



The Art of Appreciation

It has truly been an honor and a pleasure serving as your president this past year. Although my life has been extremely busy, I greatly enjoyed the challenge and look forward to providing further contributions to this wonderful Association and its members.

In deciding on a topic for my last message, I did some soul-searching and I realized what makes me tick. It has a lot to do with doing a good job. But it has everything to do with being appreciated for doing a good job.

I was going to use this parting message to inform you all about the Professional Development Initiative (PDI) and other GCSAA news . . . items that were discussed at the delegates meeting I attended in September. Then I reconsidered. Yes, I could take this moment to share the business of the national association, but Steve Mona probably will discuss all of this at the Midwest Turf Clinic. My article would have been a puff piece, and quite frankly I was not motivated to write it. This brought forward the topic of this, my final message as president.

MOTIVATION. What motivates me? What motivates you? I had never really thought about what makes me tick. I make a very comfortable living, and I certainly value the opportunity with which I have been blessed. But if my motivation was all about money, I could survive doing any one of a lot of different careers. Is the key that superintendents have an easy existence? On the contrary, we have no rest for the taking. In fact, we have responsibilities we don't even know we have. A portion of my motivation does come from sheer challenge, whether on the golf course working or playing, or performing family obligations like coaching youth sports. A great individual reward derives from succeeding at goals you personally set.


I had a conversation with Mr. Bob Williams last month, on the occasion of his 86th birthday. Bob is as interested in our profession today as he was when he was a young up-and-coming superintendent. I

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Most inland golf courses, however, do have some component of trees as part of the natural landscape. This is where a balance needs to be struck between highly maintained turfgrass (greens and tees) and the trees. Also pay attention to trees in high-traffic areas or other problem areas such as poorly drained sites. As a general rule of thumb, turfgrasses require eight hours of direct sunlight per day to maintain good performance. Of particular importance is morning sunlight. Photosynthetic activity is usually greatest in the morning, resulting in the energy fixation necessary for growth and recovery. Do not, therefore, plant trees to the east or south of greens and tees. A little foresight can safeguard the long-term health and performance of these critical areas of the golf course.

Removing problem trees can be a very controversial issue at golf courses, and the reasons cited are too numerous to elucidate. The bottom line is that we are talking about a golf course, not an arboretum, and there is no substitute for sunlight. Limited sunlight will affect turf quality, turf reliability and playing quality. Compass readings and time-lapse photography can help determine trees that are candidates for removal. In recent years, computer software has been developed to analyze shading from trees. This technique can graphically illustrate the amount of shade cast by individual trees throughout the year with amazing accuracy. Computer analysis removes the guesswork from tree removal and replaces it with data, and sometimes emotional controversy can be replaced with science. Digital imaging can also be a valuable tool to show

people what the hole will look like following tree removal.

Trees will always be a difficult issue at golf courses across the country. Golfers will have to be continuously reminded and educated about the negative consequences that can occur as a result of poorly located trees. Sometimes, a simple tour around the course with a comparison of shaded turf and turf exposed to full sunlight is all that is needed. Oftentimes, however, more convincing will be necessary. Be sure to contact your regional Green Section office to obtain assistance with this difficult issue and perhaps schedule a TAS visit. To have consistent top-quality turfgrass, it has to see the light. 

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thought, how amazing is this! I was pleased that I did find a common denominator between Bob and myself, in that I wake up every day and find it enjoyable to go to my job. He said he never considered it going to **work**, and I must agree with him. Through the ages, this mindset is part of our motivation to do what we do.

However, the engine to our motivation remains to be identified. I think I found it; in fact, I know I found it. In deciding on a topic for my last message, I did some soul-searching and I realized what makes me tick. It has a lot to do with doing a good job. But it has everything to do with *being appreciated* for doing a good job. Everyone needs to feel appreciated. A wife likes flowers because they are pretty, but beyond that, because she feels they signify the value of all she accomplishes and

appreciation for same. Bonus checks are wonderful, but the sense of appreciation for a job well done that they represent is going to last longer. Appreciation is the motivation for doing that extra task, helping out with something that would be easier to walk away from. If you think about it from that perspective, when you do not feel appreciated you generally have no desire to do any more than what you are required to do. And being happy is not a requirement.

The very wise proverb of treating those around you the way you would want them to treat you, should be the golden rule. How enjoyable life would be to rid the world of hate, divorce, child abuse, etc. That is very wishful thinking, but I think everything could revolve around making appreciation a priority. I

feel comfortable with the self-awareness that I am greatly motivated by a sense of appreciation. That being said, I am going to assume I am no different than anyone else. I am going to step up my efforts to appreciate all of those relationships around me, wife, children, grounds crew, even my bosses. Who knows, this may be the missing piece that will keep all those relationships intact.

Let us all try to nurture what we have, as well as those we have influence on. I believe there is plenty of appreciation to go around. And yes, I appreciate all of you for giving me the opportunity to lead this magnificent organization. It has been fun and I encourage all of you who have not yet served to consider it for your future. God bless. 