

AN INTERVIEW WITH BILL ROBERTS

It is essential in any campaign for any office that those individuals whose votes are being solicited know and understand the platform and the attitude of each candidate. This editor interviewed Bill Roberts and the result should show clearly why he is deserving of widespread national support.

1. WHY IS THE GOLF COURSE SUPERINTENDENTS ASSOCIATION OF AMERICA IMPORTANT?

I think the Billy J. Shelton article in the August, 1984 issue of "GOLF COURSE MANAGEMENT" outlined the tangible benefits pretty well.

Education through the structured offerings such as the Conference and Show, Seminars, "GOLF COURSE MANAGEMENT" magazine, the literature available through Headquarters, is primary.

Other tangibles such as the insurance plan, employment referral, tournament admissions, the merchandise program and travel discounts and such are fine and should become more available as we grow. GCSAA's importance, however, was best described as a group of individuals working toward a common goal. I think we all basically want the same things in terms of our profession and that is to do the very best job possible, and I've never seen a group of individuals as intense about that as we are. We want to produce the best golf courses possible, and, like everybody else, we want to be treated fairly and to be recognized for the effort we put in.

Now, education is getting us the best golf courses possible, and, as we continue to realize that, collectively, and as GCSAA gets us together and continues to further disseminate information, that is, education, we continue to get better, and we continue to gain credibility which I think is a key to recognition.

Further, our credibility grows every day and we know that. We tell ourselves that every day, individually, and every year, col-

lectively, at conference time. GCSAA, through the Executive Committee, committee members, through chapter leadership and through staff needs to tell the industry and the golf community that every day until it is assumed, and that "telling" needs to be done from a posture of leadership.

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2. WHAT IS YOUR PERCEPTION OF GCSAA AT THIS POINT? ISN'T IT ASSUMING A POSTURE OF LEADERSHIP?

Basically, it's a solid organization; it's growing, it's improving, and it's essential for the reasons we just discussed; our common goals, education, professionalism, recognition. However, it's also my perception that we, at times, tend to get hung up on the specifics of some issues, Executive Directors and such and may be creating some ill feelings in the industry or, at least, a lousy perspective of what we are all about. That certainly doesn't exhibit much maturity or leadership.

GCSAA has enough challenges to face without getting sidetracked into these "squabbles." Relocation of GCSAA headquarters, along with the short and long range implications of such a move, is not a dead issue. We need to continue to work on upgrading membership services, to provide those services in an incredibly timely manner. (We need to continue and enhance our support of scholarship and research.) We need to push harder for recognition. We need to deal with allied associations in a cooperative frame while emerging, somehow, as a leader in that cooperation. We've come a long way in the years I've been involved, and we need to step up the pace and accelerate the momentum. Bob Osterman, in his March, 1983 President's message, told us about the Massachusetts Golf Association's "vision and initiative" in seating the President of GCSA of New England as a regular voting member on its Board of Directors. We require

more of that. Our input needs to change from a courtesy to an assumption because we are partners in this game called golf.

3. ALL RIGHT, SO WHY ARE YOU SEEKING ELECTION TO THE GCSAA EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE?

Let me digress for just a moment. A few members will sit back and criticize and complain without offering to put forth any positive effort in order to help formulate and implement solutions to the challenges I've just mentioned. And you know, I think that criticism is, as often as not, valid and we should have some of that. It keeps the conversation level up, gets people excited, and, whether it's obvious or not, eventually leads to new ideas. That is a contribution. A lot of members, the majority, I think, contribute by supporting their Association through belonging, by attending the Conference and show, by participating in Seminars, some through Certification, being active at the state and local association levels, communicating with other superintendents, improving their overall talents and skills and improving others' perceptions of us as professionals. Now, for myself, I think it goes back to putting something into a profession that has been very good to me. It has been my good fortune to be one of a group whose members are dedicated, vital and proud, both individually and collectively, and I want to see us get further. I seek to play a different role in making sure we stay current educationally, continue to grow professionally, and, ultimately, I want to see us finally gain the recognition for the contributions to the game of golf we have been making all along.

One other point on why I am fully aware of an Executive Committee member's responsibility to represent the entire membership of GCSAA. However, I'd be less than candid if I didn't admit to some Chapter pride being involved here. Harry Hanson is a retired Superintendent from Wisconsin who is also a founding member of GCSAA. I believe we have had one other

Wisconsin member run for the "National" over the past 50+ years. I think it's a sign of Chapter maturity that we're ready to pursue this at this time. (We've got an excellent group in Wisconsin interested in GCSAA and we're all approaching this with enthusiasm), and we feel the experience, the meeting new people, the exchange of ideas and perspectives is going to make this a very rewarding and exciting endeavor.

4. THAT GIVES US A PRETTY STRONG INDICATION OF YOUR DESIRE TO SERVE, BUT ARE YOU QUALIFIED?

Yes, I think the environment I work in, day in and day out, and have worked in, particularly in the last 3½ years, has prepared me well to seek election in a national association. Listening, communicating, and managing, particularly managing time, money, and people in an effective manner, are integral skills I see a member of the Executive Committee needing and I have those skills.

Also, as I've stated elsewhere previously, I feel my interest in the "National," as evidenced by Conference and Show attendance in seven out of the last eight years, my participation in the Seminar and Certification programs, my tenure on the GCSAA Public Relations/Awards Committee, and my contribution to "GOLF COURSE MANAGEMENT" magazine along with several speaking engagements at various functions, my experience as a past Director of the Wisconsin GCSA, as a past Editor of the Wisconsin GCSA newsletter, and as current Secretary of WGCSA has prepared me to serve, on balance, the ultimate interests of all GCSAA members.

5. HOW DO YOU SEE YOURSELF FUNCTIONING AS A MEMBER OF THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE?

With enthusiasm, hard work, and time. I may be somewhat naive, but over the past few years and particularly over the past few months, I've read and heard comments about how hard it is to get people to pursue

election to the Executive Committee. I have a hard time accepting that because, as I mentioned before, there are a number of ways to contribute to GCSAA and more than a few can contribute through pursuing the Executive Committee route.

As a member of the Executive Committee, I think it would be foolhardy not to rely on input from past Presidents, former Executive Committee members, those Superintendents who work directly with the "National" through the election process, that is, the delegates, other GCSAA Committee members and so on.

(Ultimately, however, it's the regular membership that is going to determine where we want to go and how fast we want to get there.) Again, those Superintendents who strive to grow professionally, through GCSAA, through state and local Chapters, through interacting with other Superintendents on every level, those are the people who will decide, on balance, our professional futures and the Executive Committee is there to see that those decisions are implemented through the Committees and through our staff.

6. YOU MENTIONED HARD WORK AND TIME.

If one is charged with and accepts a responsibility, one either follows through with those duties or honestly admits they don't have the interest or whatever and relinquishes the role. If you commit to something, you do it the best you possibly can. That is, one works hard, pays attention to what is going on, and the results are there.

Now, about time. Do I have the time? Quite frankly, no. I have a family. I manage an 18 hole golf course, park areas and other recreational amenities. I supervise anywhere from 12 to 50 employees and all that goes with that. I'm very active in our state Chapter. I've been fortunate enough to be asked to speaking engagements recently, and I have community commitments, so I don't really have time for a lot of the things I do. However, for those things I'm doing, I'm willing to make time

and I'm committed to making time in order to participate through the Executive Committee of GCSAA because it's worthwhile; it's important.

7. WHAT ABOUT YOUR FAMILY, YOUR EMPLOYER, AND YOUR STAFF? ARE THEY AWARE OF WHAT'S INVOLVED?

I talked to my wife, my employer, and my staff before making this commitment to seek election, and they couldn't have been more supportive. My wife is behind me 100%. My employer supports not only the contribution I want to make but also the learning process we all realize I'll undergo as a result of participation. My staff is enthusiastic and, more importantly, very competent. They know what our operation is about and what's expected when I'm gone, and I have a great deal of confidence in them.

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8. WE ARE THEN, BOTTOM LINE, TALKING ABOUT COMMITMENT.

Definitely. As I've mentioned to others, our future is limited only by ourselves. I believe we are on the verge of limitless and exciting times for the Golf Course Superintendent. Having long been a believer in the old adage, "You only get back what you put in," I trust that my time, dedication, energy, enthusiasm, and talents may be of use to our Association in realizing the resolution of the challenges presented by such exciting times. I'm committed to that and I look forward to it by seeking election to the Executive Committee of the Golf Course Superintendents Association of America.

