

**P**rofessor Alfred Turgeon, a teacher, researcher, administrator and Vietnam War veteran, is retiring from Pennsylvania State University at the end of the month. Dr. Turgeon's impact on turfgrass science is extensive. He wrote the textbook "Turfgrass Management," now in its 9<sup>th</sup> edition, and was instrumental in founding the World Campus online degree program at Penn State University.

Listing his accomplishments, however, does not speak to his uniqueness and the qualities that made Dr. Turgeon successful. I do not pretend to have some exceptional insight into Dr. Turgeon overall, but I would like to share what it was like for me to be around him as a graduate student. I do recognize that time makes memories a little more slanted, but I hope I can capture a period of time, which, although it was less than two years, was among the most exciting in my life.

Dr. Turgeon came to the University of Illinois in 1971 as an assistant professor of turfgrass science. In general, university turfgrass programs at the time were shifting their emphasis from an extension-applied nature to one more geared toward hard science. Dr. Turgeon embraced that move and was building a strong turfgrass research program at the University of Illinois.

In the late 1970s Dr. Turgeon had several technicians, undergraduate students and graduate students working for him. I was one of five or six graduate students who arrived during the late 1970s. The group of graduate students that I was most closely associated with included Bruce Branham (Professor, University of Illinois), David Chalmers (Professor, Texas A&M University) and William Torello (Professor Emeritus, University of Massachusetts).

Bruce, Dave, Bill and I were working in an environment that was exciting and in many ways intoxicating. It was a reflection of the energy and enthusiasm Dr. Turgeon brought to work. It was like every day was the "big game" and Al was the coach. Or some might say maybe more accurately, it was like a three-ring circus and Al was the ringmaster. Either way, Al was focused on one thing — turf research — and he expected nothing less from me or anyone else. If

## Dr. Turgeon's Drive

BY KARL DANNEBERGER, PH.D.



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you wanted to talk about sports you went to Dr. John Street, the extension specialist at the time.

Al would always say no one punches a clock in his lab; your time was your own. I figured out that we didn't punch a clock because we were always there. Some would say there is more to life than turf, but not at that time in that laboratory. For me, there could have been no better environment for a lowly graduate student to be motivated and inspired in, especially at the beginning of one's career.

Dr. Turgeon ran his program like any good coach would. He could motivate you with an inspirational talk when he felt you were floundering. He could also give you a swift kick if that is what it took for you to perform. Personally, Al usually motivated me with the latter. He had a unique ability to read people.

Al was goal oriented, always looking forward. He set his sights on a project, whether the project involved research, teaching or administration. And he tackled his projects with an enthusiasm and dedication found in very few. I remember him telling me once that at the end of the work day you should take a minute, relax and reflect on the day's accomplishments... And if you could not think of an accomplishment for the day? Well then, it was not quite time to go home.

As the holidays approach and the conference circuit begins, no doubt I will run into Al's colleagues and friends. We will reminisce about Al and recount stories about him. I know for sure Dr. Turgeon won't be reminiscing. He will be looking forward to planning his next project or adventure.

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*Karl Danneberger, Ph.D., Golfdom's science editor and a professor at The Ohio State University, can be reached at danneberger.1@osu.edu.*