

A MAN FOR ALL SEASONS

Arthur Weber, the Met Area's environmental guardian angel, receives the MGA's Distinguished Service Award for 1995



by Guido Cribari

The first golf shot he ever struck, some 50 years ago, was a gorgeous, banana-like slice hit out of bounds and into some lovely marshland at the old Oceanside Club, now Middle Bay, on Long Island.

And so Arthur Phineas Weber knew from the very start that he should forget the handicap and devote his energies to greening the landscape while preserving nature's wonderlands and watersheds.

He's been greening it for a half century now, so it was inevitable that he would at some point win the Distinguished Service Award, the MGA's ultimate honor. And that day has come

at last. The dedicated Long Islander was honored at the MGA's Annual Dinner in early December with Jean, his wife of 52 years, at his side.

Arthur Weber is a man for all seasons and the DSA winner for all the right reasons. His credentials are awesome: He's been MGA president, vice-president, and treasurer; LIGA president, vice-president, and secretary. He's a founding member, past president, and perennial greens chairman of Old Westbury Golf & Country Club. And he has been universally hailed for his efforts on behalf of the United States Golf Association's Green Section. His "Code of Environmental Conduct," a set of principles, policies, and procedures for golf course maintenance, was adapted first by his home club and later

by the USGA. It also has earned him the esteemed John Reid Lifetime Achievement Award from the Metropolitan Golf Course Superintendents Association.

"Golf courses," says Weber of his work, "are, for the most part, magical places of God-given beauty; fitting houses of worship in which we play a game that stirs the very soul."

Weber admits to being "driven by a compulsion to conserve and protect" golf courses, explaining that "turfgrass gets 'hooked' on chemicals, just like people do. Golfers must become better educated about environmental issues. It's vital to the health of the game."

Lest one think that his focus on the environment makes Weber's life one-dimensional, consider that he once was a speed skater with Winter Olympic potential, was a master rifleman, and that he holds both chemical and nuclear engineering degrees. In fact, Weber was one of only 30 world-renowned atom experts assembled by the U.S. Government for the "Manhattan Project" of World War II, receiving special training on creating fuel for nuclear power reactors. And it was Weber and his gifted colleagues who developed America's first two atomic submarines, the *Nautilus* and *Sea Wolf*.

Soft-spoken, humble to a fault, Weber is driven by the same work ethic as most giants of industry. "The greatest reward for doing is the opportunity to do more," he says.

"I take particular pride," he adds, "in having pioneered and successfully implemented the Code of Environmental Conduct. And I anticipate that, because of the rate that environmentally responsible behavior is catching on, in the near future a comprehensive set of environmental protocols will be formalized—to assume their place alongside the Rules of Golf."

"I'd welcome the opportunity to come back to visit here 50 years from now," he chuckles, "just to see how it's all working out. It might prove exciting."

It might indeed, Mr. Weber.

And to think it all came about because of one errant banana slice 50 years ago. ■

Guido Cribari, retired sports editor for Gannett-Westchester Newspapers, Inc., was last year's recipient of the MGA's Distinguished Service Award.