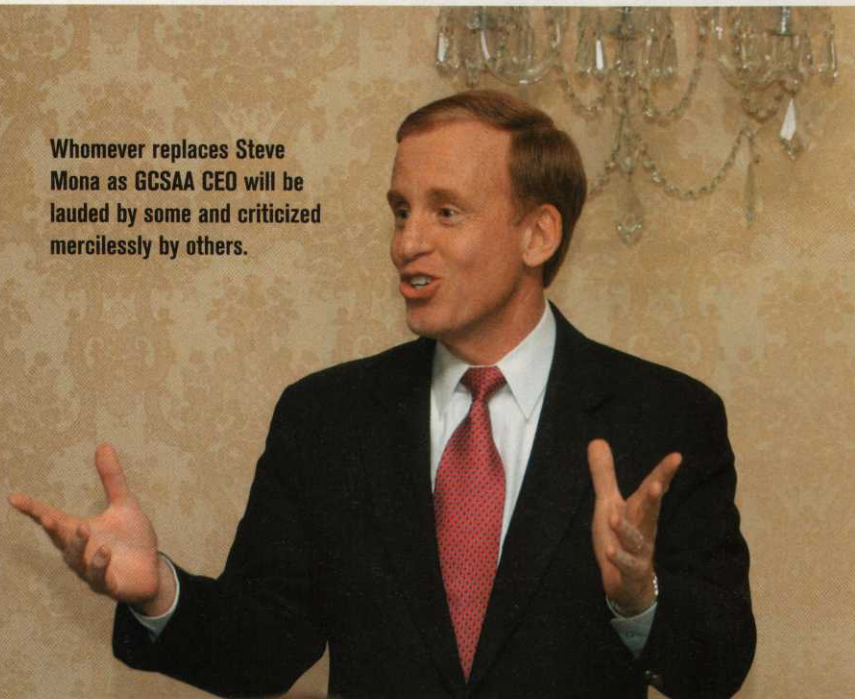


# 'May You Live In Interesting Times'

Whoever replaces Steve Mona as GCSAA CEO will be lauded by some and criticized mercilessly by others.



BY CHRISTOPHER S. GRAY SR., CONTRIBUTING EDITOR

**I**t could pop out of a fortune cookie. But this famous and seemingly innocent Chinese proverb quoted above isn't a fortune at all. It's a curse.

The word "interesting" in this context actually means dangerous or turbulent. And secondly, it's not close to Chinese in origin. In fact, it's an American creation. Scholars have collectively agreed there is no such expression in Chinese teachings, although it is thought to be related to the Chinese proverb that says, "It's better to be a dog in peaceful times than a man in a chaotic period."

The English iteration first appeared in

an article in *Astounding Science Fiction*, but it was popularized when Robert F. Kennedy famously evoked these words in his Day of Affirmation Address at Cape Town, South Africa in 1966.

Regardless of its origin, the point of the phrase has long meant to be ironic, largely because Confucianism places value on stability and constancy.

None of us can deny that we currently live in very interesting times, both personally and professionally. Pick up any business magazine and read about the ongoing court battles with genetically engineered grasses, or the ever-growing controversies between brand-name chemicals and the post-patent products flooding the market, or the constantly changing immigration laws and H-2B provisions that directly affect many of our already-stressed labor issues. After perusing these "interesting" articles, how could you not long for simpler, less turbulent times?

During the next few years, we are facing several "interesting" issues that will reshape our industry for the next decade and beyond.

## Oh captain, my captain

He was our fearless leader for the past 14 years, but Steve Mona is leaving us for the blue waters of Florida and the World Golf Foundation. I think I have read just about every industry magazine article concerning Mona leaving the GCSAA. After the third or fourth one, they all start sounding the same. For those of you who might have missed them, here's a quick summary: Mona was a great leader; he led the association into the 21<sup>st</sup> century; he had more

*Continued on page 70*

## 'May You Live In Interesting Times'

**Water issues might not be so black and white as local water districts continue to scrutinize availability and usage.**



*Continued from page 68*

successes than failures; he will be sorely missed, and his successor will have big shoes to fill. There you go. I just saved you countless minutes of valuable reading time.

Don't get me wrong, I truly like Mona and I will miss him. But I am more interested in exploring who will be filling those shoes and taking over the helm of the GCSAA ship.

In all likelihood his successor will come from somewhere in the golf industry. After reading "Position and Candidate Specification" prepared by Spencer Stuart (the consulting firm conducting initial screening and interviews), this becomes blatantly apparent. The first point under "Ideal Experience" states that the candidate should possess a "minimum of five to 10 years management experience in a golf association, foundation or other sports-related organization or business." This awfully specific criterion limits the field of candidates dramatically.

Simple logic suggests looking toward

the established executives and managing directors of both the larger GCSAA chapters and state golf associations for qualified candidates. For those members who are looking for Steve Mona version 2.0, which from my perspective is a pretty large group, you should be hoping that history repeats itself. Mona, himself, served for 10 years as the executive director for the Georgia State Golf Association.

Alas, for many more of us "rebel" members, ideal experience alone should not determine the next captain of our 110-strong staff-member ship known as the GCSAA. We are looking for a new direction to sail into, far from the tidal waves and rough seas of such endeavors as the infamous GCSAA Headquarter Relocation Study. Yikes!

We, and I'm including myself with this group, are excited about the possibility of having a new perspective and innovative ideas for the GCSAA and the members. I suggest that, perhaps, it's time for someone not so familiar with the trials and tribulations of our association to bring a fresh pair of eyes to peer at what we've become, and more importantly, see where we should be going. Many members became very comfortable with Mona running the association, but there is a very fine line between comfort and complacency.

In the end, whomever is selected and approved by the board of directors as the next CEO of the GCSAA, two things are absolutely certain. Some people will be overly happy with the selection, while others will believe beyond a shadow of a doubt that Armageddon has begun for the association. In turn, the new CEO will be both praised and criticized way too much for every move he or she makes. It certainly doesn't get much more "interesting" than that.

### **Oh water, where art thou?**

Anyone else have water issues last season? I'm sure that in some small way, the superintendents of the Southwest had to feel just a little slighted about all the press that this year's drought received from all over the country. They have been constantly dealing with numerous water issues since their

Environmental groups have been patiently hanging around for the time and opportunity to pounce on our industry and our colossal water-use rate.

courses were first planted — problems ranging from unsuitable water supplies to massive water restrictions from suppliers. These guys are no strangers to the problems that the rest of us superintendents were facing this year, particularly those of us in the Southeast. You couldn't pick up a newspaper or turn on the TV without reading or hearing about the lack of available water in the country this past year. You can certainly believe that all the hard-core environmental groups have been watching.

We are an industry that weathers enormous scrutiny from almost every environmental group on the planet. There isn't one of them out there that wouldn't enjoy having the golf industry's proverbial head stuffed and mounted on their wall like a prize buck and take credit for being the group who finally forced our industry to be, at least, regulated with our water use.

Let's face it; we are an industry that uses water, not in the millions, but by the billions and billions of gallons each year. That alone paints a very large target on all of our backs.

Like hungry lions on the African plains, lying in the tall grass waiting for the injured gazelle to come limping by, these environmental groups have been patiently hanging around for the opportunity time to pounce on our industry and our colossal water-use rate. That time might be now.

In a time when towns like Orme, Tenn., has its mayor turn on the city's water supply for only three hours a day, it's easy to gain political support for regulating water use for a business like us, which is still publicly classified as a recreational activity. When you start to weigh the golf industry against an entire town population's basic needs, we quickly lose the most important battle — the one of public opinion. Ultimately, it's this arena that will decide our future regarding water regulation. Having to deal with this impending problem categorically qualifies it as "interesting."

Myriad other issues are poised to restructure our entire industry and how we do business over the next decade. Some of us will embrace these looming and inevitable changes, while others most certainly will not. It's our unique ability, as an industry, to solve problems that will serve us best when these new challenges come to fruition.

In the end, if nothing else, these challenges will unquestionably be "interesting." ■

**Christopher S. Gray Sr.**  
is superintendent of  
*The Marvel Golf Club*  
in Benton, Ky. He expects  
an interesting year.



# Take the sure shot on ants and surface- feeders.



Talstar® Select insecticide and Talstar GC granular insecticide are the number one ant and surface-feeder brands that help you protect your course with confidence. From cutworms, webworms and armyworms to billbugs, chinch bugs and fire ants, these products provide long-residual control without damaging delicate grasses. When you want the most trusted brand in the industry on your side, it's Talstar — every time.

For more information visit  
[www.fmcprosolutions.com](http://www.fmcprosolutions.com).

**Talstar. Trusted Because It Works.**

Always read and follow label directions. FMC and Talstar are trademarks of FMC Corporation. © 2008 FMC Corporation. All rights reserved. FSP-0729-02/08/NK

**Talstar**  
INSECTICIDES