

GOLF IN AMERICA

Where We've Gone

The oldest living past presidents of the CMAA, PGA and GCSAA discuss the problems their members faced at the national convention the year they reigned. The part they played in the growth of their associations and their insight into the present and future problems which must be solved to further their associations provides a nostalgic and educating article

By Jerry Olson and Gordon Campbell

Harry Fawcett, Tom Walsh and Joe Ryan—they represent over 130 years of combined talent and dedication to the game of golf and the professional associations which have striven to improve the lot of their members. Nostalgic articles generally appeal to those forgotten retirees who were there from inception through infancy but have somehow been cast aside because time has passed them by.

However, the strength of understanding or knowing the past has a way of giving great insight into the present and future. The Club Managers Assn. of America, the Professional Golfers' Assn. and the Golf Course Superintendents Assn. of America each have a very rich historical past. It tends to be forgotten as the associations strive to combat the current problems of rising taxes, Internal Revenue Service guidelines, charges of discrimination, Federal pesticide legislation, competition with discount store merchandisers and anti-

trust investigations by the FTC.

What were some of the problems which confronted these organizations and their presidents in the past? Were they solved or just passed on to another generation? Have the duties and relationships of the club manager, professional and superintendent, with each other and their memberships, evolved or are they still following the traditions of the past?

These are some of the questions GOLFDOM asked when we interviewed the oldest living past presidents of the CMAA (Fawcett 1941); PGA (Walsh 1940), and the GCSAA (Ryan 1938). After talking to these acknowledged leaders of yesteryear, I can definitely conclude that either the associations in the past did a great job of electing presidents who are still contributing today, or these three are "unique" individuals. I'm sure it's an amalgamation of both.

It's amazing to note some of the areas which they have in common:

They were all heavily involved in either starting or evolving their respective association's educational programs. Of their total 240 years, only four years were spent in college. Their golf know-how, however, is comprised of 130 years of "education." They were dedicated toward improving the professional status and working conditions of the members who elected them. They were outspoken and progressive for their day in finding out what was needed to make their associations grow, and then following through to make sure it came about.

The reasons the associations are where they are today and the members enjoy better working conditions are a direct result of the efforts of these three men and others like them. Fawcett, Walsh and Ryan didn't do it alone, and they are the first to point this out, but they were the guiding forces which have molded the programs, professionalism and philosophies of their associations.

(Continued)

JOE RYAN: GCSAA, 1938

Joe Ryan, 86-year-old former (1938) president of the Golf Course Superintendents Assn. of America, thinks it isn't essential to be college educated to be a good superintendent.

"I came off the farm, worked for a munitions plant during World War I and then became a superintendent," he relates from his retirement home in Miami, Fla. "As long as you have a knowledge of the maintenance required on a golf course you should be able to do the job."

"People used to think it was just necessary to mow the grass—some still think so—but there is much more to it than that. The status of the superintendent was elevated when the clubs realized they were in need of them."

Ryan recalls that in the old days, clubs thought all a superintendent had to do was mow the grass and dump on fertilizer. Many of the greens committee chairman were stingy with money for supplies as related in this story by Ryan.

"The first greens chairman I worked under was a Quaker and was he tight," Ryan continues. "I struggled for a year trying to convince him to spend some money, and get myself another job at the same time. I wasn't able to do either," he laughs, "but that guy sure had a good financial report. Then one day he called a meeting and asked me to attend. He said come loaded for bear. After opening the proceedings he turned the meeting over to me. I told the members I had had a first-class pushing around. I had been deprived of the needed fertilizer—he had let me buy 10 tons, a piddling amount, while the greens chairman before him had allowed 40 tons. The greens chairman then excused me and adjourned the meeting saying we weren't getting anywhere. However things were better after that."

Ryan got his first golf course superintendent job through his brother, Tom, who was a professional at the Town and Country Club, then a new nine-hole course in Bethesda, Md., a little town above Washington, D.C. "Tom suggested me to



Joe Ryan today.

the chairman of the greens committee, said I was a good man, and I got the job," Ryan states. "From there I went to Rolling Green in Philadelphia and stayed until 1957, when I retired."

It was back in the early 30s when Ryan first became interested in the sectional and national golf course superintendents associations. In fact, he was interested by some friends before he was eligible to join in 1932. "I first got on the national board at the convention in Washington in 1937," he says. "The real problem we faced was that most clubs and superintendents didn't realize it was necessary to get knowledge from a convention on what should be done on their courses. After we got functioning, the clubs realized the organization could help them and they backed us up."

"Previously, many clubs paid more attention to the county agent than they did to their course superintendent. The county agent could talk to the club officials better and we often asked him to do so to help us get enough money for the needed implements. Courses still have a lot of the same problems today, but the superintendents now have the money as well as the knowledge to solve them. It's difficult for any organization to solve individual problems because a big problem to one club may be a little one at another," Ryan says. "Superintendents should

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HARRY FAWCETT: CMAA, 1941

"The man who refuses to go along with the advances unfolded each day in our industry takes his place along with the farmer...who beheld the giraffe for the first time and then exclaimed, 'There ain't no such animal.'"

Harry J. Fawcett

For over a half century, Harry Fawcett has resisted, been a part of, encouraged and made some of the advances which have led to the success of the Club Managers Assn. of America. "I have at various times in my career...rejected what later proved to be evolutionary," says Fawcett, who reigned as president of the CMAA in 1941. "Only... I later on accepted these ideas, subscribed to them and advocated them for others."

The contributions which Fawcett has made—not only to the CMAA, but to members of clubs, employees of clubs and the golf industry—place him as a prime candidate for dean of the CMAA presidents.

In 1914 at the age of 24, Fawcett chucked a job with the railroad to take a job as assistant and later manager of Cedarhurst CC, Long Island, N.Y. Fawcett later moved to Chicago where he served as manager of the Standard Club, The Down Town Club and finally the Lake Shore CC. He later became president of the \$8 million Shoreland Hotel, where he planned the building, equipment, layout and furnishings of the 800-room facility.

It was during his tenure at Lake Shore that he was elected president of the CMAA. "My primary emphasis in 1941 at the convention, held in Buffalo, N.Y., was to strengthen the national organization and adopt a uniform system of accounting for clubs. Most city and country clubs had very poor systems of bookkeeping," states Fawcett. "To get greater involvement and participation in the national organization, I strongly advocated that a chapter member must also be a member of the national organization."

TOM WALSH: PGA, 1940, 1941

Fawcett is generally considered to be the one person responsible for the adoption of the service charge at clubs in the United States.

"Restaurants and hotels in Europe had long worked under the 'Tronc' system. I read about its workings and wondered why an adaptation of it here would not work. At that time club employees generally were among the poorest paid of any service employees. Hotels and restaurants paid higher and permitted tips. The boards of directors at most country clubs, though, paid a pitiful wage and practiced 'no tips' in their by-laws and house rules. This obviously led to disgruntled employees and poor service. I adopted a 10 per cent service charge, still with no tips, and the situation improved. Now that the waiters were happy, it soon became evident that the other employees should also benefit from the service charge, so without changing the rate, we held out 2 per cent, dividing it among the other employees.

"If you are going to adhere to the age old tenet of clubs and actually have no tipping, then you must include all employees in the service charge. At another club an increase in the rate of the service charge to 15 per cent of sales was sufficient to give every service employee a service charge, pay all the costs of a welfare plan, accident, health and
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Harry Fawcett when he retired in 1963.

In 1909, when Tom Walsh was a 11-year old caddie, the Professional Golfers' Assn. of America didn't have an educational program—there wasn't a PGA.

In 1940, when Walsh took over as president of the 1,400-member PGA he started an educational program with a \$1,000 allotment.

Today the theory behind Walsh's educational programs still exists: however, the scope has been broadened to include over 7,000 golf professionals, and encompasses an educational program estimated in 1972 at over \$250,000.

Walsh's attempts to educate the professional and the public have gone a long way toward placing golf near the pinnacle of this nation's leisure time and recreational activities.

Today at age 74, Walsh owns a golf course and is still an active head professional. He shot a 77 last year and his golf shop grossed \$150,000. He has seen his struggles to improve the status of the golf professional finally begin bearing fruit, not only for the touring pros, but more importantly, for the underpublicized and underrated home or club professional.

Educating its members has been a goal of the PGA since its inception in 1916, but an actual training program never got beyond the drawing boards in the early years. To understand the evolution of the educational program conceived by Walsh and other PGA officials in 1940, it is necessary to examine the steps which led to the creation of a program.

The eldest of 10 children, Walsh got his golfing baptismal as a caddie at Beverly CC in Chicago. Because the caddie system was "the way" to become a head professional, his initial crusade in golf revolved around improving the lot of his fellow caddies.

"When I was 12 years old, I participated in a caddie strike for more money," Walsh recalls. "At the time we were getting 15 cents an hour and we upped the demand to



Tom Walsh pictured in 1970.

20 cents," he laughs. "We didn't get the nickel raise, but a great fringe benefit was that the caddies were allowed to play on Mondays, and I guess this is when realization of the need for increased education began. With my four golfing brothers—Frank, John, Marty and Packy—we organized a golf school in the Chicago area. I went to Arch Ward, editor of the Chicago Tribune, and we started the largest effort toward educating the public about golf with the Chicago Tribune Golf School in 1933. We eventually gave golf instruction to more than 100,000 Chicago-area golfers until the school's demise in 1970."

It was during this period (1927) that Walsh attempted to find out what made a successful golf professional. "We had our own individual ideas on how important we were and what our functions at the club should be, but the low income of many of the professionals convinced me that we were not giving the public what they wanted. We ran a survey in our golf shop in 1927, but we didn't ask the professional, we asked the people who employed us—the members," he says. "We had this electrical box rigged up where all of the people who came into the golf shop could mark down what they looked for in a golf professional. Their responses were startling and almost unanimous," Walsh recalls, "and destroyed some
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Walsh

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of the previous notions which some of the 'prima donna' professionals had been operating under. Some pros felt as long as you played good golf or improved the members' golf game they would patronize your shop. However, the first thing which golfers looked for in a professional was personality," Walsh comments. "Next in order of importance were teaching ability, a neat appearance and a well-stocked pro shop. Trailing in order of importance were playing ability, keeping appointments, club storage room in good order, knowledge of fitting clubs, don't gamble, knowledge of the rules and interest in caddies. The results of the survey surprised most of the professionals," Walsh says, "because we were inclined to put playing and teaching ability in the top slots."

The emphasis on personality, teaching and merchandising indirectly set the stage for the future PGA educational program. "I had always wanted to build a daily fee course," he says, "and I bought land in 1927 and built Westgate Valley in Chicago. The course opened in 1929. Three

months later the Depression left me with a \$90,000 mortgage. The struggles of most golf professionals to try to make a living during the Depression made me realize that only greater emphasis on education was the answer if the pro was to get out of a rut.

"You see," Walsh continues, "the pro was not only financially poor during the 1930s, but also suffered from a poor public image, in-fighting within the sectional organizations, a lack of communications with his members and the national organization and extremely bad relations with golf equipment manufacturers. Because most of the professionals had risen up through the caddie ranks," Walsh explains, "they could teach and play golf, but the business side of golf was almost totally ignored. Business procedures, accounting and merchandising were foreign to us because our education, few of us had any college training, did not extend to the business arena. Our poor relations with manufacturers was due to the poor credit risks of professionals. Bills weren't paid and the pro seldom stocked enough mer-

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Fawcett

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life insurance. The balance left each month after paying all of this and a bonus to all other employees was placed in a restricted bank account for the payment of future employees pensions who retired after specified years of service. The club also deposited \$500 monthly to the restricted pension account."

Fawcett also created at the same club an employee credit union whereby after he put it together, he had no part of its management. "It really helped relieve all kinds of distresses and yet after some years of operation it paid around 4.6 per cent dividends and never had a loss.

"Most managers in the old days did not have a college education but were known as 'stewards' because they had come to manage clubs from positions with steamship lines," Fawcett says. "In the steamship trade," recalls Fawcett, "the stewards not only received wages and tips from passengers, but also a fee or commission on all purchases for their employers, usually 10 per cent was common to the steamship industry and regarded as legitimate. You can see where business interests then sub-

sidized or compromised some managers by commissions paid on club purchases. Fortunately, today's codes of ethics and higher salaries have all but eliminated those practices.

One very sore point with Fawcett and one he feels bears correction to meet the needs of the future concerns the relationship of the CMAA with the National Club Assn.

"I have always believed in the merger of the two organizations," says an adamant Fawcett. "Why should two organizations duplicate each other's scope and usefulness when one, with one office expense for payroll, etc., would solve both associations' problems. I proposed that clubs be allowed to join CMAA in 1929 as did the late Darwin Meisnest and B.E. O'Grady and the response then from CMAA officials was downright rude. In fact Meisnest tried to present the idea of a merger to a CMAA board meeting and they refused to even let him appear. An example of the pettiness," Fawcett recalls, "was a statement later from one CMAA president that went, 'What have we as managers got in common with club presidents?' I think a lot of the old timers who fostered the separatism of the two or-

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keep up to date by attending conventions, local and national, and gatherings of county agents."

A committee of Ryan, Tom Dockerty, Marshall Farnham and Joe Valentine brought about the change in the name of the national organization in 1938 from National Assn. of Greenskeepers of America to Golf Course Superintendents Assn. of America.

"We didn't like the word greenskeeper," Ryan declares. "In the

first place, we were more of a superintendent than a keeper. You don't keep greens or fairways, you tend them. Also the word superintendent has more prestige."

Members of the association in the early days mostly co-operated because they wanted to improve their lot, too. The number of college-trained men was small as superintendents developed from working on the course. "I don't think the duties and responsibilities of a superintendent have changed much," suggests Ryan. "The advent of tools to

do the job has made it better and easier today. Superintendents are more active and more important now and get better co-operation from club owners," Ryan states.

Although Ryan wasn't in on the founding of the national organization, he was helpful in developing the GCSAA magazine and often contributed articles to it when it was known as "The Greenskeepers' Reporter." He thinks the current name: "The Golf Superintendent" should be changed to "The Golf Course Superintendent."

In days gone by, the golf course superintendent didn't see much of club members outside of the greens committee. "Sometimes they'd say hello and ask about the grass, but for the most part, we had very little to do with them, and," Ryan adds, "many I never wanted to see. They were a pain in the neck."

"Every club had its own authority setup, some good, some bad," Ryan relates. "Joe Valentine, for instance, ran the whole show at Merion near Philadelphia. Sometimes a club would copy another's arrangement, but lack of organization often brought this about. Generally, though, the superintendent was on good terms with everybody."

Some of today's mechanized and sophisticated equipment leaves Ryan cold.

"A lot of it ain't worth a tinker's damn," he says. "It was just the result of a good salesman selling the superintendent or greens chairman something he didn't need. I've seen a lot of them take a hazard, like a trap, and turn around and make it easy to get out of. That doesn't jibe in my book."

What about chemicals. Is there more reliance on them now than in the past?

"I believe there is, but I wouldn't say there is any more necessity for them," he says. "In my day, if they weren't necessary, we wouldn't use them. Today, it looks like they have them just for the sake of having."

Ryan is an enthusiastic football fan and can be found in front of his television set on the front porch every Saturday afternoon. He still has difficulty getting around due to an injury he suffered to his right knee many years ago. Nevertheless, he keeps up-to-date on everything, including golf courses. □



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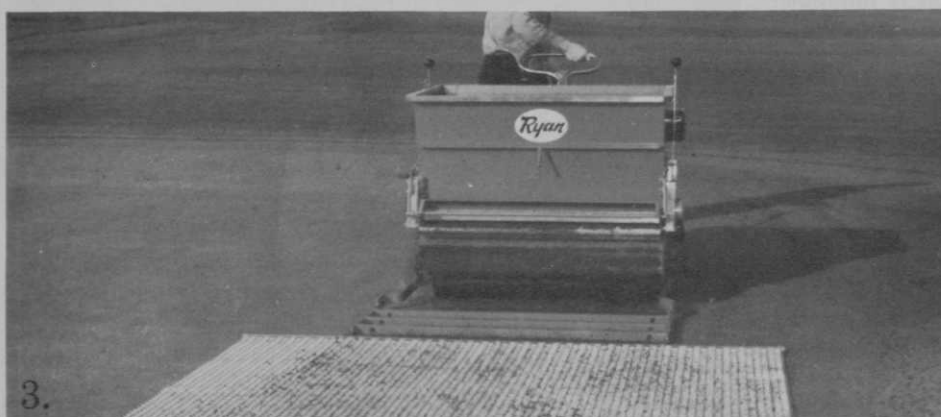
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ganizations always looked upon the CMAA as a sort of trade union and that we had nothing in common with employers."

"There is no doubt that differences between the two organizations exist," Fawcett explains. "I think the CMAA finds itself in this situation because some presidents in recent years didn't mind the shop. Although the differences between city clubs and country clubs are great, the problems which they face today and certainly will face in the future regarding legal matters, particularly Internal Revenue Service guidelines and social discrimination charges, warrant a merger. I am encouraged, however, by the attitudes of the present officers and board members and their attempts to settle some of the differences. After all, the two organizations have more influence together than individually."

"Although discrimination is now a topic which leaves many clubs open to attack, in the old days the main discrimination was financial. Sometimes the exclusivity benefited organizations, because several clubs which I know of were reported to require charity bequests as high as \$500,000 before a prospective member could be proposed for membership."

Fawcett, whose book "Management of Clubs" has been considered a bible of the club industry, has also been active in the educational programs of the CMAA. He has worked with the association and with hotel and restaurant schools such as Cornell and Denver.

"Too many colleges," says the outspoken Fawcett, "have fine courses in executive management but they miss the boat in educating the student about the other club functions. I advocate a training program where each prospective club manager spends six months out of a school year in the classroom and six months getting practical experience. And what place is better than the school they are attending, every one of which is the counterpart of a hotel, larger than most the students will be employed by when they graduate. The colleges duplicate almost every function in the operation of a hotel that the embryonic club manager will have to face. I have often wondered why our colleges have not recognized this and made the practical experience compulsory." □

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Walsh
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chandise to give his members a selection. Everybody, including the sections and the national organizations, were still tour oriented but the purses were so small that only the elite players could make a living by playing.

"In 1935 and 1936 I served as an officer in the Illinois Section. In 1937 to 1939 I served as secretary of the PGA. In this capacity I was able to start the ball rolling toward a national educational program. I started working with the Illinois Section in 1937 with Horton Smith, who was president of the section at that time, and a program emphasizing accounting, merchandising and public relations as presented to the local membership. The early clinics were extremely successful," Walsh says, "because we had businessmen, equipment manufacturers and credit managers talking to us about ways to improve our income and 'professional' status.

"In 1938 and 1939, after the successful Illinois Section education clinics, The Purdue Clinic, which discussed relationships of the professional to the club, merchandising and better relationships with the manager and greenskeeper, was held. It has been billed as the first educational golf clinic ever held," Walsh relates. These three-day education clinics attracted professionals, greenkeepers and managers throughout the United States.

"When I was elected president at the national meeting in Chicago in 1940 the main topic for the pro delegates was unfair competition from the rapidly springing up sporting goods discount stores (as it will probably be this year also).

"I have little sympathy for professionals who want to hide behind a protective shield. By adhering to good business and merchandising procedures," Walsh claims, "a pro at either a public or private golf course doesn't need protection. In the old days," Walsh reminisces, "the pro did not have the formal education, merchandising or selling tools available to him that he has today. A pro has a steady clientele of people who need his products," Walsh says, "and if he doesn't take advantage of this at-hand market then he has only himself and his lack of initiative to blame.

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"I guess the biggest change that has taken place since the 1940s is the role of the professional," Walsh says. "To some people it is seen as diminishing, to others, it's a change of direction. In the early days," Walsh says, "the pro had the greatest contact with the members and was usually the liason between the greenskeeper, who was usually under the pro, and the club house manager. This arrangement might have created conflict and resentment among the professional and the greenskeepers as the professional status of the greenskeeper and club manager increased. But, just as the roles of maintenance and operation of the golf course increased in stature, operating a pro shop has become a full-time job. The pro does not have the time, nor is he paid, for wearing three hats.

Walsh served only two years as president of the PGA and then resigned from the organization. "I guess it caused a little controversy," he says, "but previously no time limit had been set on how many terms a president of the national could serve. I felt in order for the association to move ahead and make the professional's life more fruitful, then officers of the PGA should step aside after a year of service. This encourages more people to become active in the association and also pumps new blood with fresh ideas into positions of leadership. Being an officer is a full-time responsibility, or should be," Walsh says, "and if a person stays in office more than one year, then administrative duties begin to bog him down. Something has to suffer," he says, "it's either his responsibility to his club and members, or it is the PGA."

Although Walsh concedes that TV, the golf car and caddie cart have probably given golf the popularity and practicability for all people, not just the rich who could afford country clubs, he feels the success of the sport belongs to the club professionals. "They have responded to the changing needs of the public and the sport," Walsh states. "Their dedication toward promoting golf to their members has not only provided them with a life which is satisfying and rewarding, but has been good for the game, their fellow professionals and their fellow man." □