

**1993 FGCSA
President's Awards**

Hugh Bebout
Dick Blake
Don Delaney
Karl Jacobs
Ed Ramey

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GCSAA Director to
be nominated and
elected from the
floor of the
annual meeting. I
was president of
the GCSAA in
1971-72.'***

***The FGCSA President's Award
for Lifetime Service was
established in 1990 to honor
those superintendent pioneers
who were instrumental in
state and local affairs but who
may no longer be actively
involved in the FGCSA.
Qualifications include 20
years or more of service to the
turfgrass industry, 10 of which
were as a superintendent .***

Thank you, Mr. President!

***Dick Blake has led three statewide
superintendents' associations, and the
national organization, the GCSAA***

BY JOEL JACKSON, CGCS

When the President of the United States steps down, he historically retains that title and, as a measure of respect, is addressed as "Mr. President" for the rest of his life. I think Dick Blake has earned that courtesy after serving his peers as president of three different state or regional associations and the Golf Course Superintendents Association of America.

That record of service is but a reflection of the sense of duty, loyalty, and hard work that a young lad from Wilmington, Mass. learned from the Marine Corps after graduating from high school. Those values have led Dick through a long, rewarding career in golf turf management and into his current semi-retirement work as a sales representative with Growing Technologies, Inc.

"After I mustered out of the Marines, I was interested in pursuing a career in wildlife management at the Stockbridge School of Agriculture," said Dick in a recent interview. "There were no openings in the class I needed, so I took a course in turf management. The program was under the tutelage of pioneering turf professor Lawrence S. Dickinson, and he got me so interested in this field that I switched majors.

"It was a good time to be getting into the business. We had instructors like Geoffrey Cornish teaching classes. We

were the first generation of the new breed of superintendents that got a strong educational background in turf management principles as well as practical experience in the field.

"Upon graduation from Stockbridge, I started my career working for the Mitchell Brothers Corporation, which was a family of superintendents and architects. I spent one year with them building and renovating golf courses in New England.

"I then worked in succession at Whittinsville C.C., Concord C.C., and Salem C.C. All three were designed by Donald Ross. I was at Whittinsville for eight years. We then moved to Boylston, Mass. for 13 years at Mt. Pleasant C.C. After that, I did an eight-year tour of duty at Woodstock (Vermont) Golf and Tennis Club which was part of the Rockefeller Rock Resort chain.

"In 1965, I joined the Rhode Island Superintendents Association, eventually serving as president. After that, I joined the New England Superintendents Association and worked my way from newsletter editor to president in 1970.

"I began my service on the GCSAA Board of Directors in 1967. I was the first GCSAA Director to be nominated and elected from the floor of the annual meeting. I was president of the GCSAA in 1971-72.

"Those New England winters began

to get a little hard to take, so we moved to Florida in 1982. I started the Florida portion of my career at Card Sound G. C. and worked my way up the coast to Quail Ridge and eventually to my last duty station, Bocaire Country Club.

"Sometime around 1984 or 1985 I attended an FGCSA Board meeting and started asking questions. The first thing I knew, Tom Burrows said the best way to get the answers to those questions was for me to be secretary/treasurer of the association.

"A few short years later I assumed my fourth association presidency in 1987."

"I have made a lot of friends in Florida and I really appreciate the honor the association has bestowed on me with the President's Award. My service to the Florida Association has been an enjoyable experience buoyed by the support of fellow board members and our executive secretary, Marie Roberts.

"In the early days of my association work in New England — and even with GCSAA — we didn't have any staff support. We did all the paperwork ourselves. Elaine, my lovely wife of 40 years, helped me tremendously with those efforts. She also managed to raise our six children and they, in turn, have blessed us with eight grandchildren."

Asked to reflect over the past, present and future of golf, Dick had these observations:

"I always enjoyed being involved in the construction or rebuilding on golf courses. It gave me a lot of personal job satisfaction to add something to a course. I especially liked to plant trees.

"Now when we visit New England and I visit some of the courses where I worked, it is very satisfying to see the mature trees and the effect they have on the courses. I also have enjoyed watching the growth and development of over 30 superintendents that worked with me over the years. It's nice to see them progress and take their place in the service of our industry."

"I've always been an environmentalist at heart, stemming from my early interest in wildlife. I have always tried to influence people in the safe and proper use of pesticides. One of the things I'm proud of was the legislation we developed while I served on the Conservation Committee

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and Planning Board in New England.

"It is necessary to remember that humans are part of the environment too. Their needs and survival are just as important as the snail darter and the spotted owl. Facts and common sense need to be at the heart of the regulations that are formulated for the protection of the environment."

"One of the most pressing issues I see facing superintendents today is job security. There is far too much turnover in superintendent positions. Clubs need more continuity so they can develop some good programs and make positive progress.

"This merry-go-round approach to changing club presidents, greens chairman, and greens committees annually just creates turmoil and usually results in turning over the superintendent's position rather than establishing good working relationships."

"For people entering this profession, I

must say they cannot be thin-skinned. They should expect to work long, hard hours and pay their dues before becoming a head superintendent. While they are paying their dues, they should develop business management and people-handling skills.

"I strongly urge they also take public speaking and business writing courses. Communications is a key part of the profession today. I also recommend they read a book called *Developing Your Executive Abilities*. It really helped me see the big picture a little better."

Dick enjoys his work with Growing Technologies, Inc. It keeps him active and involved with an industry he has helped lead and shape. When he isn't working he enjoys photography, historical reading, and traveling. A trip out west and to Alaska is in the planning stages right now. Enjoy the trip, Dick, and from all of us, thank you, Mr. President!



Dick Blake, right, with GCSAA President Gerald Faubel, CGCS, left, and FGCSA President Joel Jackson, CGCS, at the 1990 Poa Annuu Classic in Naples. Blake is a past president of both organizations.