Past GCSAA presidents speak out

By PETER BLAIS

ORLANDO, Fla. — This is the second installment of a story that first ran last month checking in on the whereabouts of past presidents of the Golf Course Superintendents Association of America and asking them two questions:

• What is the biggest change you've observed in the golf industry during your career?
• What single piece of advice would you give to incoming GCSAA President David Fearis?

Following are the responses of those who were available:

Biggest change: The chemicals, fertilizers and equipment have come a long way. The industry has supplied us with the latest and best methods of maintaining a golf course. The biggest change is the education and professionalism of the superintendent. Back when I graduated from Purdue in 1954, I was the first graduate of the turf school.
Advice for Dave: He's also a Purdue graduate. He should continue to expose the superintendent to the golfing public so we will eventually get recognized as the head of the leaders of the most important part of the golf course operation.


Biggest change: The certification program started in 1971 and the seminar program was just starting to grow when I became president in 1975. It has expanded to 80 to 100 courses now at the conference. It's a great means of fostering continuing education.
Advice for Dave: Don't get too big-headed. We came from the ground up. We've grown tremendously as a profession — the amount of information, be it agronomic, employee, environment, government, computers, technology. But our basic job is still to keep grass on the course for the golfer's enjoyment.

Biggest change: The introduction of improved grasses that can withstand insects, disease, drought.
Advice for Dave: Step boldly. Don't be tentative. There are a lot of challenges facing the profession. Act in counsel with the board of directors.

Biggest change: The biggest changes have been in the modernization of chemicals and equipment and the demand by golfers for better courses.

Biggest change: Grasses, the height of cut and the adaptability

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ity of turf are phenomenal today. Our research and grant work over the years has really paid off. They are fantastic the way they can hang in there in spite of bad weather, disease and close mowing. Trying to convert golf courses to the new grasses will be the big trick.

Advice for Dave. Make certain everything is fine at home with your family and job before you embark on too many things with GCSAA.


James Brandt — 1968 — Retired in 1988 from Danville (Ill.) CC. Operating a lawn-care consulting business and living in Danville.

Biggest change. The equipment is the biggest change, along with the design of the newer courses. The courses are a lot more challenging today.

Advice for Dave. Do the best you can for all the members regardless of the type of club they are at. Some of the people at lesser clubs are not being served as well as those at higher-echelon clubs. Concentrate on bringing the lower-income groups up.


Biggest change. Equipment, seeds, fertilizers are all much better. We now have parks out there instead of golf courses, with all the flowers and waterfalls. You never used to see that sort of thing. We just had plain golf courses back then. The association has changed markedly since I was president. There were 5,000 members back then, now there are something like 18,000. The job of president is more complicated than it used to be.

Advice for Dave. Emphasize the certification program. When you have golf courses that are multimillion-dollar facilities, you need to have someone in charge who knows what the score is. It's becoming more important that the superintendent is certified. More money should also be spent on research.


Biggest change. The equipment is the biggest change, along with the design of the newer courses. The courses are a lot more challenging today.

Advice for Dave. The climate has changed such that I'm really not in a position to give advice.


Sherwood Moore — 1962 — Retired. Living in Brewster, Mass., and working with the Executive Service Corps. Superintendents are more educated today. Superintendents have so much more to work with in terms of equipment, but they have more environmental issues to contend with because of the chemicals they have to work with. And the budgets individual superintendents have to work with are much bigger. When I went to Winged Foot, my budget was $125,000 and when I left it was $600,000. Who knows what it is now.

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Witt elected GCSAA sec'y/treasurer

ORLANDO, Fla. — Longtime board member Tommy Witt of StillWaters Resort in Dadeville, Ala., was elected secretary-treasurer of the Golf Course Superintendents Association of America, joining President David Fears and Vice President Scott Woodhead as officers of the national organization, which held its elections during the Annual International Conference and Show here in early February.

Witt, a 20-year GCSAA member who has served on the GCSAA board of directors since 1994, bested Michael Wallace of Hop Meadow Country Club (CC) for the secretary-treasurer post, meaning Witt will likely be elected president in 2001.

Fears of Blue Hills CC in Kansas City, Mo., and Woodhead of Valley View Golf Club (GC) in Bozeman, Mont., ran unopposed.

In the race for the board of directors, Snyder and Woodward outpolled Joseph Emanuel of Hurstbourne CC in Lexington, Ky.; James Nicol of Hazeltine National GC in Chaska, Minn.; and Timothy O'Neill of the CC of Darien (Conn.).

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Advice for Dave.
Remain devoted to your work. You've got to like what you are doing to be a superintendent.

Elmer Border — 1959 — Deceased.

Biggest change.
Construction costs for an 18-hole course have gone from perhaps $50,000 in the early 1900s up to several million dollars today.

Advice for Dave. Appropriate your time involvement with due consideration for your family, your job at the club and responsibility to GCSAA.

Paul Weiss — 1957 — Deceased.
William Johnson — 1951 — Deceased.
Carl Bretzlaff — 1949 — Deceased.

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