



Someone Else's Opinion

By Tom Parent
River Oaks Golf Course

A Response to One Guy's Opinion

The following response is to the April 1996 article "Dual Membership, Whose idea was this anyway?" As I stated in this month's "Editor's Corner," the response to the article was overwhelmingly positive in support of the opinion expressed in the article.

The only rebuttal I will give to the rebuttal (one of the joys of being editor is that you get to get in the last word) is that it clearly points out the flaws in the chapter delegate voting system. Our delegate voted how he felt the chapter would wish him to. For this he deserves high praise. The problem is, it appears, that he clearly did not have an accurate view of how the chapter felt.

To date only three members of the MGCSA have called me to tell me that they disagreed with the article. One stated that I should be looking to the future.

I feel that the dual membership issue and most of the other bylaws that were passed this February have everything to do with the future. I see an economic segregation of our industry. Those that can afford both dues and those who can't. My concerns over this and other issues are unfortunately not addressed in the following rebuttal.

I would like to throw this idea up for discussion. One member, one vote. This would preferably be done on the national level. A voting booth on the floor of the trade show and proxies for those who are not in attendance perhaps?

Democracy only works if people are involved. Until I was elected to the board, I know I was, like too many of us, not participating in our democracy.

I would also like to apologize to Pat Walton for any misinformation in the article regarding Tommy Witt's visit. The reference in the article stemmed from Mr. Witt stating, at the start of his talk, that, several years ago he would have passed on the invitation to speak, and now he felt it was important that he come. As Rush Limbaugh knows so well: If you want to get people's passions aroused, stretch the truth a bit. Enough said, read on.

Dear Mr. Parent:

I saw your column about dual membership in the April *Hole Notes* and needed to respond to some of the miscon-

ceptions and errors that it contained. First, though, I would like to thank you for your compliment about GCSAA doing an excellent job in many areas. We try hard, and listen carefully to our members.

In response to your basic question of "Whose idea was this anyway?" I can say that it certainly was not original with GCSAA. Many other associations in all types of industries — including some of our allied associations in golf — have dual membership requirements.

This idea is not even new to our own association. When the National Association of Greenkeepers of America, GCSAA's precursor, was formed in 1926, it was assumed that the national association would have chapters, and members would have to belong both to the national association and the chapter. The Northern Ohio chapter, which gave birth to the national association, has always retained its own dual membership requirement, even after the national association began lowering the percentage of national members it required local chapters to maintain.

In recent years, the idea came from a group of ardent local chapter supporters who volunteered their time, energy and insight to help GCSAA build stronger ties with its affiliated chapters, with the goal of benefiting chapters and individual members as much as, or even more than, GCSAA.

This group, representing chapters of all sizes and regions, recognized that the key to a successful relationship is clarity of expectations. As they developed a clear and manageable affiliation agreement proposal and ideas for programs to actually help chapters succeed as chapters, they came to the conclusion that it was all for naught — unless the national and the locals had a common, joint membership.

The concept of requiring dual membership was then discussed by about 90 chapter representatives at the 1994 Chapter Relations Meeting. With their general agreement that the concept was worth a closer look, the Chapter Relations Committee began working on a specific proposal, while the delegates took the information back to their chapters for local discussion and feedback.

The committee's specific proposal was presented at the 1995 Chapter Relations Meeting. After much discussion, the delegates in attendance asked for specific changes in the proposal:

- 1) Exempt assistant superintendents from the dual membership requirement.
- 2) Replace the implementation plan of requiring chapters to have increasing percentages of GCSAA superintendents with a single cut-off date and a grandfather clause for all current members of GCSAA or chapters.
- 3) Make GCSAA swallow the first dose of the medicine by voting on a bylaws amendment to require superintendents who want to join GCSAA to join their local chapter.

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GCSAA Response—

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If the amendment were to fail, the clause in the affiliation agreement requiring future chapter members to join GCSAA would be stricken.

Of course, as you know, the GCSAA bylaws amendment sailed to an easy passage, 6,093 to 548. Minnesota GCSAA's votes were cast 100 percent in favor of what you termed a "goofy idea."

Minnesota GCSAA also voted 100 percent (including 34 Class C members) in favor of the amendment to revoke Class C members' voting privileges. The chapter's votes were also 100 percent for cutting Class C dues in half.

I don't know where you got your "quote," but I can guarantee it wasn't from any member of the Board of Directors or Chapter Relations Committee. I speak for both groups, and I would warrant the majority of the chapter voting delegates, too, when I denounce anyone who says assistant superintendents don't know or care about what goes on in this association.

When the delegates recommended cutting Class C dues to increase assistant superintendent participation, the Standards/Bylaws Committee and Board of Directors agreed to put the recommendation to a membership vote. While we do anticipate lower dues revenues the first few years, we have an aggressive marketing plan in place to more than double our Class C membership. When we cut the dues per Class C member by half, but have four times

as many Class C members, the association will be well ahead in revenues. Just as importantly, we will be providing important services to a greater segment of the profession, and building a stronger profession and association for the future.

Your comment about the Board being "uptight" about these issues is way off base. We stuck to a 100-percent democratic process, and are prepared to abide by the wishes of the vast majority of members. Tommy Witt's appearance at the Minnesota GCSAA's March Mini-Seminar was in response to a Speakers Bureau invitation from Patrick A. Walton, CGCS, for any director or officer to speak on "What Do I Get for My Dues Investment?" Tommy Witt's report on his trip noted, with some surprise, that he received no questions whatsoever from members.

In closing, I must clearly state that chapters and the quality of the relationship between chapters and the national association have been key priorities for me since I first came on the GCSAA Board of Directors. I believe in strengthening both, to the benefit of us all. And I believe the road that the members have chosen will take us in the right direction.

— Sincerely,

— Paul S. McGinnis, CGCS

Chapter Relations Committee Chairman



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