

“Sphere Power – Making a Big Impact in a Small World”

*Remarks by William F. Stasior, Retired Chairman & CEO, Booz Allen Hamilton
Western Golf Association Annual Conference
May 25, 2007 – Chicago, Illinois*

Published in Executive Golfer magazine, December 2007

Thank you, Rich, for those very kind words.

I haven't faced this many Directors in green coats since I interviewed for the scholarship in 1958. It was terrifying last time... but we're going to have fun this time.

I'm proud and grateful to be here today. And I hope, when I've finished speaking, you'll understand why this opportunity – and this organization – means so much to me.

For starters, to help me gauge the nature of our shared experience, I'm wondering how many of you owned or used a shag bag?

In the 1950s, shagging was the first job – the first right of passage – for aspiring caddies. And, for me it was a real wake-up call that this caddying thing was serious business!

I remember showing up at the caddie shack as an under-sized 11-year old. I'm sure the caddie master wondered what to do with me, and whether I'd survive. After sitting out that first day, he finally offered me a job to shag golf balls. And I said, “what's shagging?” He said, “The member hits golf balls and you pick them up.” That sounded simple until I realized that the member was going to be hitting the balls at me... I was the target... and he had counted the balls, so at the end of the day, I better have the same number of balls in that shag bag – OR ELSE.

Well shagging wasn't so bad once you got the hang of it. And it proved to be the first of many invaluable life lessons that I learned in the caddie shack. Inside the shag bag is something loved (yes, at times loathed) by all of us here. [*golf ball*]

I want to tell you first-hand how this little sphere has the power to transform a life. Not by itself, but through the work of the Directors of the Western Golf Association, this ball has transformative power.

That's what I'd like to talk about today – “Sphere Power.” It's the power you gave to me, and so many others.

So, what do I mean by “sphere power?”

I mean the interconnections, the unbroken circle, of a person’s life and his or her sphere of influence. I mean the way relationships, leadership, good deeds, and success build on each other – and create a positive ripple effect that benefits others.

To me, “sphere power” is a spin on the “*what goes around, comes around*” proverb – shaped around values, leadership, family, and community – and, of course, golf.

It started for me at a very young age. My father was a steelworker and he loved golf and I was 5 or 6 when he put a club in my hands for the first time. It was about the same time that he started telling me, “Bill, you’re going to go to college.” I didn’t even know what college was. No one in my family had ever gone to college... and, on top of that, my Dad told me I was going to study engineering -- *whatever that was*.

When I was 11, my Dad encouraged me to get a job caddying so I could start saving money for college. At least by that age, I knew what college was.

My first job was at Shoreacres in Lake Bluff, but it didn’t take long for me and my friends to decide that life might be better in more ways than one down the road at Onwentsia. (*They have a tradition of throwing young caddies in the lake at Shoreacres – it wasn’t mean-spirited, it’s just what the older boys did when they got bored*).

On a serious note, there’s no question that the caddie shack at Onwentsia holds some of my fondest memories. It was an extraordinary learning experience – about people, responsibility... and golf.

I learned about life – how to get along with all types of people... how to deal with intimidation by the older boys... how to gain ‘mentors’ and ‘sponsors’... how to settle grievances.

And, I learned a lot out on the golf course as well. The main thing was: a caddie could never have a bad day – it’s our job to try, no matter how play is going, to make it a good day for the member. You learn to laugh at their jokes and to know when to talk and when to be quiet. You learn who you can be loose with and who you need to be buttoned down with. You learn the importance of being reliable, of showing up every day, no matter how badly you feel, and of course, you learn about golf.

Above all: *Being a caddie teaches you that the world is not about you.*
These were invaluable lessons for business and life – about hard work, responsibility, client service, and treating others with courtesy and respect.

After two years of caddying at Onwentsia, Hubby Habjan, the assistant pro, asked me if I would like a job after caddying in the pro shop -- cleaning clubs, racking bags, and doing other housekeeping chores. Hubby would become, along with my Dad, one of the great influences in my life. Hubby was a perfectionist – he was very demanding, but very fair and generous with his time, and he was quick to give you more responsibility if you earned it. He also had a wild sense of fun! (*don't worry, Hubby, I won't divulge details*).

Hubby was an accomplished professional – he was named Club Pro of the Year in 1965. He was also a clubmaker, and he taught me the craft: how to fix clubs, re-shaft clubs, and wrap a leather grip. He also let me sit in on everything that went on in the golf shop, and, two years later, when I was 15, he offered me a job as assistant shop manager. A year later, I became shop manager. I worked with suppliers, ordered goods, kept the shop well-stocked, and, of course, served the members.

Hubby sponsored me for the Evans Scholarship, and introduced me to club members involved with the program. I remember going with my Dad to WGA headquarters to interview with a dozen WGA directors, all sitting around a conference table. They asked me who was the most important person in my life and I talked about my Dad and Hubby.

A week later I received a letter offering me the scholarship. I don't know who was happier – Dad, Hubby, or me – but it was incredible. And, it was about to get even better.

The Evans Scholars house at Northwestern was another life-shaping experience, and Mac McGuigan, who was the Evans Scholars Foundation educational director at the time, was a tremendous force in shaping our outlook and values. He made us feel special, and inspired us to excel.

We were a group the campus took notice of. Evans scholars were tops in intramural sports and won academic honors. We worked hard at everything – our studies and maintaining the house -- and took great pride in all of it. And, I gained something else very important at Northwestern – one of my upper-class housemates introduced me to Joan, my wife of 45 years.

When I finished my masters in electrical engineering, I interviewed with Booz Allen Hamilton, a consulting company. For a lot of people, consulting is a

stepping stone, but I was captivated by consulting as a profession and by Booz Allen as a firm.

Consulting is about problem solving with a lot of variety and challenge. You're not making products, you're working with people and coming up with solutions. Most of my work was in the information technology and computer systems field and my clients were in the Intelligence Community and the Department of Defense, so there was a patriotic appeal as well.

In the 1970s, applying information technology to gain strategic leverage or to improve operations was an emerging idea. I was lucky to catch that wave, and with the lessons I learned in the caddie shack and in the Evans scholar house, I was able to build a business, a clientele, and a team of people. But, there's no question that leading people was the biggest and most important part of my job – or any job for that matter.

In another striking parallel from those early days – the recognition that “*it's not about you* – was the single most important thing I learned about leadership. Leadership isn't about being the boss, it's about helping others reach their full potential.

My success as a leader came from hiring the best and smartest people I could find, and being passionate about *their* careers and *their* success. I'm proud of the fact that Booz Allen's current Chairman & CEO, Ralph Shrader, was one of my first hires.

Another parallel between the business world and the caddie shack was the moment of truth on that first morning as I sat behind my desk as the newly-elected CEO thinking 'what in the world have I gotten myself into!'

It reminded me of facing – and facing down – previous challenges like picking up a 50 pound leather golf-bag bloated with gear, belonging to a VIP member who eats caddies for lunch... (and I was thinking about the partnership and partners who eat their leaders for lunch).

Leadership is also about doing the right thing. 'Do the right thing' may sound simple – but as we all know, in real life, it's neither simple nor easy. It's much more than being ethical – it's about promoting excellence, having respect for others, sharing ideas and resources, giving back to the community. Giving back as you have done on behalf of the Evans Scholars program.

Well, enough about the good ole days. It's been a wonderful ride that continues today with rewarding work on Boards like the United Negro College Fund and

Northwestern's Kellogg School as well as some private companies. And, in retirement, I have more time to spend with my family – three grandchildren now – and to play golf.

My home course is Ventana Canyon outside of Tucson – where I met and played last fall with Jim Moore, Jerry Dudek, and WGA Director Jack Wingate. Playing with them not only brought back old memories about my Evans Scholar experiences, but they brought me up to date on the excitement and challenges the organization faces today.

So, from Onwentsia, to the Evans Scholars house at Northwestern, to Ventana Canyon, I'm sure you can see that golf has been much more than a pastime for me – golf has shaped my world.

So, imagine for a minute that this little white sphere is painted blue and green like our planet. It would be a very small world – but that's a good thing, like the Walt Disney song.

Understanding that “it's a small world after all” encourages us to treat people as we want to be treated. When we give of ourselves, we make the world smaller and enlarge our sphere of influence – for the good.

The single most profound “small world” experience for me happened shortly after I was elected Chairman & CEO of Booz Allen in 1991, and this is the story I'd like to leave you with today.

Our founding partner, Jim Allen was still alive and though long-since retired from active leadership with the firm, he remained very much our spiritual leader. I went to Florida to visit Jim after my election – he was the firm's second chairman and I was the sixth.

We talked about Booz Allen, clients, and our alma mater – since we both attended Northwestern. And, we talked about our shared passion for golf. I told Jim about getting an Evans scholarship to attend Northwestern, and found out that he was one of the founding contributors to the Evans Scholars Foundation. He said, “You're an Evans Scholar.” And then, he sat back and reflected for a moment and added, “Well, I guess my investment really paid off!”

I was struck by what an incredibly small world this really is, and how, without Jim Allen's generosity, I might not have gone to college – or certainly not a college of Northwestern's stature.

Think about it...Jim Allen, Mac McGuigan, Hubby Habjan, my Dad – and *all of you* in your role as Directors of the Western Golf Association -- are truly making a difference in the world.

Your sphere of influence is large – and you're making the world a smaller, better place. For thousands of Evans scholars, you've provided an education and set an example we would not have had. And, when you look forward and see each of us going on to lead and inspire thousands of other people over the course of our lifetimes... That, my friends, is "sphere power" – making a big impact in a world made smaller and more intimate by your generosity.

Thank you. Thank you on behalf of all of us – the past and future Evans Scholars.