

# Jack Berry Receives Lifetime Journalism Award

By Terry Moore

*“My favorite colors are blue and green—blue sky and green grass. I’ve had my share of both.  
My favorite thing has been  
to find out what’s going on and write about it.”*  
—Jack Berry

In a memorable tribute to Michigan’s most acclaimed golf writer, the PGA of America’s President Brian Whitcomb bestowed the prestigious Lifetime Achievement Award for Journalism to Jack Berry. With his wife and four daughters beaming in the audience, Berry accepted the honor in Augusta, GA, at the annual Golf Writers Association of America Awards Dinner on the eve of the ’07 Masters. Previous award recipients include such notables as Dan



Photo courtesy of PGA of America

**From left, Greg Johnson, Jack Berry, and Terry Moore celebrate Jack Berry’s Lifetime Achievement in Journalism award at the Golf Writers Association of America award dinner.**

Jenkins, Jack Whitaker, Herbert Warren Wind, Dave Anderson, Jim Murray, and Renton Laidlaw. Berry is the first local “golf beat” writer to be so recognized.

“I was lucky to work at two newspapers, the *Detroit Free Press* and *Detroit News*,” said Berry in accepting the award, “that had a tradition of covering local and state golf. I liked covering the locals, the club pros, the publinoxers, and the amateurs, all easily approachable and friendly and happy to get their names in the paper.”

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### Jack Berry

And did he ever get their names in the paper. Berry originated the News popular “Golf Page,” a weekly feature that covered all aspects of the game in the state—charity fundraisers, the newest golf course, profiles on players and owners. Although Berry has covered 38 Masters and scores of other majors, he never forgot nor neglected the duties of the local golf beat. That’s why, for example, he would drive down to Sharon, OH, to cover the U.S. Open Sectional event and wait for the last qualifier to be determined, preferably some club pro or amateur from Michigan bursting with a

quote about heading to Oakmont, or Wing Foot or Oakland Hills.

“I’m lucky that I was born in Michigan,” said Berry at the podium, “with its great history and tradition in golf, with such PGA champions as Walter Hagen, Walter Burkemo and Chick Harbert. Three Michiganders have won the Club Pro Championship. And Oakland Hills has hosted major championships...and a recent Ryder Cup that perhaps the PGA would like to forget for the result, but definitely not for the facility, the galleries and the weather, which

were all spectacular.”

In his remarks, Berry also acknowledged his fellow golf writers and their national organization, the Golf Writers Association of America (GWAA), in which he served as both President and later as its Secretary. “I’ve belonged to a lot of writers’ associations but none can approach the Golf Writers Association of America in writing ability, camaraderie and accomplishment.” During his tenure as GWAA President in 1984, Berry lobbied to have women reporters in the players’ locker room at the Masters so they

could have equal footing with their male counterparts in doing their jobs. Later as the GWAA Secretary, Berry was admired for his informative and witty newsletters, savvy industry networking, and for his efforts— with the able and tireless assistance of the PGA’s Julius Mason—to upgrade the annual awards dinner, making it one of the most popular evenings of Masters week.

Berry’s award presentation was also noteworthy for a most impressive six minute video in which a number of his colleagues and friends paid tribute to him, including Dave Anderson of the *New York Times*, Dave Hackenberg of the *Toledo Blade*, Nick Seitz of *Golf Digest*, Greg Johnson of the *Grand Rapids Press*, Treetops’ Rick Smith, and this writer representing *Michigan Golfer* where Berry has been a longtime and loyal contributor.

Outgoing GWAA President Art Spander of the *Oakland Tribune* (CA) said: “Today, too many journalists put themselves in the story. Jack never was the story. The story was what was going on the golf course.”

From Rick Smith: “He put northern Michigan on the map, made it come alive, and helped to grow the game.” And from past GWAA President Marino Parascenzo: “With professionalism, integrity, and hard work, Jack presented it fairly and accurately—that’s the key to journalism.”

Due to time constraints, the video unfortunately but wisely omitted some lighthearted com-



Photo by Art McCafferty

**Jack Berry (r), known for his great writing skills, helped bring in the Internet Television era as a reporter with Michigan Golfer Television Host Bill Shelton (l).**

ments about Berry’s infamous golf game. But through unimpeachable sources, this writer learned of a few video “out-takes” such as this priceless line from Johnson: “If I’m ever lost in the desert, I hope I have one of Jack Berry’s golf balls in my pocket—because that ball would surely find water!” Another writer recounted that Berry’s constant travails with the forced carry shot over water motivated one Media Day organizer to embroider the back of Berry’s gratis golf cap with this apt nickname: Aquaphobe.

But when it comes to writing, Berry plays at scratch. Despite retiring from the *Detroit News* in 1993, he’s remained active and involved in golf circles by not only writing and advising on golf but serving as a steadfast volunteer for various projects including the

GWAA Journalism Scholarship Fund which identifies worthy college undergraduate recipients at his alma mater, Michigan State University.

In his remarks, Berry quoted his predecessor at the *News*, the late John Walter, who once said about the golf beat, “You go to the nicest places and meet the nicest people.”

Often the nicest and most deserving people win prestigious awards.

Richly deserved, this time Jack Berry is the story.

*A member of the GWAA, Terry Moore lives in Grand Rapids, MI and may be contacted at [terry\\_moore@comcast.net](mailto:terry_moore@comcast.net) **MG***