

A VIEW OF THE TOP

Former GCSAA
presidents reflect
on their past posts
and the benefits of
serving the
association

BY JOHN WALSH,
CONTRIBUTING
EDITOR

Since 1926, 74 different men have served the GCSAA as president of the association. When Robert M. Randquist, CGCS, director of golf course and grounds at Boca Rio Golf Club in Boca Raton, Fla., takes over the reigns as president at next month's Golf Industry Show, he'll be the 75th person to proudly hold that title.

While the office of president is prestigious, it also comes with some heavy responsibilities. These men have gone into the office of president and worked hard, taking time out of their lives, to serve their fellow members.

Golfdom caught up with four former GCSAA presidents: Dennis D. Lyon, CGCS (president, 1989); Gary T. Grigg, CGCS, MG (president, 1995); R. Scott Woodhead, CGCS Retired (president, 2000); and Tommy D. Witt, CGCS (president, 2001). They reflect on how their time on the board influenced their lives, from learning and honing non-agronomic skills to developing new friendships, many of which last to this day.

DENNIS D. LYON



GARY T. GRIGG

R. SCOTT WOODHEAD



TOMMY D. WITT



Becoming president

Certified superintendent Dennis Lyon, head of the golf division for the City of Aurora, Colo., was a local chapter president in 1980 and was elected to the GCSAA board in 1985. He's always been active in committees and committed to the certification program and members' education.

"Any time you run for the board, you should be willing to serve as president," Lyon says.

In 1989, Lyon was the first GCSAA president from a municipal golf course, which was a big deal then.

"It wasn't an issue, just an evolution of the association," he says. "It's the willingness of the public guys to get involved."

In 2000, R. Scott Woodhead, senior manager of member relations for the GCSAA, was superintendent at the private Valley View Golf Club in Bozeman, Mont., while serving as president. Involved in committees since 1987, Woodhead served 12 years on the Peaks & Prairies GCSA and nine years at the national level.

But Woodhead's route to the presidency was different than most because he was asked to serve on the board in 1993 by then-president Randy Nichols as a result of a vacancy. Woodhead served as a director for five years then moved through board offices.

Tommy Witt, CGCS, director of golf course operations at Northmoor Country Club in Highland Park, Ill., followed Wood-

head in 2001. Witt, who was the superintendent at The Kiawah Island Club during his year as president, was elected to the board in 1994. He served as president of the Lone Star and Central Texas GCSAs before moving to GCSAA committees and board service.

"I've always been involved at the local and state level," he says. "In my first year as a superintendent in Texas, I was asked to serve on the local board, and I enjoyed that. I got into the volunteer tract. Being young, I always was involved in associations to learn and meet people. It became natural."

Gary Grigg, CGCS, vice president and agronomist for Grigg Brothers, was 27 years into his career in 1995 when he became president. He did his due diligence and served on various committees for the GCSAA before running for the board in 1989 while he was superintendent at Shadow Glen Golf Club in Olathe, Kan. In 1992 he moved to Naples National Golf Club. From there, he went to Royal Poinciana Golf Club in Naples where ownership allowed Grigg to complete his presidency and time on the board.

Addressing the issues

During a presidency, there are usually several issues to be dealt with, and most likely, the president is familiar with them because of his time on the board.

Continued on page 38

Continued from page 37

When Woodhead was president, the big issues were tied to membership-approved standards, i.e., the professional development initiative (PDI). Before the standards were implemented, Class A status required only paying dues and being a member for three years.

The biggest challenge of PDI was to provide members with all the information, so they could make an educated decision, Woodhead says.

"A good portion of my time was the formulation and communication of standards," he says. "Be-

cause membership approval was 75 percent, the GCSAA viewed the standards as a mandate. But some members didn't appreciate being told what to do. We lost a few members along the way, but membership, in general, appreciated it.

"It was a case of documenting their professional development — things they were already doing," Woodhead adds. "It wasn't a case of having to do more

than they were already doing. We can now market the value of hiring Class A and certified members."

"The standards classification leaves an option for everyone who wants to be a member," Witt, who served the following year, says. "They can choose where they want to fall."

Whether GCSAA should change its name and if the association should relocate its headquarters were the two hot-button issues when Witt was president. The board approached the issues by conducting focus groups with members and allied associations, using a combination of member and resource groups and outside professional consultants.

"Rarely can people get 'GCSAA' out of their mouths," Witt says. "It's a lengthy name and a mouthful. I've always thought the name recognition of the association could improve with a name change."

Regarding the relocation, Witt says he'd been told it was challenging to recruit people for upper-level positions in the association, and that it was extremely difficult to get top staff candidates to relocate to GCSAA headquarters in Lawrence, Kan.

"Board members come and go, but executives are there every day," he says. "We were told it was difficult to attract top-level staff to Lawrence. We had a significant amount of staff turnover at the time, and some board members thought that could improve with a new location."

There was one burning issue while Grigg was on the board — looking at moving away from the delegate voting structure. Grigg says a fraction of the board wanted a one-man, one-vote structure. Some thought the board should decide, others thought members should decide. Ultimately, the membership voted to keep the delegate voting structure.

"It's not a lot of fun when there's division on the board, but that's part of having a board," he says.

In Lyon's final president's message, he addressed the environmental challenges

TRAVEL AND PERKS

Throughout the years, GCSAA board members' travel and perks have been scrutinized and criticized. But several past presidents view that aspect of the job as a duty, of serving the association.

Woodhead attended major golf events where the GCSAA wanted a presence and to industry meetings such as Golf 20/20 during his presidency in 2000.

"Traveling was an eye-opener for me being a kid from Montana," he says. "I was able to see much of the country. Because of some of my travel, I missed some things in my family life and was away from home during major family events. That was my biggest challenge while on the board."

Woodhead says no travel is required while serving on the board, and that family comes first, employer second and the GCSAA third.

"You have to make sacrifices, and many of those came at the expense of my family," he says. "When I became a board member, something had to give. My fly fishing license expired, and I wish I hadn't let that happen."

Lyon says he traveled efficiently when he was president in 1989. He traveled over the weekends so he would miss only one day of work.

"I wasn't hanging around for allied meetings," he says. "I did what I had to do and left. Officers travel more now compared to back then. For example, I never went to BIGGA (British and International Golf Greenkeepers Association)."

However, Lyon did go to Australia to attend a superintendent's association event and England for a Ransomes golf tournament. He views that sort of travel as part of the job, not necessarily a perk.

Typically, when one serves on the board, there isn't a lot of travel, says Grigg.

"The president can take what he wants and delegate the rest," he says. "I was in between doing a lot of travel and delegating a lot. Travel is a duty because the president is representing the association. It was nice to go to the Masters and Ryder Cup. We always squeezed in a board meeting at those events." — J.W.





"I've always thought the name recognition of (GCSAA) could improve with a name change," Tommy Witt says.

the industry was going to face in the 1990s. Those challenges are still relevant.

"The price of maximum golf course maintenance may be ecologically and financially too high," he says. "We need to shift from maximum maintenance to optimum maintenance."

In Lyon's last article he wrote as president, he also said superintendents, although often comfortable in a behind-the-scenes role, need to get involved at the highest levels of club decision- and policy-making.

"The positions we hold and the decisions we're entrusted to make are critical to the ultimate success of our clubs," he says. "The bottom line is we're responsible for the golf operation, and we needed to move from the barn to the boardroom."

Never stop learning

One constant while serving on the board is learning about non-agronomic subjects such as leadership, communication and delegation.

Woodhead's communication skills grew, as well as his ability to see the big picture and realize there's much more to the success of a facility.

Lyon was surprised by the personal growth he experienced as a leader and a supervisor. He developed relationships and a sense of accomplishment, but he also had fun.

"It wasn't my life," he says. "I paced myself and did the best job I could. When my year as president was over, that was fine. Then I got involved with the Rocky Mountain Regional Turfgrass Association and the Colorado Golf Association."

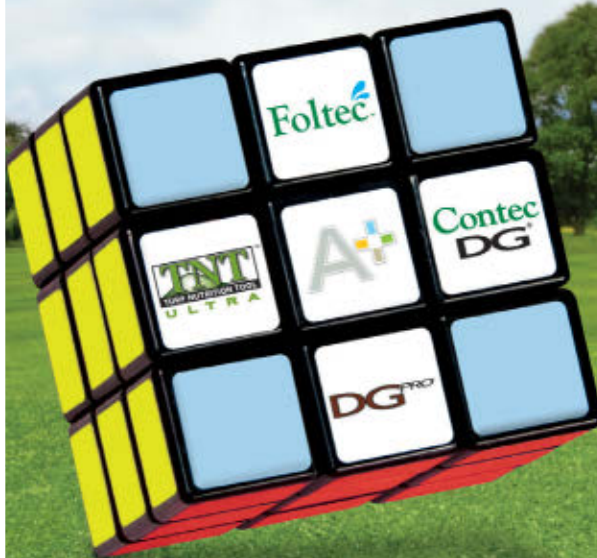
Being on the GCSAA board is a lot like being on city council, Lyon says.

"It helped me have a better understanding of what our elected officials go through," he says. "I learned about consensus building and finding win-win solutions, and to address issues professionally. I continue to use these skills in my job."

Witt learned a lot about himself and how to listen to others and their opinions. He developed strong relationships with

Continued on page 40

SOLVED!



The Andersons Complete TURF HEALTH SYSTEM

We guarantee it!



The Andersons

800-253-5296
www.AndersonsTurf.com

Continued from page 39

a number of board members, some of whom are his best friends. How to delegate effectively was the most important skill Witt learned.

"Prior to me being on the board, I judged myself on how much I worked and how many hours I was at the course," he says. "It became imperative to delegate responsibility to those who were on my staff to give them the chance to excel. I couldn't have been on the board without the people who worked with me from 1994 to 2003."

Grigg learned a lot about planning meetings. He's taken that knowledge and put it to good use helping operate Grigg Brothers.

"You need to look at your company top to bottom and take a good, honest look at yourself," he says.

A look back

Looking back, past presidents see how their service has influenced the association.



"Those who are afraid should step up and do it."

— DENNIS D. LYON,
HEAD OF GOLF DIVISION,
CITY OF AURORA



"Back in late '80s and early '90s we adopted a philosophy of governance: The president is responsible for the board, and the CEO is responsible for the staff," Lyon says. "We sensed board members were getting very involved with the daily operations of running the GCSAA, so we drafted a philosophy that was different. The board drifted away from that philosophy, but now it's similar to what we had."

For Woodhead, the opportunity to meet and interact with various individuals was the best part of the job. He has fond memories of the friendships he developed with allied members. One high point for him was standing at the podium as president when members approved the professional standards — this after one of the most contentious meetings in 20 years at the GCSAA, he says.

"My feeling was that I was there to serve the GCSAA, and the members allowed me to serve," he says. "I appreciate the opportunity the members gave me to serve them."

As a board member and president, Witt says he knew his job wasn't to call and talk to former CEO Steve Mona every day and occupy the time of the department heads. The GCSAA staff assumed a more active, decision-making role, and it was the job of the board to set policy and for Mona and his staff to execute the policies.

"The year I came on board, we just returned to the committee system," he says. "While I was high on accountability, I had to balance that with my job as a board member and president. There was a time when board members had minor roles in how these things were decided. I favor the committee system, but I didn't want to dictate what the committee was going to do."

Witt admits he could've handled some issues better.

"By the time I got off the board, I'd have tried to find different ways to encourage people to do better or would have done a better job accepting accountability. I could've approached holding others accountable better."

Witt developed speeches and talked about topics he says weren't being presented by other instructors, such as enhancing superintendents' value, the environment in which a superinten-

Introducing the Re-Designed
TEE SENTRY®
From Reliable Golf Course Supply

- Innovative LED Technology
- Increased Efficiency
- Lower Cost



Still the best answer for managing blind shot situations at your course

Come See Us at GIS Booth #565

Reliable
Golf Course Supplies 1.800.274.6815
reliablegolf.com

dent needs to be successful, developing successful relationships, and the superintendent as a true revenue generator.

When Grigg served on the board during the early '90s, the association was going through an extreme period of growth, gaining about 1,000 members a year, he says. As part of the growth, the association bought land and built a new headquarters.

"It was an exciting time," he says.

Grigg says it's overwhelming to be president, but his education (masters degree in agronomy from Michigan State University) and prior experience helped him a lot.

"I didn't try to build a name for myself," he says. "You grow into the presidency position by the time you've become president. You need the years on the board to grow into it."

Advice to the young

Younger superintendents can heed past presidents' wisdom so they're better prepared to serve the association should they be elected to do so.

Witt advises that it's essential to have total support of one's employer.

"They need to know it can be an eight- to 10-year process," he says. "It's important to paint a picture to your employer that you have an opportunity to receive training and grow exponentially in a myriad of professional skills, such as organization, leadership and time management."

Grigg also warns superintendents they better have an understanding club and be ready to commit time.

"Some guys lost their jobs because of their board duty," he says. "It's time consuming, and it comes out of your personal time. My wife got straddled with raising kids more than she should have, and all my vacation days were used for my board duty."

Witt reminds superintendents that serving on the board is a balance between work, family and the GCSAA.

"Travel is taxing, but the benefits

of meeting industry peers and learning about the association far outweigh the negatives," he says.

Woodhead recommends superintendents first get involved with the association at the local level as early as they can. Volunteer for GCSAA service or become a voting delegate.

"You have to have willingness to serve

and give back to the profession," he says.

Lyon acknowledges serving on the board is a sacrifice, but those who do so make great contributions to the profession.

"Those who are afraid should step up and do it," he says. ■

Walsh, a contributing editor for Golfdom, resides in Cleveland.

TRI-WAVE
60-Inch Overseeder

Traditional overseeders create a v-shaped slit, causing inconsistent seed-to-soil contact.

The TriWave creates clean, square slits, resulting in faster, thicker turf establishment.

NEW WALKING TRI-WAVE™

BETTER GERMINATION WITH LESS SEED.

The innovative Turfco TriWave™ 60-Inch Overseeder delivers better germination and quicker establishment with less turf disruption.

- UNC study showed 30% greater germination rates versus traditional methods
- Patented floating heads follow the ground contour for consistent seed depth
- Patented WaveBlade™ technology creates optimum slit width for improved seed-to-soil contact without turf disruption
- Patented seed delivery system puts seeds directly into the slit, reducing seed waste and increasing germination
- Close 1 1/2" spacing increases germination with fewer passes
- Now available as a walk-behind, the TriWave delivers even greater maneuverability and versatility

"The TriWave is the first overseeder that does exactly what we want it to do."

..... Dale Caldwell
Superintendent
Minneapolis Golf Club
Minneapolis, MN

To see the TriWave in action visit www.turfco.com, or call 800-679-8201 to schedule a FREE DEMO.



WWW.TURFCO.COM