

Chester Mendenhall Receives USGA Green Section Award for 1990



*Chester
Mendenhall*

PHOTOGRAPH BY BRUCE MATHEWS

CHESTER MENDENHALL was named the recipient of the 1990 Green Section Award at this year's GCSAA International Golf Course Conference and Show, in Orlando, Florida. He is the eighth golf course superintendent to receive the Green Section Award since its inception in 1962. Mendenhall brings additional honor and distinction to the list of the previous 29 Green Section Award winners. He has had a long and illustrious career in golf, and his professional accomplishments are extensive and varied.

Mendenhall is a unique individual who has devoted his entire life to improving the game of golf through his work as an innovative superintendent. He helped to build the GCSAA into a national organization. He served as a USGA committee member for 36 years, and was instrumental in helping to establish a solid working relationship between the GCSAA and the USGA Green Section.

During the 1930s and 1940s, Mendenhall, on his own time and with his own money, frequently embarked on long trips in his Model T Ford to visit superintendents to promote both the Green

Section and the GCSAA. These trips were made to golf courses throughout the Central Plains states. He was an invaluable aid to both organizations.

Mendenhall even made a few golf course consultation visits for the Green Section during this period. At that time, Dr. John Montieth was Director of the Green Section, and was responsible for the USGA's research program at the Arlington Turf Gardens, and later at the Beltsville Research Station. When Dr. Montieth was unable to accommodate all of the requests from golf courses for his services, he regularly called on Chet to assist clubs with their turfgrass management programs in the Great Plains states. Mendenhall performed these services on a volunteer basis and was never compensated for his time.

Mendenhall is a charter member of the GCSAA and served as that organization's 12th president, in 1948. He was instrumental in moving the GCSAA Annual Conference west of the Mississippi River in 1939 and eventually to California in 1949. Prior to that time the GCSAA had been quite regionalized, and he helped make it a truly national organization. He was also a major force in the formation of the Heart of America

GCSA chapter, which encompasses Kansas and Missouri.

As a superintendent for more than 45 years, Chester Mendenhall was a leader and an innovator. He was the first superintendent in Kansas City to install a quick coupler irrigation system on fairways, and he was instrumental in the planning and construction of an experimental pie green at Ford Park in Kansas City. (Pie greens were turf plots on golf courses in which each slice of the green was a different experimental turf variety.)

At 70 years of age, Mendenhall retired from the superintendent's profession to begin a new career in golf course design and construction. He worked in this capacity and as a turfgrass consultant until 1983 when, at the age of 85, he finally retired from the business.

Recognized previously by GCSAA with their Distinguished Service Award, the USGA proudly acknowledges Mendenhall's "distinguished service to golf through work with turfgrass" with its 1990 Green Section Award. He is now 93 years old but remains active in the industry, and has missed only a handful of the 61 annual GCSAA Conferences.