



"I'll admit I ignored the email from GCSAA that contained the announcement that Ihms was, like too many superintendents these days, recently unemployed. I realized I missed something important when my phone started blowing up."

SETH JONES, *Editor-in-Chief*

GCSAA's field staff and its president? Oh, my!

I do not consider myself to be a GCSAA watchdog. ¶ My goal is to be a good editor of this magazine. I want to have the most compelling magazine in the industry, from our feature stories and columns to our research and departments. I want you to read this magazine cover to cover every month.

But because my last place of employment was 1421 Research Park Drive — GCSAA headquarters in Lawrence, Kan. — I'm occasionally asked if I like to be a thorn in the side of my old employer, and watch over their every move.

The answer would be no. The GCSAA is an important part of our industry, but it is still a part of the industry, and not larger than the industry itself.

And yet our two lead stories this month do focus on the association: a cover story on the field staff program and a Q&A with its current president, Keith Ihms.

First, the topic of the field staff.

I thought I would write this story three years ago. When I left GCSAA in December

2010, this program was a huge concern of mine. Why? Because for two years, I worried I'd lose my job to make room for the new field staff person headquartered in Somewhere, America.

Don't ever expect anyone to have a rationale impression of a person, place or thing when it threatens to take food off his or her table. With a young family, I hated the field staff program. Layoffs were common at the time, but meanwhile they're hiring someone to work out of their home in Florida?

The program is responsible for at least a little of my gray hair. I think even the field staffers themselves will forgive me for resenting the program five years ago.

Since then, I've traveled

extensively for *Golfdom*, visiting chapter events across the country. I'd met most of the field staff by the time I started writing this story. I'd even become friends with a few of the guys.

I'll let the cover story speak for itself. But I am interested in watching this program evolve... Because win or lose, this is an important, substantial investment to GCSAA and its members.

Next topic: my Q&A with Keith Ihms.

I'll admit I initially ignored the email from GCSAA that contained the announcement that Ihms was, like too many superintendents these days, recently unemployed. I was on deadline at the time, and too busy to click to see what was new.

I realized I missed something important when my phone — both office and cell — started blowing up. "What do you know?" *Uh, about what?* "Check your email, moron."

I've known Keith Ihms since I was a kid... we first met when he hosted a stop on the turf tour at GCSAA's conference and show (not yet dubbed the Golf Industry Show) when it was in Dallas in 2001.

While we don't have a secret handshake (yet), Keith has always been friendly and courteous to me. So did I want to call him and ask him, man-to-man, the nature of why he lost his job? Of course not. I do have a soul. But I also have a job. And I felt my job required I ask him.

Ihms was gracious enough to take my call. Hell, as you'll see in the Q&A, he thanked me at the end of our conversation, even though he was doing me the favor. Total class.

We posted a portion of this Q&A on our website in mid-March. After one day, it was already among the top 10 most read stories posted on *Golfdom.com* for the year.

Golfdom's readers care about the president of their association. And they care about significant investments made by GCSAA, such as the field staff.

Am I a GCSAA watchdog? No. But if it's newsworthy to our readers, then it is important to us.

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