

A Fireside Chat with Bruce Williams (Fire Not Included)

By John Gurke and Dave Blomquist

Upon entering the Office of Bruce Williams, superintendent of the Bob O'Link Golf Club and next President of the GCSAA, it is plain to see that this is a busy man. Shelves and tables are crowded with computers, fax machines, copiers, and the like. His desk is piled high with correspondence. Looking behind one of these stacks, we find Bruce waving us in while finishing a phone call. The purpose for our visit: To find out more about our next GCSAA president—his motivations, his goals, and the issues he plans to tackle during his term. This is not going to be like pulling teeth, as those of us who know Bruce also know that he is more than willing to talk to anyone who'll listen about our profession.

We asked Bruce about his beginnings in the industry, which of course centered around his father, the legendary Bob Williams (who was, ironically, President of both MAGCS and GCSAA during his celebrated career). Bruce not only worked under his father, but several other notable superintendents and pros like Bruce Sering and Hubby Habjan before deciding upon a career in golf course maintenance. He took over Bob O'Link in 1979 when Bob retired after twenty years. For the past sixteen years he has had the pleasure of working with Rick Bowden, his assistant and right hand. Asked if Rick's presence has facilitated his long-term commitment to our associations, and we get a resounding YES. But it doesn't end there, says Bruce. For this pursuit to be successful, he is quick to point out that all facets of



Bruce Williams, CGCS

his life have Supported him: His staff, his club members, his peers, and, most importantly, his family. His involvement with the GCSAA is a 7 to 9-year stint, with many days away from home and work. The year of his impending Presidency alone will require him to be away from 60 to 90 days, including ten or more during our peak season!

Why would anyone want to bring this on themselves? Bruce's answer is simple: He has a genuine desire to improve our profession. How he can do this is answered when we ask his "Mission" as our next president. Bruce's initial reaction is "to continue to look forward and to leave it better than I found it." He continues on to explain the three mandates he will address as president: Image, Environment, and Chapter Relations. With the first two we have been very successful over the past few years, says Bruce. Our PR programs such as "Par For The Course" and the one-minute spots during televised golf tournaments, among others, are evidence of this. But Bruce would like to expand on this to the point

of making GCSAA a "brand name"—a name as recognizable as, say, PGA. Akin to image enhancement is somewhat of a "sub-mandate" focusing an career development.

Bruce explains that with club budgets becoming tighter and fiscal prudence more important than ever, the need for us to expand our professional capabilities is paramount. Management companies and upper management streamlining will favor the individual who has a more all-encompassing background not only in turf maintenance, but in financial management, marketing, and facility management.

The chief area Bruce has been and will be attending to is Chapter Relations. The GCSAA has had an affiliation agreement of one type or another since the thirties. As he sees it, the need for an upgraded affiliation agreement is key. The goal is for all chapter members (A and B classes) to be GCSAA members eventually. At the present time, many chapters have a less than 50% membership rate, but these chapters receive all the benefits an affiliated chapter receives. The GCSAA programs offered to chapters cost money, and many superintendents are reaping the rewards of these programs without belonging to the Association. This, in Bruce's opinion, is an issue which must be addressed. He hopes that by the year 2000 the GCSAA increases its membership from the current 15,000 to 20,000, with a 10 to 15% increase in the current 8,200 A and B membership. Our Association is growing rapidly, and to ensure its future success we need the support and involvement

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Winterkill of Turfgrasses... (continued from page 12)

Before applying any type of protective layer or covering to a green or tee, it is important to make the appropriate applications of fungicides for snow mold control. The coverings, while protecting the turf, also create a microenvironment that is conducive to the development of the snow mold diseases.

Even adapted, acclimated turf can be killed by low temperatures, however, if the turf is extremely thatchy. The thatch does not retain heat as well as the more dense soil, and the effects of extreme cold on the turfgrass plant are not as well-buffered. Thatchy turf is also likely to become desiccated, thus subjecting the grass plants to two forms of potential winter injury.

Frequent and/or heavy traffic on frozen turf can also cause injury or death. This is a type of low temperature injury because the traffic causes ice crystals, that have formed inside the dormant plant to puncture cells and destroy tissue. This is similar to the damage that occurs following traffic on actively-growing, frosted turf in the fall or late spring.

Finally, a winter-related problem that few superintendents seem to be aware of is that of the winter mites. I believe that much of what is attributed to "winterkill" or winter desiccation is actually caused by the activities of these small mites. The mites feed heavily on turf during the late winter and spring, causing the turf to become bleached and desiccated, generally resulting in death. It is not surprising that mite injury is mistaken for winter desiccation. They are most active on south or west-facing slopes, along the south or west-facing sides of buildings or walls,

and around the bases (especially the south side) of evergreen trees (especially spruces). Their populations skyrocket on drought-stressed area. They can be found on any species of turf, and are most easily seen feeding on the tips of grass leaves late in the afternoon on sunny days. Irrigation seems to reduce mite populations significantly; variable levels of control are seen with Diazinon (not on the course!) and Dursban, Talstar 10W, a miticide that is quite effective against these critters, has a 24c registration in Colorado that allows use on turfgrass. Apply 2 to 4 tablespoons per 1000 square feet in 1 gallon of water, and do not irrigate in. This is highly toxic to fish and use near water is prohibited. ■

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of its affiliates. Future programs Bruce discussed that the GCSAA will offer its members are very promising indeed, from an on-line continuing education program to be unveiled at the 1997 Conference and Show in Las Vegas to computer terminals for each chapter for communication uplink between chapters and the GCSAA. The success of these progressive programs relies heavily on chapter affiliation, and thus on member involvement.

Discussing these and other issues with Bruce Williams leaves us with several lasting impressions, the most apparent being that our Association—the GCSAA—is poised to continue its growth and pro-active nature, and that it could not be in better hands than those of our own Bruce Williams. ■

Urbanization Affects Tree Longevity (continued from page 8)

more. Use of smaller or slower-growing varieties, and exceptional attention such as careful watering, fertilization, pruning, etc., may prolong the usefulness of trees beyond what might be expected. Inevitably, these trees will take increasing amounts of attention and eventually will require replacing.

Even though the lives of trees planted in adverse situations will be shortened, this in no way means that such trees should not be planted. Such trees fill a vital need, softening the harsh urban environment, providing shade or screening, or just providing something attractive to look at.

When trees are used in such a manner, it is important that everyone involved recognizes that these are temporary plants and will need to be replaced periodically. If the condition in which the trees are being used is understood in advance, and if replacements are anticipated and budgeted, there will be far less trauma when the plants begin to outlive their usefulness and replacement becomes necessary. ■

**James A. Fizzell is a consulting horticulturist and President of James A. Fizzell and Associates, Ltd., Park Ridge, IL.*



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