



“In a world of constant change, sometimes it is nice to know some things don’t change.”

KARL DANNEBERGER, PH.D., *Science Editor*

Changing of the guard

I shall adopt new views as fast as they shall appear to be true views.

— Abraham Lincoln

June at The Ohio State University and many other universities represents the end of the fiscal year.

It’s also a time when retiring faculty officially bid adieu to the university. It’s both an exciting and sad time. You’re happy for your outgoing colleagues as they start a new “career,” but at the same time, they will be missed. Many faculty — not only here at OSU but around the country — are retiring or will within the next few years. It is estimated in my college, the College of Food, Agriculture and Environmental Sciences, that 30 to 50 percent of our faculty could potentially retire in the next three to five years.

Most of the faculty who have retired recently or plan on retiring either served in, were educated during, or grew up during the Vietnam War. The current Vietnam War generation replaced the faculty from the World War II generation in the late 1970s and early 1980s. Now we are being replaced by a new generation, one I hope is not described by some war.

I believe any change — whether good or bad — presents opportunities. Younger generations especially seem to

embrace change. And with every retiring professor comes an opportunity for the next generation to take the stage. Dr. Bill Daniel, a turfgrass professor at Purdue University, seemed to acknowledge this when he retired in the early 1980s. He loved working at the university and interacting with students and people in the turfgrass industry, and I remember asking him why he was retiring. He replied, “It’s time to give someone else a shot.” I think he viewed change positively, and who better to adapt to change than someone young in the profession?

Make no mistake, universities are facing significant challenges, from fiscal issues to meeting future needs in research and education. Although universities are facing constant change and challenges, the core — teaching, outreach and research — remains. We may alter how we teach and the type of research we do, but why we do what we do remains constant.

The core of what universities are teaching and researching is comforting to many... like church. The virtues associated with a religion are similar to the fervor alumni and students feel for their university. And for many of them, the school serves as a personal anchor long after graduation. I probably say

it too much, but in a world of constant change, sometimes it is nice to know some things don’t change.

This month, after 33 years as a faculty member, Dr. Peter Dernoeden, professor of turfgrass science at the University of Maryland, retires. He taught a class in pest management strategies for turfgrass, published more than 100 scientific journal articles and advised a number of graduate and undergraduate students who have gone on to successful careers in the industry and academia. Given that Peter primarily worked as an extension specialist, his impressive research and teaching accomplishments are that much more remarkable.

Dr. Dernoeden, and I say this with the utmost respect, is what we would call an “old time” extension specialist. He ran the University of Maryland Turfgrass Plant Disease Diagnostic Laboratory, coordinated the Maryland Research Field Day and conducted countless studies on turfgrass pest control to complement his extension activities.

What made him unique in today’s world of technology and budget cuts was his face-to-face, one-on-one extension visits to golf courses. Peter helped numerous golf course superintendents throughout the mid-Atlantic region during stressful summers by problem solving, providing unbiased, no-nonsense recommendations, and most of all, listening to superintendents. The result from Peter’s doing this year after year? He had one of the largest and most loyal followings among superintendents out there.

Very few can achieve all that Peter has, but in a world of constant change, he is the perfect model for a new generation of turfgrass faculty.

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