

**T**he problem with awards is not so much who you give them to, it's who you *don't* give them to. I know quite a few of you will either disagree with our "titans" or suggest others who were more worthy of recognition. That's OK. In fact, it's great. Send your comments to us.

The idea behind our selections (and they were ours, so blame us) was to highlight those who have had a significant *impact* on the industry, but who don't always get the attention they warrant. Carl Spackler (i.e., Bill Murray) is a perfect example.

Years ago, when I worked for GCSAA, I was at the ATT Pro-Am at Pebble Beach and I spied Mr. Murray whacking balls out of a practice bunker. I wandered over to him, extended my hand and introduced myself. I explained that I wanted to talk with him on behalf of superintendents everywhere who had been miffed by his now infamous portrayal of a half-witted assistant greenkeeper. His exact words were (imagine Murray's goofy voice here): "Oh, you guys ... you sent me so many letters. It was just a movie. Get over it."

Yet we as an industry can't get over it. Twenty-one years later, Spackler still haunts this profession like the Ghost of Christmas Past haunts Scrooge. Like it or not, *Caddyshack* has had an impact. That's exactly why we chose Spackler/Murray as one of our "titans."

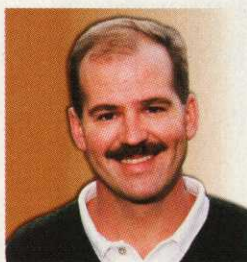
The same rationale applies to Eddie Stimpson, a quiet Bostonian who created a simple tool to ensure that putting characteristics were consistent from one green to the next. Little did he know he was condemning generations of superintendents to a nightmarish competition based on speed, speed and (did I mention) more speed.

Some of our choices are obvious and evident (Burt Musser and Joe Duich), but others may be less so. For example, we chose two people who, in their own way, quietly had a huge impact on what the profession is today.

John Schilling led the GCSAA staff for a tremendous and tumultuous decade. When he took over as executive director in the mid-1970s, the 6,000-member group was virtually bankrupt and struggling to survive. By the time

## A New Look at Our Titans

BY PAT JONES



THESE INDIVIDUALS,  
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he left as CEO, GCSAA was a thriving organization with a growing membership, a nationally recognized education program, and a huge conference that largely paid the bills for a showcase headquarters in Kansas.

Was Schilling perfect? No. He left under difficult political circumstances. Was he demonized unfairly considering his contributions to the association and profession? Yes. Had it not been for a less-than-perfect parting of the ways, Schilling would today be remembered by everyone as a titan of our industry. We believe it's time Schilling gets the credit he deserves.

So, too, does another one of our leaders — the man whose conscience led him to challenge Schilling. Randy Nichols, the quiet man from Atlanta, risked his personal and professional life to give the reins of the association back to its members.

It was Nichols (with help from many others, notably Joe Baidy) who faced personal and professional sacrifices, long hours and the threat of serious legal repercussions to return ownership of GCSAA to its members. Because Nichols had the courage to act on his convictions, the association has made a great leap forward under a more sophisticated executive team and a leadership philosophy that (despite what some may think) puts members first.

By the way, both Nichols and Schilling still look back fondly on their experience. Both also simply say that it was time for a change.

Change — that is the common bond between the individuals we've chosen to highlight in this issue. Some changed us through positive contributions. Others, like Spackler and Stimpson, were wild cards in the deck. But, like it or not, they helped to make us what we are today.

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