



IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Contact: Bob Denney
561/624-8582
bdenney@pgahq.com

WILLIAM J. “BILL” POWELL, OHIO’S PIONEER IN GOLF DIVERSITY, TO BE ENSHRINED MARCH 12, INTO THE PGA GOLF PROFESSIONAL HALL OF FAME

Editor’s Note: Please see the following photo link for the 2013 PGA Golf Professional Hall of Fame inductees: <http://mediaarchive.pgalink.com/cgi/viewerlogin.pl?ljobid=11030>

PALM BEACH GARDENS, Fla. – William J. “Bill” Powell, whose resolute campaign to make the game of golf “color blind” by building Clearview Golf Club of East Canton, Ohio, is one of eight inductees to be enshrined in the PGA Golf Professional Hall of Fame.

Powell, who passed away at age 93 on Dec. 31, 2009, will be honored Tuesday, March 12, at the PGA Education Center at PGA Village in Port St. Lucie, Fla. The inductees’ names will be inscribed in granite on the back portico of the adjoining PGA Museum of Golf. Powell’s daughter, Renee, the 2003 PGA First Lady of Golf and PGA head professional at Clearview Golf Club, will represent her family at the induction ceremony.

The PGA Golf Professional Hall of Fame inductees also include the late Jimmie DeVoe, formerly of Los Angeles; Don “Chip” Essig of Westfield, Ind.; Michael Hebron of St. James, N.Y.; Jim Mrva of Pittsford, N.Y.; the late Bill Ogden, formerly of Glenview, Ill.; Robert “Bob” Toski of Boca Raton, Fla., and PGA Honorary President Allen Wronowski of Bel Air, Md.

“It is with a great deal of pride that The PGA of America welcomes a special eight-member class into the PGA Golf Professional Hall of Fame, who by their life’s work have made significant and lasting contributions to The Association and the game of golf,” said PGA of America President Ted Bishop. “This class features those who battled social injustice, renowned instructors, and leaders who exhibited a passion for serving others beyond their job description. Their names will be forever inscribed among those who have made golf the greatest game.”

Powell remains the only African-American to build, own, and operate a golf course in the United States. In 1945, following his return from serving in World War II, Powell was denied access to local golf clubs due to the color of his skin. In 1946, Powell began breaking down barriers by building a “color blind” course, Clearview Golf Club. Clearview is among the National Register of Historic Places, and a site where Powell developed programs that are mainstream today, including women’s leagues, junior tournaments, adult after-work leagues, and group lessons. Powell was 83 when he was granted PGA Life Member status, retroactive to 1962, a year when The PGA of America dismantled another social barrier, the “Caucasian clause” in its by-laws.

“In Canton, we have the Football Hall of Fame, and we all understand the journey for those who fill that hall of honor,” said Renee Powell, the second African-American to compete on the LPGA Tour. “For our father, William Powell, it has been a long journey. Now, he will forever be listed along with the other greats of the game such as

Ben Hogan, Byron Nelson, and Jack Nicklaus in the PGA Golf Professional Hall of Fame. Our family is thrilled that he is being honored in this manner.”

Born Nov. 22, 1916, the grandson of Alabama slaves and in the birth year of The PGA of America, Powell’s life journey began as his family moved to Minerva, Ohio, when he was 3. Powell discovered a love for golf at age 9, by playing and caddying at Edgewater Golf Course. He became a multi-sport athlete at Minerva High School. He would later form a high school golf team and as team captain would schedule matches against all local schools.

At age 16, Powell hitchhiked 42 miles round trip to compete in a junior event at Orchard Hills Country Club (now Arrowhead Country Club) in north Canton. Though initially denied entry, he waited two hours before officials granted him access. He went on to finish third in the tournament.

Powell later attended Wilberforce University in Xenia, Ohio, where in 1937 the school’s men’s golf team traveled to face Ohio Northern University at Lost Creek Country Club in Lima, Ohio. It was the first inter-racial collegiate golf match in American history. Wilberforce returned home triumphant and captured the rematch. Sixty-five years later, the two schools gathered for another match, this time at Clearview Golf Club.

Powell served in the U.S. Army Air Corps, attaining the rank of Tech Sergeant. During his down time, he played golf in Great Britain at virtually every course he visited. When he returned home, the clubhouse doors were not open to him. He elected to carve his own path to equality by building his own golf course.

Denied a G.I. Loan to begin his dream, Powell received the financial support of two black physicians in Canton and Massillon, Ohio, to break ground on the public golf course. Powell added his own part of the necessary capital after his older brother, Berry, took out a loan on his home.

In April 1948, nine holes opened for play on the former dairy farmland. Powell said of Clearview, “It is where the only color that matters is the color of the greens.” That was Powell’s tonic for what he faced throughout life to gain the respect of those within his local community.

“The things that motivate me will stop a lot of people,” Powell said in summer of 2009, not long before he was named recipient of the PGA Distinguished Service Award, The PGA of America’s highest annual honor.

In 2001, Clearview Golf Club earned a niche on the National Register of Historic Places and established the Clearview Legacy Foundation, a 501(c)(3) organization for education, preservation, and turfgrass research.

Larry Powell, a 40-year member of the Golf Course Superintendents Association of America, spoke about his late father and mother’s sacrifice. “My father and my mother paid a high price and persevered no matter what the circumstances,” said Larry. “They opened up the game of golf to diversity.”

William Powell is survived by his daughter, Renee, and a son, Larry. He was preceded in death by his wife, Marcella, and a son, Billy.

About the PGA Golf Professional Hall of Fame

Originated in 1940 at the suggestion of famed sportswriter Grantland Rice, the PGA Golf Professional Hall of Fame was relocated in 2005 at the PGA Museum of Golf at PGA Village in Port St. Lucie, Fla. The Hall of Fame recognizes all PGA members who have made significant and lasting contributions to the building of The PGA of America and the game of golf. The inductees include PGA Presidents, PGA Golf Professional of the Year award winners as well as those PGA Professionals who also distinguish themselves as competitors while in service to The PGA of America.

About The PGA of America

Since its founding in 1916, The PGA of America has maintained a twofold mission: to establish and elevate the standards of the profession and to grow interest and participation in the game of golf. By establishing and elevating the standards of the golf profession through world-class education, career services, marketing and research programs, The PGA enables its professionals to maximize their performance in their respective career paths and showcases them as experts in the game and in the multi-billion dollar golf industry. By creating and delivering world-class championships and innovative programs, The PGA of America elevates the public's interest in the game, the desire to play more golf, and ensures accessibility to the game for everyone, everywhere. As The PGA nears its centennial, the PGA brand represents the very best in golf.

The PGA of America, 100 Avenue of the Champions, Palm Beach Gardens, FL 33418