

## 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."

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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