

MERCHANDISER OF THE YEAR (Private Category)

Allen F. Wronowski

Merchandiser of the Year (Private Category) Allen Wronowski hails from Baltimore, Maryland. His parents are Fred and Evelyn Wronowski. Allen was first introduced to the game of golf through his Patapsco Senior High School gym class. After graduating high school in 1972, he attended Essex Community College, Towson State University and Western Maryland College. In 1974 he was the captain of the Essex Golf Team. He also worked part time as a golf instructor at Essex Community College. Allen attributes his inspiration to begin a career in the golf business to Master Professional Coleman Plecker, from whom he took lessons in the early seventies.

John Lazzell, Head Professional at Rocky Point Golf Course, gave Allen his first break in the golf business in 1974. After gaining his initial experience working in the cart area, Allen was promoted to Assistant Professional at Rocky Point in 1975. He remained in that position for the next four years. During the off-season winter months, he worked for the Recreation and Parks Department giving golf instructional seminars at three area schools. In 1979 he was selected from 92 applicants vying for the Assistant Professional position at Hillendale Country Club. Allen was elected to membership in the PGA in 1981. Over the next nine years he gained invaluable experience working under PGA Past President and "Legend in Golf," Bill Clarke; and in 1990, when his mentor retired, Allen was elevated to the position of Head Golf Professional at Hillendale Country Club. Allen credits Mr. Clarke for providing him the excellent training that has been an integral part of his success while at the same time, giving him the freedom to be creative with new ideas of his own.

In his new position as Head Golf Professional at Hillendale, Allen's goal was to concentrate heavily in the merchandising end of the business. He hired Gail Chase to assist him in the retail aspects, and maintains that her impact was immediate and tremendous. Over the next three years Allen and Gail discovered they worked very well together as a team, and their friendship and mutual respect for each other grew into romance. In 1993 they decided to make the partnership permanent and they got married. Allen does not hesitate to recognize his wife's many talents and her contribution to his own accomplishments -- *"Behind every successful man there is a great woman, and Gail is the inspiration in my life."*

Allen's primary merchandising objective is to provide a warm and friendly golf shop atmosphere and to provide his club's members with the highest level of service and quality. In this day and age, there are numerous avenues for clientele to purchase hard and soft goods. Allen believes the real challenge for today's merchandisers is to provide those customers with every reason possible to make them want to support their golf shop. As a firm believer in the "WOW" impact technique promoted in Dale Carnegie seminars, he is constantly trying to find new and innovative ideas to "WOW" his membership. For example: many golf shops keep clientele wish lists and personal profiles and offer free gift wrapping. Allen's shop offers all of these, but goes on step further and provides free home or work delivery!

If he had to choose a single key element in his successful operation, Allen would say it is his staff. It consists of talented, creative and tireless individuals to whom he gives a free reign to use all of their abilities, just as Bill Clarke gave him when he came to Hillendale as an assistant golf professional. Allen's goal has been to create a staff with strong marketing capabilities, but

more importantly a staff who works well as a team and interacts with the membership in a positive and upbeat manner. It is evident that goal has been realized. The Hillendale clientele exhibits total confidence in the staff's recommendations for purchases in addition to truly enjoying being in their company.

In recognition of Allen's strong marketing skills, he was named the Marketing Professional of the Year by the Mid-Atlantic Salesman's Association in 1996. Allen has also been a leader in his association since his election to membership. From 1982 - 1988 he served on the Assistant Professionals Committee and became the A-8 Director in 1987. He was named the Assistant Professional of the Year in 1984. In addition to the Assistant Professionals Committee, Allen has served on the Membership Committee and chaired the section's Rules, Scholarship and Special Awards/Hall of Fame committees. He has served on the Section Board of Directors since 1995 and is currently the MAPGA's Vice President. He has been an MAPGA delegate at the PGA Annual Meeting for the past three years and will be attending as a delegate again this year.