



# Chapter Affiliation

By Mark Keinert



Do the words "dual membership" mean anything to you? How about "chapter affiliation"?

If you are presently a member of the Golf Course Superintendents Association of America, and a member of the Wisconsin Golf Course Superintendents Association, they should. If not, then you started your winter hibernation too soon and it's time that you get back into the flow of things. There has been enough written here in the pages of our GRASS ROOTS and also in GCSAA's NEWSLINE for you to draw an opinion and reach some conclusion on the subject for yourself. How does it affect you? At present, not at all as all current members of either the state or national will fall under a "grandfathers"

clause. In the future, however, it will affect who we can accept as a member into our ranks.

My message today will serve more as a historical reference point. As you read this, we will have voted on this issue at both the national level and debated it locally here in our state chapter at our spring business meeting. By now you are aware of the fact that the GCSAA chapter affiliation agreement is a done deal. The GCSAA board voted to implement the new requirements during their fall board meeting. The Board of directors of GCSAA using the vote taken at the chapter representative meeting in Lawrence in September 1995, which from my viewpoint was an open and fair process, as a green light to pro-

ceed with the business of approving the renewal of chapter affiliation agreements. The only thing left for the chapters to do was to vote on a little house—keeping in the by-laws that needed to be attended to. Our work at the state level was complete by either endorsing the directive and jumping on the "bandwagon" or setting up a loop hole to circumvent the affiliation agreement.

Back in December of 1995, I set out for Steinbock Library on the University of Wisconsin-Madison campus under the impression that all "charter chapters" of the GCSAA would be "grandfathered" and excused from the "dual" membership requirement. If I could find proof, it might be the loophole that we would need to circumvent the dual

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membership requirement. Should that proof be found, it would keep us from having to find and develop "loopholes" in our bylaws in an effort to hide our fellow superintendent that are not able to afford membership dues for both organizations.

In the back issues of the GREEN-KEEPER REPORTER the official newsletter of the National Association of Greenskeepers of America, (NAGA), the forefather of our present day GCSAA, I sought to prove that the Wisconsin GCSA was indeed a charter chapter. What I did find was very interesting. For as you see, what was life back then, found our country in the depths of the Great Depression.

This was a time when many country clubs around the country went into bankruptcy. Architectural gems that were forever lost to the game were turned back into farm fields and future residential neighborhoods.

You should also keep in mind that this was also the time that unionization of our country's work force was in full swing in almost every industry in an effort to improve workers rights. Greenkeepers of the past were no different in the sense that they too also wanted to create this association (NAGA) for the sole purpose of improving the working lives of its membership. The NAGA was the "Greenkeepers" union.

In the depths of this depression, it was the state chapters, at the grass roots level that initiated the dual membership requirement. Dual membership was a fundamental grass roots directive initiated by the membership active in those days in what I believe was a good faith measure to insure that the NAGA did not go out of business and that the association would be around for its future generations. It was an association managed by its membership.

Now the reverse is true; management from the top down is using the same dual membership requirement in a time of unparalleled prosperity to mandate membership requirements.

I found proof that the our chapter "donated" monies to NAGA so that they could keep publishing the newsletter. This was back in 1933. Too bad this wasn't a loan, just think of what that money would be worth today. I could not document the fact that the Wisconsin Golf Course

Superintendents Association was indeed a charter member. We were represented by a district spokesperson back then but lacked definitive document to support our charter chapter standing.

I found out later from Mr. Don Bretthauer, Chapter Relation Manager, that it was the revised intent of the GCSAA Board to require that all chapters renew their affiliation agreement, charter chapters or not, for the sole purpose of having all chapters from this period on of record supporting the affiliation agreement.

GCSAA also tightened the requirement, later, due to the fact that they themselves do not have anything on record showing who in fact were charter members of NAGA. Proof is now required in the form of the "Original Certificate." In the case of the Wisconsin GCSA, I'm sure that this was disposed of years ago, as someone's heirs cleaned out the papers in, the estate of one of our associations past officers and did not realize what significance that little piece of paper would hold today.

For the record, during our January business meeting, the chapter affiliation agreement was discussed in length and a vote taken on the issue. I used this forum as a GCSAA caucus to gain a feeling how the membership and your board felt on the issue. Also, I tried to gain the feed back of all our membership as they telephoned me over the winter months leading me up to the GCSAA annual meeting in Orlando. Your board, after much debate, voted 5-4 to defeat the dual membership requirement and directed your chapter voting delegate to vote in the negative against the bylaws changes that GCSAA had on the ballot.

What troubles me the most is that there has been so little resistance to this measure as I write this in mid-January. I've spoken to all but four of the candidates running and have asked them point blank if the dual membership issue has changed anyone's mind. What kinds of resistance have they been hearing? I've monitored "Turf Byte," the unofficial, official bulletin board of our nation's golf course superintendents for similar kinds of feed back. Nothing.

I received E-mail from Gary Grigg telling me that the "overwhelming

majority" of members support all of the changes. And yesterday, a single fax from the only chapter in the country that can boast of 100 percent dual membership has a problem with reducing the dues for Class C membership as it would decrease GCSAA revenues by close to a quarter of a million dollars. They are in favor of dual membership and are willing to pay full price for their assistants to belong to the National.

How much did membership apathy have to play with the ease in which the chapter affiliation agreement flew through the board is not for me to answer. I know that the vast majority of superintendents have their dues paid by their employer. Did this fact hide the dual membership issue?

I would have to say it did as a landslide majority of GCSAA members did not question the issue. Or did they face similar experiences as I did as a younger associate who paid for dues out of his or her own pocket, figuring that if they could do it so could others?

I don't know; however, I can count from direct experience that for the five of the first six years that I was a GCSAA member, I paid for dues out of my own pocket, first as a government employee on a public golf course, and then for a semi-private club in which I was nothing more than a "seasonal" employee forced to stand in an unemployment line during my "off months."

I attended conventions out of my own pocket and drove to the conference back in those days. My wife, I and my daughters stayed in third rate motels. That was my vacation. I'm a lot richer for the experience as I have a lot of memories from those trips taken back then. That was my choice. In those days I paid for the sacrifice. I didn't want to be left behind. Now it is ironic that we have to decide whether we vote to leave others behind in the wake of the dual membership requirement or we as a chapter are left behind by GCSAA.

This measure has forever changed the life of the Wisconsin GCSA, its value to its membership and quite simply its very essence for serving all of its members. By now the dust will have settled and you will have a little feel for the emotion of the issue. I can only hope there is enough of our association to salvage. ♣