



Monroe Miller is a retired golf course superintendent. He spent 36 years as superintendent at Blackhawk Country Club in Madison, Wis. Miller can be reached at groots@charter.net.

DEDICATED TO HARRIET

His name is arguably the most recognizable among turfgrass academics: Dr. James B. Beard. Not just in this country, but wherever turf meetings and conferences have been held, Dr. Beard has been a favored lecturer. He has served as major professor for grad students at Michigan State and Texas A & M universities who have done great things for turf in their own right. His leadership has been powerful, his teaching well respected and his research has stood the test of time.

And then there are the books. Never satisfied with limiting himself to some narrow aspect of turf, his books have been thorough and complete and comprehensive.

The thought occurred to me that Jim Beard had dedicated all of his books to Harriet, his wife. She even co-authored one of those books – “Beard’s Turfgrass Encyclopedia.” It piqued an interest in this woman who clearly was a positive force in Dr. Beard’s career.

More inspiration about Harriet Beard came at a late 1990s Wisconsin Green Industry Expo. Dr. Beard was scheduled for a couple of lectures, but he was sicker than a dog. Harriet was there, too, and I am sure she is the reason he was able to travel and present two excellent lectures to us. I had the chance to meet her, see what she looked like and chat a bit. But I still wanted to know more.

So, this summer, before leaving for Traverse City, Mich., to visit relatives, I called them at their summer home on Lake Leelanau and asked if I could visit. They graciously agreed. That short visit turned into most of the day. I couldn’t have had a more enjoyable time, and I really learned who Harriet Beard is.

Jim and Harriet Beard grew up on adjacent farms in west central Ohio,

and despite that proximity they attended different schools. They recall cultivating cornfields next to one another and waving back and forth. They also attended the same church and Sunday school class.

Harriet is two years older than Jim. After graduation she worked at the bank in town. She told me that she knew for a long time that he was a bright young man. He finally asked her for a date – to go fishing!

Few know that Jim Beard was an excellent high school athlete and recruited by 10 colleges to play football. He made an academic decision instead and enrolled at Ohio State. They continued to date, were engaged in 1954 and married on spring break 1955. They’ve been married 56 years.

Michigan State hired the new PhD in 1961, the same year Harriet

He took a break for dinner at the student union, and completed his writing for the day when doors to the library closed at 11:00 p.m. He left that day’s work on Harriet’s desk, and when he left for campus in the morning, the manuscript had been typed perfectly for him. That was teamwork.

His writing continued on at Texas A&M in much the same way. Nowadays, when they are working in the MSU library, she is also busy with tracking down references, abstracting and other duties that give Jim more time to do the actual writing. I have heard that when they go to campus to work they arrive early and stay late. They are still working hard after all these years.

Harriet told me her life with Jim Beard has been wonderful. They have lived carefully and shared their

“I had the chance to meet her, see what she looked like and chat a bit. **But I still wanted to know more.**”

was pregnant with their son Jim. It was a difficult time for her, one that required bed rest at home. But it was the beginning of 14 happy years (1961–75) for the Beards. A second son John was born there.

When Jim decided he was going to write a book, Harriet played an even more active role in his career. There were secretarial tasks she was always happy to take care of, and she did a lot of the parenting of their young sons while Jim worked. He didn’t even have to mow the lawn or shovel snow! But the book added an entirely new dimension to her role in his life.

The MSU library is where he spent most of his free time during the eight years of writing. He went to the library at the end of each day to write.

prosperity, through the James B. and Harriet Beard Endowed Graduate Fellowship at MSU, and their \$1.4 million gift to the Beard Collection at TIC.

Dr. Beard will tell anyone how proud he is of Harriet and how fortunate he has been to have her as his wife and best friend. “She has allowed me, over 56 years of marriage, to double my productivity because of her help and support.” In just the few hours I spent with them this summer I could see how deeply they feel about one another.

Those two new history books Dr. Beard is closing in on – I am betting they’ll be dedicated to “Harriet.” Just like she has been dedicated to him for so long. **GCI**