

**N**early six months later, people still wonder why Mark Woodward left the Golf Course Superintendents Association of America as its CEO. I do, too. But because the GCSAA and Woodward won't talk about what happened between them, there isn't much to write about. That has changed recently, but for the most unfortunate of reasons.

Originally, the GCSAA announced last June in the worst press release in the history of press releases that Woodward resigned immediately from the association to "pursue other career interests." The press release, which contained no quotes from Woodward and no information where he was going, was a crock. Woodward might have "resigned," but it's my understanding he was under pressure to do so.

While I tried to find out what really happened, nobody from the GCSAA wanted to talk specifics about why Woodward left. Neither did Woodward, for that matter, which isn't surprising, considering there was probably some kind of agreement in place. So that's what I reported — the GCSAA and Woodward were basically taking the Fifth. But I also opined that the GCSAA's dues-paying members — from superintendents to suppliers — deserved to know what happened to their leader. It's their association, after all. As that request fell on the GCSAA's deaf ears, it occurred to me I might have a better chance taking on big oil.

I decided not to push the matter further. That is, until recently, when I heard a nasty rumor about why Woodward left the GCSAA. The rumor, whose specifics I will not disclose, had nothing to do with golf course maintenance and was personal in nature while attacking Woodward's character. The rumor is not only not true, it's appalling.

Who knows where the rumor came from and how many people heard it. Even if it's just a few people, that's a few too many.

But I can understand how it got started. We live in a rumor-mongering society. We're all guilty of it. And when an organization like the GCSAA refuses to give a detailed reason behind

# This Is How Ugly Rumors Get Started

BY LARRY AYLWARD



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a high-profile industry matter such as Woodward's dismissal, it's natural for people to start asking questions about "what really happened." And then things can get ugly.

Again, the press release the GCSAA issued on the matter was a joke. If you read it, you knew immediately there was something more to the story because it had more holes than my golf game. Because of the lack of detail surrounding why he was leaving and where he was going, it was hard to believe Woodward truly resigned. But because the GCSAA issued such a non-descript press release, all it did was power the rumor mill.

I called a high-ranking GCSAA official to talk about this. When I told him of the ugly rumor I heard, he was genuinely concerned. The official, who didn't want to be identified, told me to let the people of the industry know "there were no legal or moral issues with Woodward's departure."

Finally, a little insight into the matter! Seriously, I'm glad the official agreed to issue that statement as it puts to rest any more ugly assumptions that could become rumors.

But such assumptions and rumors wouldn't have started in the first place if the GCSAA would've addressed the matter head on. If what I've heard is correct and I believe it is, Woodward "resigned" because of disagreements with the board of directors. This kind of stuff happens every day in every line of work. So what's wrong with issuing a press release that states that? Why does everything have to be swept under the rug?

Of course, the GCSAA official I spoke to talked about "legal agreements" that prohibited him from commenting on Woodward's "resignation."

Well, you just had to know there were lawyers involved.

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