to save and restore Sharp Park, that Alister MacKenzie classic that stands for so much and is in such jeopardy. Recognition from the GCSANC means everything to us. We could not- and cannot do what we need to do without support from you. So please know that we accept this recognition humbly, gratefully, and knowing that we are now part of that wonderful, incredible brotherhood of men and women who are so vital to the future of the game.

Let me close with two thoughts. First, whenever someone congratulates Richard and me on "winning" the Sharp Park case, as many have recently in the wake of the trial court's dismissal of that unfounded environmental claim, I must say that I feel like the superintendent who has just gotten past the member-guest with everyone raving about the quality of the greens. I know full well that a storm may blow in, or a heat wave descend, that will ruin everything. That is to say, we are in a good place now, but we have to keep on keeping on, if we are to get the job done.

And secondly, let me take a moment to express as best I can the gratitude for the work of your incredible organization and every member in it. I tried to do that in a little poem called "Guardians of the Game," which is a verse about golf course architects and superintendents- the folks who create and in every real sense sustain the places where we play the greatest game of all. What follows is a paraphrase of what I wrote, morphed if you will permit the phrase, so it hones in on superintendents alone (the architects can wait for another day): (See next page)



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*Those whose skills have shaped the land  
And caressed the earth with able hands  
Both bent and tugged at every fold  
With tools they've driven, some they've rolled  
They've given golf its storied ground  
Where greatness lives, yet makes no sound  
To answer back, for just one day  
To offer thanks from those who play  
Whose triumphs here, all shine in grace  
Saluting those who tend this place*

\* \* \* \* \*

*Ever more, I wonder  
Who'll know golfs name?  
Who'll be the ones  
To play the game?  
Yet I know, golf will be found  
By people seeking higher ground  
I sense we'll always find a throne  
On which to rest golfs crown  
If the course remains forever more  
The sacred game's most hallowed ground  
And to those men whose hardened skills  
Bring forth the game from ancient hills  
They may be faceless, with no name  
To forget their work would be a shame  
The labored on, and sought not fame  
They lent their hands when the challenge came  
And that's why they shall remain  
The truest guardians of the game.*

Thank you again for this incredible honor. In the days, months and years to come, I will do my best to prove myself worthy of your judgment.

Here's hoping we all meet again soon somewhere down the fairway.

Sincerely,  
**ROBERT D. LINKS**

RDL/r  
cc: Ms. Emmy Moore-Minister  
Mr. Richard H. Harris, Jr.

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