

# It's A Wonderful Life

*In the movie It's A Wonderful Life, George Bailey is rescued from peril by an angel who then takes him on a tour of his hometown. At every turn, it becomes apparent to George that he has had some profound effect on his community and the quality of other people's lives.*

*... In the wake of this holiday season, in the early days of a new year, I would remind you all to raise a glass to the founders of our wonderful association. These men have made a difference every bit as profound as George Bailey.*

I would like to ask the reader to now imagine that the game of golf has been transported to another place and time, not unlike the scenario in the movie. But in this story, the missing entity is the GCSAA.

In this dream sequence, you are paired up with a member of a typical Chicago-area club, and you are eager to get on the course and experience what the game presents. You approach the first tee; you survey the golf hole and detect that it is weed-infested, with large areas of disease-ridden and barren turf. The bunkers are ragged and overgrown. When you reach your fairway lie, the ball is plugged in soft and thatchy turf. Now you come to the green and the roll of the ball is anything but smooth and true. You are amazed to see that your golfing partner is content with all of this. You are incredulous. How can this be? How has the association made such a difference?

Has there never been a man like Bob Williams to selflessly mentor or apprentice talented and gifted assistant superintendents?

What about an Oscar Miles? Has there never been a man to push the industry toward deploying triplex greensmowers, and eventually five-plex machines over fairways?

And where was Joe Dinelli, the inventor of the first mechanical bunker rake; or Carl Hopphan, the inventor of the slit-seeder for golf turf?

Has there never been a Ted Woehrle to experiment with chemicals from the cotton industry on the turfgrasses at Beverly?

Has there never been a Dudley Smith to promote camaraderie and love for each other?

Has there never been a Ray Gerber or Raymond Schmitz to show us how a gentleman carries himself?

Has there never been a Paul Voykin to take up advocacy for the birds and the butterflies?

There is no attention to detail. Maybe there has never been a Randy Wahler to raise the bar.

There is no interprofessional communication because there has never been a Fred Opperman to even bother with the selfless act of getting a newsletter out on time.

There is no Randy Kane to help us with pathology—in fact, there is no interest in cooperating with academia whatsoever, for that would only reveal a culpability for dead grass, and the mercenary superintendent would rather bamboozle the golfer into thinking that dead grass is inevitable.

Golf course superintendents are not especially keen on communicating with their members, because there has never been a Bruce Sering to show them the art of speaking on their feet, or an Adolph Bertucci to show them how to be friendly with all (not just some) of the members.

Has there never been a Julius Albaugh or Albie Staudt to set an example of longevity and dedication to a piece of property?

Has there never been a John Ebel to exemplify simple and genuine faith in God?

Have there never been men like Emil Mashie or Bob Kronn to model the importance of playing your golf course, and playing the game to the best of your ability?

Granted, some of these men might have found the greenkeeping profession, but one cannot help but wonder if all of these men would have gravitated to golf course management were it not for the association that promotes trust, openness and fraternity for the advancement of the game. So in the wake of this holiday season, in the early days of a new year, I would remind you all to raise a glass to the founders of our wonderful association. These men have made a difference every bit as profound as George Bailey.



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