

Past PGA Distinguished Service Recipient Dies at 84

Dr. Bill Dickey was a pioneer in building diversity in golf

By Bob Denney

Dr. William “Bill” Dickey, who dedicated more than 50 years to building diversity in golf, died on Oct. 16, in Phoenix, Ariz. He was 84. Dickey was one of the most decorated servants of the golf industry, receiving the 1999 PGA Distinguished Service Award, The PGA of America’s highest annual honor, recognizing his humanitarian qualities magnified by his advocacy for minority golfers. In 2001, Dickey was presented the USGA’s Joseph C. Dey Jr. Award for meritorious volunteer service to golf. In 1992, he was recipient of the Card Walker Award from the PGA Tour, presented to a person or group, which has made significant contributions to the support of junior golf.

Dickey was president emeritus and founder of the Bill Dickey Scholarship Association (BDSA), which celebrated its 30th anniversary last January. Under Dickey’s leadership, the BDSA has raised more than \$3.1 million and distributed more than 1,000 scholarships to college-bound minority golfers.

In 2007, the University of Maryland Eastern Shore bestowed an honorary doctorate degree upon Dickey, who was instrumental in the University becoming the first historically black college to become a member of The PGA of America’s Professional Golf Management University program. The Bill Dickey Scholarship Association distributes a scholarship to a minority golfer bound for Maryland Eastern Shore.

In 1983, Dickey founded the East/West Golf Classic in Scottsdale, Ariz., which began by generating \$1,500 to aid four student golfers attending Prairie View A&M University. From that modest beginning, the National Minority Junior Golf Scholarship Association was established and incorporated.

The association was renamed the Bill Dickey Scholarship Association, and serves as one segment of Dickey’s commitment to minority golf.

Since 2000, the Bill Dickey Invitational Junior Golf Championship has enabled more than 400 golfers the opportunity to compete against the finest minority junior players in the country.

He also was one of the founders of the National Minority Collegiate Golf Championship, now the PGA Minority Collegiate Golf Championship, which marked its 26th edition last May at PGA Golf Club in Port St. Lucie, Fla.

“Bill Dickey’s remarkable passion and energy to build diversity in our game opened doors for young golfers and became a series of success stories,” says PGA President Allen Wronowski. “Young men and



women who may not have had the financial means to pursue a college education were the benefactors of Bill’s efforts, and they went on to pursue their dreams. Golf will miss him dearly.”

Born March 29, 1928, in Darby, Pa., Dickey attended Virginia Union University on a football scholarship before entering the Air Force. Following his discharge, he moved to Phoenix, and went on to earn a B.S. degree in economics and management from Arizona State University.

Dickey enjoyed a successful career as a real estate and insurance executive before retiring in 1981.

Dickey was a life member and six-time president of Desert Mashie Golf Club at Encanto Park in Phoenix, which he joined in 1958. The club became an affiliate of the Western States Golf Association (WSGA), a regional organization with 30 clubs in six states. Dickey served as WSGA president from 1981–83, during which time he helped launch the WSGA Junior Championship, beginning his promotion of junior golf.

A member of the National Negro Golf Association, a bronze trophy in Dickey’s likeness was donated in 2010 to the USGA’s Golf House in Far Hills, N.J. The trophy, designed by legendary sculptor Ed Dwight, honored the 25th anniversary of the East/West Golf Classic that Dickey founded, and is part of the USGA’s African American Archives.

Among his many honors, Dickey was a 1985 inductee into the Western States Golf Association Hall of Fame; the National Black Golf Hall of Fame (1989); the Arizona Golf Hall of Fame (2000); and the African American Golfers Hall of Fame.

Dickey is survived by his wife, Alice; a daughter, Dorina; four grandsons and three great-grandchildren. He was preceded in death by daughters Susie and Debbie (O’Neil). ■