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George Cleaver

“A Past President’s Reflections on GCSAA”

The opportunity to interview an immediate Past President of GCSAA isn't likely due to this elite group of gentlemen being spread thinly across the country. We of the Mid-Atlantic are especially fortunate in having George Cleaver in our Chapter. All of us are proud of George's work with GCSAA. My day to day contact with George allowed me a special insight into GCSAA and I hope the following questions and answers might tell you readers some things you might not have known.

1. What are GCSAA's strong points and their immediate goals?

“Undoubtedly, GCSAA's strongest point is our Conference. The Conference is the key of GCSAA's monetary success. Individual dues make up only a very small percentage of GCSAA's operating income. Furthermore, the Conference is a jam packed week of information to the Superintendent, 50% of which are the educational sessions and 50% of the

benefits come from exposure to the manufacturers exhibits. It would sound better if I put more emphasis on the education aspect, but I sincerely believe the exposure to new products helps keep us up to date on the latest procedures in our business.

As far as their immediate goals, I guess the most important would be GCSAA's study on sectionalizing the membership. This is an idea I believe in, but there are so many ways this can go it is hard to even begin to describe it adequately.”

2. What might be some of GCSAA's weaknesses?

“At this time the most prominent item is to get more *Superintendent* members that are not from private clubs. Presently, GCSAA is made up almost entirely of Superintendents from private clubs. This majority has been an excellent majority membership throughout GCSAA's history, but the time has come to seek out our fellow Superintendents who are not from the private, exclusive club. There are two simple reasons for this: one, the number of new private clubs is on a downswing, while the daily fee and public course is the majority of new golf course construction. Second, if the situation ever arose where the private clubs refused to pay their Superintendent's dues, we would undoubtedly lose a substantial number of members. Now is the time to seek out those professionals who are willing to join out of their own pockets, it can only help to improve the character of our membership.”

3. What direction is GCSAA heading and what is your opinion of this direction?

“GCSAA is an ever-expanding professional association. Let me say again that to me the immediate need is for more *Superintendent* members. If a majority of members become commercial people, what good is it? Don't get me wrong, the commercial people are a definite advantage for GCSAA for obvious reasons, but we are an organization created for the advancement of the professional golf course Superintendent.”

4. Does GCSAA relate more towards individual membership or Chapters? What benefits do each receive and who has more influence collectively?

“GCSAA definitely relates to the advancement of the individual professional. However, Chapters do have more

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President's Message

The attendance at our first meeting was very encouraging to say the least. It was great to see so many old and new faces. It is the responsibility of the membership to welcome the new members and to make them feel a part of the group. We also need to encourage those that aren't too active.

Clean the dust off of your clubs and get out and practice. The Superintendent/Pro Tournament is always a lot of fun for those who participate. This year's tournament at Hog's Neck will be no exception. Hog's Neck is a great layout, with more sand than the Sahara desert and the hospitality is always great.

I hope to see everyone there.

Sam Kessel

P.S. The return reservation card worked very well for the meeting at my club. Do the host a favor and send your card in early. They are a big help.

GEORGE CLEAVER

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influence in GCSAA's affairs. A Chapter's suggestion is much more influential than a single member's request. A single member stands his best chance at being heard on the Conference floor more than any other time. The Chapters are really quite a bit stronger than our total membership because the total number of members belonging to Chapters is considerably more than the total GCSAA membership. There are NO provisions in GCSAA's bylaws stating members belonging to a local Chapter must belong to GCSAA. It's unfortunate that these non-members can exert influence on GCSAA, but it is a fact. My personal hope is that when the concept of sectionalization is perfected, we will eliminate this non-member participation."

5. What changes do you feel might be beneficial for GCSAA's membership structure: specifically this "sectionalization" you mentioned?

"It's hard to talk of specifics in GCSAA's sectionalization idea since so many of the details haven't been solved as yet. The idea looks good until one reflects on the hostility that might develop as Chapters lose some of their influence, especially when a section's area might take in two or three Chapters that previously worked independently of each other. Sectionalization means equal representation by area, not Chapter. Basically, it's reverse of the system we now employ. Because of the obvious mountain of possibilities and problems, many of us aren't totally convinced because we still don't have anything concrete worked out that we can put our hands on and judge. This probably seems ambiguous, but that's the process of perfection; if we didn't have a lot of loose ends and went out for approval with a half-hearted idea, it would be shot down immediately. If all the problems find answers, then I will be convinced this is the way for GCSAA to go."

6. Do you feel the President and his Board are an effective guidance system for GCSAA or do they merely influence an operation that generally steers itself from within?

"Actually, the system we're currently using is quite effective. What has to be kept in proper perspective is that the Board is a policy setting committee and not a day to day manager of GCSAA's office."

7. Should the President or any of the Board responsibilities be altered: Why and how?

"Each President has his own interpretation of policy. This has its' good and bad points. Those who agree with the President and his Board generally believe everything is satisfactory. Those persons who disagree with the elected officials feel that they aren't doing their job. Many times it has been suggested a President hold office longer than a year, supposedly to get a better grasp on his duties before his term runs out. I don't believe this to have any benefit because I sincerely feel that yearly change continually brings new ideas to GCSAA. We have run very good over the years due to

past Presidents and their Boards. Even though each year is different, GCSAA has progressed."

8. How much time is required of the President and his board?

"This varies tremendously, depending on if the President wants to take in every possible event or delegate many of the items he could do but is not required to do. Our main job is not an elected official, but a golf course superintendent; it's a feeling of responsibility that motivates a person to offer as much time as he can. This is one very good reason I respect our office staff, because each year they are faced with a President and Board that do things differently than the past. If the elected officials don't have much time to spend on GCSAA, then the staff makes up the difference. Then you add the fact that each year the officials choose to do different tasks, requiring the staff to continually have to tackle the various remaining tasks. The staff's flexibility and the time available to the officials always adds up to 100% completion and perhaps because each year is different in duties, GCSAA benefits."

9. For your year as President, how would you evaluate the office staff?

"As I've said, they did a very good job and it was a pleasure to work with them. If I were to mention a complaint, I would have to express my regret that many times we have personnel changes. I would like to see some stabilization of our staff. I do realize that continual mobility is the norm for association personnel advancement and I assume that GCSAA will always have this minor problem."

10. Are you satisfied with your work as President of GCSAA?

"Yes, most definitely; I really enjoyed it. I sincerely believe a lot was accomplished. I'm especially satisfied with GCSAA's combined work with our Allied Associations. It seems to have brought us more recognition, both as GCSAA and as individual Superintendents. The magazine format and name change was perhaps the single most tangible item that was accomplished during my year. Also, the Conference was the largest ever this year. Of course, I'm not taking credit as some sort of great leader, the combined efforts of many fine people helped make it a year for me to always remember."

11. Do you have any recommendations for GCSAA or individual Superintendents?

"It's just like proverbs always say, the more you put into it the more you get out of it. It's a shame more people don't participate both nationally and in local Chapters. A much better understanding can develop by participation in organizations, especially a deep understanding of ourselves as a profession."