



One Guy's Opinion

By Tom Parent
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Dual Membership: *Whose Idea Was This Anyway?*

Alas, I've tried to generate a written debate and have found nothing but support. Time to pull out all the stops!!! I'll probably lose any chance for that seat on the GCSAA research committee I wanted, but here goes. . .

Where did the idea of dual membership come from? I find it unbelievable, in a country that prides itself on individual freedom, that we, as an association have agreed to this. In case you don't know what I'm talking about, dual membership was voted in as a new by-law by the delegates at the GCSAA conference in February.

The new by-law states that if you want to become a member of the GCSAA you must become a member of an affiliated local chapter. Conversely, if you want to become a member of a local chapter you must become a member of the national. In our Minnesota association that's a \$300+ bill for each of us and much of our staff if we want in the MGCSA.

The by-law grandfathers all current members the freedom of choice to belong to only the organization they choose to or can afford to belong to. All new members must join both associations. This smells like a freshly killed skunk on the yellow brick road to Kansas.

I can understand that to the all powerful Oz and his fellow wizards on the GCSAA board of directors, this may seem like a good rule. These guys come from the big clubs with big budgets. They have wanted to get their staffs signed up for the National, which is a noble goal. Now, they finally have the excuse they needed. I hope it doesn't backfire on them.

It's too bad that there are not one or two directors from nine hole courses with operating budgets of under \$60,000 elected to the GCSAA board of directors. If there were, this goofy idea would have never made it out of committee.

Are these people so far removed from the reality of the vast numbers of superintendents that struggle and fail to justify even their local dues to the owners of their clubs or boards? We don't know these superintendents, much less their views because they can't even afford the local chapter dues.

Now chances are even better we will never know them. If Oz and his fellow wizards had tried to dream up a rule to exclude the small and meek low budget clubs from the GCSAA and affiliated chapters, they could not have done it any better.

In all fairness the Bob-o-Links and other clubs that generously lend us their superintendents are so far removed from the reality of so many of us that they cannot see that this will preclude many good people from our association.

My golf course is a perfect example. I am blessed with two outstanding assistants that will most likely become superintendents in the next several years. The city we work for will not pay for national dues unless you are a department head.

The end result: New superintendents - 2. New members of the GCSAA? New members to the MGCSA - 0. The losers: My future staff, and the MGCSA. If we think this policy is not going to alienate the next generation of golf course superintendents in this country, I think we are mistaken.

All you Class C members out there, you already know that you just lost your last chance to influence the direction of what will be your association. A fairly clever strategy since you're the people this ruling will affect most and you will no longer have any say.

After all, if you believe the reasoning for the change in Class C voting rights, and I swear this is a quote: "They neither know or care what the delegates are voting on anyway." The arrogance in that reasoning is beyond my comprehension.

One bright spot is the cost for assistant membership was reduced by half to enable more assistants to join. I can't argue with that one. If we can afford to lose \$300,000, could this have not been done anyway?

Oops! I forgot to mention that we were told that this policy shift would cost the GCSAA \$300,000 this year. We weren't told the God knows how much it will cost in the years to come.

Heaven help us if the National loses the tenants in the much unpublicized addition to the emerald city they built in Lawrence several years ago. Could this money have been spent on research, or promoting our industry? How many of us have a clue as to what really goes on down there? I for one will be livid if our dues suddenly go up to cover this cost.

In discussions against this short-sighted policy, I brought up the fact that many clubs or potential new members will not be able to afford this. The response I got after I was repeatedly told it would not affect me, and again I swear this is the truth, "It's only \$210 and for a person making \$20,000 it is only one percent of their salary (they left out the words pre-tax when they stated this).

I couldn't believe my ears! How contemptuous an at-

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titude can you have? My salary six years ago was within several thousand of the figure stated. With car payments, student loans, rent, food etc., buying hamburger was a luxury. That amount of money buys a lot of groceries; \$210 dollars may be pocket change to these guys but to someone with a family making \$20,000 pre-tax it's a lot of money.

The impression I had was, if they could not make the personal sacrifice to cough up the \$210, did we really want the freeloaders anyway? Where was their loyalty to Oz and the Emerald City?

Why was this done? We've heard the reasons. The GCSAA does all this cool stuff for us whether we're members or not. I've been told that this isn't fair that some superintendents might be out there freeloading on these great services.

The fact that some superintendents may have serious questions about how the Emerald City is run or disagree with the views of Oz and his fellow wizards, and choose not to be members was not mentioned.

Again, their freedom of choice has been taken away from them. If I was not grandfathered into this mess, I would quit the GCSAA and put up one hell of a fight to stay on the board and in the MGCSA.

They say the more members the national has, the more people, (i.e. voters) it represents in Washington. The nation-

al, whether we agree with them or not, has decided that they speak for all of us and we should pay for that privilege.

They're so uptight on this that they even have the board members out on traveling promo tours. Tommy Witt's appearance at our March meeting shows just how nervous they are.

In all honesty, the GCSAA does a lot of good things. Are they worth giving up our freedom of choice? The delegates to the National decided that it was. I wonder how the superintendents of American (not just GCSAA members) would vote if a referendum was held. If a bogus by-law such as this can be passed, perhaps it's time to relook at the whole delegate voting system.

Was the Rock Group Devo really right when they sang "Freedom of choice is what we've got... Freedom from choice is what we want"? We had freedom of choice and we gave it up. Now we have freedom from choice.

But don't worry, we can just relax and let our Big Brothers (Oz and his fellow wizards) on the GCSAA board of directors make all our local decisions for us. George Orwell, author of 1984, was only off in his prediction by 12 years for our organization.

For the \$210 paid by my employer, I want the National to continue doing what it does best and it does do an excellent job in many areas. What I don't want it to do is dictate rules and regulations to our local chapter.



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