



## A FRESH BREEZE FROM KANSAS

By Monroe S. Miller

In September I was in Lawrence, Kansas to participate in a GCSAA resource committee meeting. It was an eye-opening, refreshing and learning experience.

It would be charitable to say that in recent years some GCSAA members have been less than satisfied with the organization and any number of the association's activities. Count me among them. "It was an ill-wind from Kansas," a friend of mine said.

There would be no useful purpose in rehashing the things that led to the suspicion and dissatisfaction. Most members know, at least in a general way, what those things are. And even among those members who pay little attention to such affairs, there was a sense that something was wrong and that GCSAA needed an infusion of trust and faith or some kind of renewal and maybe a new sense of direction. Possibly a clarification of purpose. Something.

I can report to you, from first hand experience and exposure, that the association appears to be getting that "something" it needed.

There are lots of things that caught my attention in Lawrence. Foremost and most important was the clear

message that those in charge now — employees and elected officers and directors — are committed to serving our profession and our members. It is an attitude most of us feel in our own workplaces and expect at headquarters. Let's face it — service is the tenderloin of the GCSAA. When you lose sight of that simple concept, you are on a slippery downhill slope.

How do I know that things are different? Well, at every turn on my visit that point was made. By Joe Baidy. By Bruce Williams and Dave Fearis. And by Joe O'Brien. The open exchange and comfortable conversation were refreshing.

I was a little cynical when Steve Mona and Joe O'Brien were hired to run the headquarters office, reserving judgment until I saw some results from them. After all, talk is cheap and nothing is easier than telling somebody what they want to hear. Performance is something entirely different. But now I have seen some results and I like what I see.

For the two intense days I was at the headquarters building I watched O'Brien in action, at work. The guy won me over. And he wasn't even

trying to — I was just one of many people on that committee. All Joe did that weekend was his job, the things he was hired to do. His title — chief operating officer — fits like a glove.

When the board hired him, they got a man with excellent experience in the PGA organization and a couple of different stops in the hospitality industry. He is a University of Illinois graduate, very bright and decisive. During the meeting, his role was facilitator, and he really made the time we spent productive time. Bruce Williams was smart enough to let him do this.

But as important as any of those things is the fact that O'Brien is a genuine, down-to-earth person, sincere and friendly. He is a nice guy with an easy smile. But he is not an elbow kisser, obviously preferring to let people judge him by what he does and who he is. I really like that.

It is probably right and fair to give credit, which I haven't before this, to Randy Nichols. Lots of members "in the know" have told me he was key in opening the doors of the association and getting more member input and involvement. I credit him for hiring O'Brien and Mona.

We will all have a chance to get to know Steve Mona soon as he is speaking at the Symposium. If he measures up to O'Brien, we all should raise our glasses to toast new times in Lawrence.

What a breath of fresh air that would be! ♣

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