



Golf's Good Counsel

Jim Cotter is the recipient of the MGA Distinguished Service Award for 1999

For more than a quarter of a century, Jim Cotter has worked tirelessly as a volunteer to help steer golf and the MGA through some of its most challenging and successful times. His wise counsel, given freely and unselfishly, has positioned the MGA to move successfully into the 21st century.

Born in Rhode Island in 1942 and educated at Fairfield University in Connecticut and the University of Virginia Law School, Cotter first became involved with golf as a caddie at the Warwick Country Club in Rhode Island. Though baseball was his first love in college, golf stole his heart while Cotter was stationed in Guam as a Navy lieutenant during the Vietnam War. Shortly after returning, Cotter joined the New York law firm of Simpson Thacher & Bartlett, where he met Bill Jennings, founder of the Westchester Classic. It was just starting its run as a PGA Tour event, and there were many legal and business issues relating to sponsorship agreements and the hospital's charitable beneficiaries, and Cotter soon became an important advisor.

Cotter has been MGA legal counsel since the early 1970s, when the Met Area was facing a recession. He also has served on the MGA Executive Board in a number of positions, including President from 1991-1992. Areas in which he has played a critical role include the development, with the USGA, of the Golf Handicap and Information Network (GHIN), which now serves some 60 associations and two million golfers nationwide, and the negotiation of the MGA's sponsorship agreement with MetLife, one of the longest and most successful corporate partnerships in golf.

He also helped create *The Met Golfer*, the MGA Foundation, the MGA's "Golf Central" headquarters, and the association's cooperative insurance programs for clubs. And Cotter has been pivotal in ensuring the MGA positioned itself as advisor and leader to its member clubs on such issues as discrimination, the environment, and new course development.

Through the years, Cotter has also helped hire some of the best administrative and creative talent in golf, including David Fay, former MGA Communications Director and now USGA Executive Director, and current Executive Director Jay Mottola, now in his 20th year at the helm. "Jim's ability to understand and simplify complicated issues, to always grasp the 'big picture' and to steer the MGA in the right direction, is uncanny," says Mottola.

W. Sydnor Settle, a former MGA President and a colleague of Cotter's at Simpson Thacher & Bartlett agrees. "Jim is an exceptionally gifted lawyer and a wonderful family man, yet he has been able to find the time to make a distinctive and perhaps unique contribution to golf in our area."

As part of the time Cotter has spent volunteering, he served on the Nominating Committee of the USGA, as president of the New York Law Institute, and on the Board of Trustees of Fairfield University—all this while maintaining a busy global law practice and an active family life that includes wife Melinda and three daughters.

Although he stepped down from the MGA Executive Board in 1998, Cotter remains a valued advisor—and one of the most worthy recipients in the history of the MGA's Distinguished Service Award. — *Jeanne McCooey*