

THE MUSSER FOUNDATION

A Brief Review

By FRED V. GRAU, President



Fred V. Grau

EDITORS NOTE: We welcome Dr. Grau to our esteemed list of guest writers. We will eagerly await his future articles. During the depression Dr. Grau worked his way through four years of college and his Ph.D. When he became U.S.G.A. Green Section Director he began at once to develop a fund to help graduate students. In 1953 Dr. Grau became a consultant to manufacturers and the graduate program was dropped. When H.B. Musser died he saw a chance to develop a foundation in his memory and to renew the graduate effort.

Penncross bent is known and used world wide. It is the product of Burt Musser's genius and dedication. It was one of his "investments in the future". Playing conditions on golf courses have been improved greatly by the use of Penncross bent, the first seeded bent to produce uniform playing surfaces.

Pennlawn fescue has improved millions of lawns and is favored in mixtures with bluegrass for producing quality sod. It, too, was developed under Professor Musser's guiding hand.

The book "Turf Management" was written by Professor Musser under the sponsorship of the U.S. Golf Association. What a boon it has been to golf course superintendents!

Golf course superintendents who studied at Penn State under this pioneer teacher are scattered 'round the world. What a wonderful way to make an "investment in the future" because now they are teaching others.

Among the graduate students who earned (and I mean earned) their Ph.D. degrees at Penn State under this "task master" are:

Dr. James R. Watson, v.p. Toro Co.; 2nd v.p. MITF
Dr. Joseph M. Duich, Prof. Turfgrass Science, PSU;
secretary, MITF (incorporator)
Dr. John C. Harper II, Extension Agronomist, Penn State
These men are leaders — a credit to the profession. The turfgrass industry has been enriched by their activities.

We honor the memory of this pioneer in turf by establishing a Turfgrass Research Fellowship Fund in the Musser Foundation which will perpetually assist deserving graduate students to achieve their degrees and to take their place among the leaders in the turfgrass industry. Some of our current scientists are facing retirement. We must provide for their replacement. These are the men who brought this Living Memorial into being as INCORPORATORS:

Dr. J. M. Duich Mr. Albert W. Wilson II
Mr. E. R. Steiniger Dr. Fred V. Grau
Mr. Warren A. Bidwell

Part of the first monies collected for The Musser Fund went to help Dr. Burton get his turf program started in Tifton. Now Dr. Burton is on the honorary board of The Musser Foundation. Many things could be accomplished in the South through this Foundation, but so far no support has come from our area. Lets stand up and give our financial support for a Musser Fellowship to combat some of the problems facing golf courses in the South.

Many others have been supportive. The Pennsylvania Turfgrass Council gave it a start when Don Krigger, then president of PTC in 1968, named Grau to head the organizing committee which included names well known in the turf industry: Hallowell, Harper, Mascaro, Miller, Shuman, Sirianni, Stolpe, Steiniger, Tenos, Watson, Wilcox and Wilson.

These contributors started the Fellowship Fund with money out of their pockets (total \$475.00):

Philadelphia Toro Co.
Frank I. Shuman
Fred. V. Grau
Dr. J. M. Duich
GCSA of N. California
They believed in the future.

Professor Howard Burton Musser initiated turf work at Penn State in 1927. The first turf conference came in 1929. He died in 1968. He was active in organizing the Pennsylvania Turfgrass Council in 1955. His work with bluegrasses laid the foundation for Pennstar Kentucky bluegrass. In weed control work he successfully blended chemicals with fertilizers.

The Musser Foundation is one of three non-profit groups which accept contributions and raise funds in other ways in order to perform needed research and to improve the quality of turf and turfgrass management. The Noer Foundation operates independently and does not conflict with Musser Foundation goals and objectives. The third group is the newly-formed American Council for Turfgrass (ACT), a group designed to correlate activities and to provide a unified voice for turf in the nation.

The Musser Foundation has grown slowly partly because many have misunderstood its function. MITF raises money in several ways, all tax-exempt:

- 1) Free-will contributions
- 2) Unitrusts which provide lifetime income (planned giving)

3) Memorial giving — funds instead of flowers to yield income forever to help students of turf.

4) Turfgrass Benefit Tournaments. There have been twelve of these: 5 in Ohio; 4 in Oregon; 3 in Delaware. One is planned for the Mid-Atlantic region June 12, 1979 at Indian Spring C.C., Silver Spring, MD. This is a painless way to raise money by having fun.

5) Turfgrass Research Fellowships named for the donor, \$1,000 each. This approach is designed to let those who profit through sales & services to share with a tax-exempt foundation that will put money to work for turfgrass improvement across the board. It includes manufacturers, distributors, dealers, seed producers, sod growers, landscape contractors, golf course architects, lawn care companies and others. Actually no one is excluded. Two such fellowships now exist in the name of individuals, Fred. V. Grau and Bob Dunning; and one in the name of a seed-growing firm, the Penncross Bluegrass Association.

The Musser Foundation is run by a board of 24 directors with an Honorary Board to lend prestige. All serve without pay. The annual meeting is held in conjunction with the GCSAA Conference and Show. All monies are turned over to the treasurer, Ben Warren, who invests it in secure high-yield securities. Only the income is used for grants to exceptional graduate students at turf-oriented research institutions to help them obtain advanced degrees. By this method the entire turf industry gains valuable research data by way of a learned thesis and, a new leader has been trained!

Other officers are:

Fred V. Grau, president

Joseph M. Duich, secretary

Warren A. Bidwell, first vice president

Dr. James R. Watson, second vice president

Dr. Frank Dobie is Director of Benefit Tournaments

Anyone wishing further information on any of the several fund-raising efforts may write to Dr. Fred V. Grau, P.O. Box AA, College Park, MD 20704, or phone 301/864-0090.

Most turfgrass managers are aware that the *Ataenius* beetle threatened turf with multi-million dollar damages. The Musser Foundation pooled its resources with the GCSAA and Ohio golf clubs over a 3-year period to support research aimed at life history and control. The joint efforts paid off and Mr. Gerald Wegner, a student under Dr. Harry Niemczyk, Wooster, Ohio, expects to have his thesis finished soon. Thus another scientist has been trained and every phase of the turf industry will profit.

The misuse of tax funds has made it almost useless to look to this source for assistance. Those in the industry who operate for profit should face up to the fact that they have a responsibility to build a FUND that will be self sustaining for now and in the future. Fellowships offer the ideal way to perform needed research, accumulate valuable data, produce a learned thesis and, most important of all, develop a trained scientist who can become a leader in the industry. The Musser Foundation is the ideal vehicle by which these benefits can be accomplished. We need to share and to work together. As George Cleaver, president of GCSAA, has said, "Let's Communicate, Cooperate and Coordinate."

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