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A Legacy on the Green: Retiring Director of Golf Stan Marshaus reflects on 35 years of Chautauqua Golf

The golf season starts at a large, fully grown tree sitting in front of the third green on the first course at the Chautauqua Golf Club. The tree is just one of thousands of trees that cover the 36-hole club. For Stan Marshaus, director of golf, the tree is a reminder of how long he has been at Chautauqua and how far the golf course has come.

"One day after a round of golf, a guy I was playing with told me, 'Boy, wasn't that sad?'" Marshaus said. "I said, 'You know what's really sad (pointing to the tree)? I can remember when I planted that tree.'"

Trees are something that Marshaus is most proud of in his 35 years with the Chautauqua Golf Club. This is the last golf season for Marshaus, who is retiring. With only weeks left, Marshaus seems ready.

"I'm really happy to be retiring," he said. "I'm sad I'm leaving, but this is a great place.

"Last night, our daughter couldn't sleep, so my wife took her to the car. She drove to the golf course and came back and said she wanted to cry, but the place is kind of behind us now."

The highlight of his last season is the opening of the Golf Learning Center. The center was a vision Stan had for 30 years, and he has repeatedly said it is the future of golf and it will keep the Chautauqua Golf Club running for many years. The center formally opened in June with music, competitions and speeches from Marshaus, Jack Voelker, director of recreation and youth services, President Thomas Becker and Board of Trustees chairman George Snyder. Marshaus and his 4-year-old daughter Elizabeth cut the ribbon that officially opened the center. Voelker called it one of the highlights of his career at Chautauqua.

Marshaus said he was ready to retire at the end of last season, but he was not going to leave until the center opened.

"It was a completion of a dream," he said. "I have been talking about that facility for years. Jack and I have talked about that facility for a long time. It was

very important to me that we get that center completed, and so far the reviews of the place have been phenomenal."

In his time as director, the golf club has expanded from 18 holes to 27 to the current 36-hole layout and the learning center. He started the irrigation system on the greens and extended that to the fairways. Under Marshaus' direction, new maintenance barns were added as well as a new clubhouse.

The clubhouse came as a result of a fire that destroyed the old one. Marshaus is the reason many of the collectables and pictures from the old clubhouse hang on the wall today.

"The firemen were pulling furniture and other stuff out of the building," he said. "I told them to try and get the pictures out - we can get new furniture but we can not replace these pictures."

Among the items saved are original designs from Donald Ross as he drew out the designs for the golf course. Pictures of PGA legends playing at the golf course also hang on the walls alongside plaques honoring the winners of various tournaments at the club.

He's played with entertainers - Hootie and the Blowfish, Dinah Shore, Johnny Mathis, Tony Bennett and Willie Nelson, to name a few - and has also golfed with President Bill Clinton and former Supreme Court Justice Sandra Day O'Connor.

"Yesterday was the first time we took a picture together in all the years we have played golf," Marshaus said of O'Connor.

There is a picture of Marshaus with PGA great Jack Nicklaus in front of his desk in his office. On the opposite end of the office a window overlooks the entire golf club. Trees, Marshaus' favorite part of the course, create a canopy over the grounds. Thirty-five years ago, there were hardly any trees on the course.

"I've probably planted 4,000 trees out there - it is probably one of my greatest accomplishments here," he said. "There were years where we planted 300 to 400 trees at a time. We would buy them and dig them out of the woods."

It's commitment like that, others said, that will make it impossible to actually replace Marshaus.

"He's just as comfortable driving a backhoe as a TaylorMade iron," said Ron Kilpatrick, current trustee and former president of the Chautauqua Golf Club. "He went on eBay and bought a Bobcat and a sprinkler system himself so we could get that added to the golf course.

"His strength is that he is a tremendous pro and that he can wear so many hats at the same time," Kilpatrick added. "He is the general manager of the club, he can handle catering facilities and he is an architect. He constructed buildings and the golf course."

Kilpatrick has no doubt that Marshaus will be on the golf course frequently when he retires. He said Marshaus has been on the course more in the past few years and his handicap has gone down.

"He's great to be in a golf cart with," Kilpatrick said. "He's just like one of the guys. He plays anytime you want to play and he can step up and hit the ball a mile off the tee."

But even in the last weeks, Marshaus is there to help. He was on his way to helping the junior golfers Tuesday afternoon, and he planned on being with them the rest of the afternoon. It doesn't feel like 35 years to him, and he would never question the decision to be here this long.

"Thirty-some years ago I was offered a job in Washington, D.C., and I turned it down," he said. "I just really loved being a golf pro, and I loved Chautauqua and everything it had to offer. The guy who offered me the job was a Chautauquan and he understood exactly what I meant."

It wasn't just golf. In the 1970s, Marshaus teamed up with a young Roger Goodell and Geof Fallansbee on the softball team, the U-Dogs. He pitched when the team won a couple of championships.

It wasn't the only time he won something or was honored in Chautauqua. *Golf Digest* ranked the Chautauqua Golf Club the No. 1 golf destination in the United States. The magazine has also constantly ranked Chautauqua a 4.5 out of 5 stars golf resort.

"What I am most proud of in that *Golf Digest* article is that it said, "You will never find a friendlier staff," Marshaus said. "Our staff is outstanding. I am very proud of it."

But in the end, Marshaus considers retirement another phase of life. He is ready to retire. He has two young daughters he can watch grow up. He said with a laugh that he is going to smile more in retirement, and his philosophy he started with shows here in the final few weeks.

"My one agenda was to do the best job that I could," he said. "I was always taught to leave something better than when I got it. I feel like we have done that here. It has been a great 35 years and the improvements have been immeasurable."