



Message From The President

By Jim Hillier, President
New Hampshire Golf Course Superintendents Association

Editor's Note: I wonder if Jim Hillier has received any nasty letters from GCSAA lately? Usually, from my experience, articles like he wrote in the March/April issue of TURF TALK generate a defensive letter from GCSAA.

Jim speaks to a couple of issues with GCSAA. He, too, wonders what happened to Phase II of the GCSAA mortality study that was promised by GCSAA. Bruce Williams and Paul McGinnis both wrote me while they were president that the GCSAA substituted its Safety Awareness Program for the Phase II mortality study. They must think some are dumb enough to believe that. I surveyed 124 GCSAA members, mostly from Wisconsin but from a couple of other states as well to see if anyone knew what the GCSAA Safety Awareness Program was all about. NOT ONE person knew. Pat Norton came the closest; his answer was, "is that the video program they've got?" If the Safety Awareness Program was serious, it was an abject failure.

Jim also asks questions some of us asked at the spring business

meeting and couldn't get a straight answer to.

I spoke with Jim in June and he gave me permission to share his thoughts with you. MSM, Ed.

I'd like to report on my trip to the GCSAA Conference and Show in Anaheim. I found many valuable talks and exhibits, but there was one thing in particular I'd like to comment on: the commercial sponsorship of every reception and event. The National uses the term "partnership" now for corporate sponsorship. Now I have no argument with corporations sponsoring a scholarship or research project, but the sums of money being tossed around here are getting to be quite large. The question is, can the GCSAA remain impartial with research results when such large sums of money are involved?

GCSAA just completed a water quality study that touted the safety of modern golf course chemical use. If the manufacturer of a chemical contributes \$30,000 to GCSAA, how can you expect the environmentalists to believe a study that shows that

chemical wasn't found in the groundwater under a golf course? Indeed, can I as a member of GCSAA believe it?

GCSAA has formed a partnership with a number of corporations and individuals to raise \$3.5 million for the GCSAA Foundation — to support research, education, and to produce more affordable golf courses. There was a recent article in *Golf Course Management* by Rhone-Poulenc, a chemical manufacturer and donor to the Foundation. They said that we must cut our labor budgets to produce for affordable golf courses. This is, of course, one way to save money, but they failed to mention another way to save money: cut chemical use! Do we want these corporations to dictate how we run our courses? How impartial do you think they'll be?

I am not saying GCSAA has done anything unethical, but I'm just a little voice saying to beware of entangling yourself with big bucks. Look at the problems politicians in Washington have gotten into by accepting those huge campaign contributions. It doesn't matter if their votes have been influenced, but they no longer have any credibility.

A couple of years ago, GCSAA supported the so-called "Mortality Study." Superintendents appeared to die from certain cancers more often than the general population. GCSAA tried to downplay the results, saying cigarette smoking and outdated pesticides might have caused this. Why have there not been follow-up studies on an issue as important as our health? Maybe it's stress or too much coffee drinking that's killing us, not pesticides. But how can we know without more studies? Maybe the "partners" feel we should spend money on making our golf courses more "beautiful" instead of on superintendents' health? 🌱

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