

HARRISON ENDS FOUR YEARS AS WTA PRESIDENT

By Monroe S. Miller

Longtime WGCSA member Tom Harrison passed the gavel of the Wisconsin Turfgrass Association presidency to Terry Kurth at the WTA's annual meeting and conference. The meeting was held at the Waukesha County Arena on January 13th, 1987.

Tom was one of the founders of the WTA and served as president for 1983, 1984, 1985 and 1986. He guided the WTA through a period of substantial growth and leaves the association in good posture for upcoming years. A plaque presented to Tom at the annual meeting summarizes his contribution well: "A testimonial of sincere appreciation of the splendid leadership and time generously given."

Tom remains on the WTA Board as past president. Wayne Otto and Dewey Leak were elected to the Board

of Directors at the January 13th meeting and they join WGCSA members Curt Larson, Red Roskopf, Roger Bell and Monroe Miller on the Board.

Nice job, Tom. You're going to be a tough act to follow.



WTA Past President Tom Harrison with plaque of appreciation for dedicated service.

EXTRA! READ ALL ABOUT IT! EXTRA! MILORGANITE DECLARED INNOCENT!

By Monroe S. Miller

Despite the efforts of a UW-Madison researcher and a Milwaukee newspaper to convict Milorganite as a cause of ALS (amyotrophic lateral sclerosis - Lou Gehrig's disease), a jury of state and federal officials cleaned the MMSD product of those unfounded, unjustified, unfair and untrue charges. At a meeting held in the University of Wisconsin-Madison Hospital and Clinics on February 19th it was determined that there is *no* need to further study whether Milorganite is tied to ALS. Those officials, composed of physicians and epidemiologists, criticized Benjamin Brooks, an ALS researcher at the UW-Madison, for the comments he made suggesting that the heavy metals found in sludge should be studied as ALS suspects. It was this irresponsible suggestion that took Milorganite into the headlines here in Wisconsin and all across the country.

Brooks was widely quoted in the media as saying that the incidence of ALS in Milwaukee was significantly higher than in the rest of Wisconsin or the rest of the country. He was also quoted from coast to coast as saying that the ALS death of two San Francisco 49er football players might have been the result of their exposure to the Milorganite used to fertilize the team practice field. Later investigations turned up no evidence that Milorganite had even ever been used during that time. But the damage to MMSD had been done by then.

Brooks was taken apart at the meeting in Madison by the seven or eight physicians and epidemiologists present. Dr. A.A. Rimm, an epidemiologist with the Medical College of Wisconsin, told Brooks: "I sort of feel you have found a product guilty of murder, and it's innocent." He pointed out that there is *no difference* between the ALS death rates in southeast Wisconsin (Milwaukee) and the rest of the country. Rimm also accused Brooks of "shooting from the hip". Henry Anderson, Chief of occupational and environmental medicine in the Wisconsin Department of Health and Social Services, told Brooks that "associating ALS with Milorganite was premature and speculative." Yet another physician, Dr. Henry M. Goldberg of Milwaukee, said, "No scientist here (at that Madison meeting)

feels there is any connection between Milorganite and ALS. I have trouble with the logic of Brooks' proposed study." And finally, Dr. Patricia Murphy, an EPA epidemiologist from Cincinnati, summarized the meeting best when she told Brooks: "There is no evidence to indicate an increased incidence of ALS in Milwaukee or Wisconsin."

Brooks, apparently shaken and shocked that anyone would question him, was taken aback by the attack on his actions. Dr. Murphy said the scare had "initially been blown out of some groundkeeper's imagination," referring to the 49ers football team. Then, Peter Parthum, a physician with the Milwaukee Health Department, said it wasn't uncommon for scientists to be "sucked in" by incomplete information. **THAT DOESN'T EXCUSE BROOKS.** I wonder if he'd like to make up for lost Milorganite sales for the next couple of years out of his own pocket? Dr. Rimm criticized Brooks for doing epidemiology work when he was unqualified and incompetent to do so. Dr. Anderson reminded Brooks that medical researchers had to distinguish between skin contact with a substance like Milorganite and exposure to that substance. There is an enormous difference.

To put this whole issue to rest forever, MMSD will continue studying Milorganite and ALS. "I want Milorganite to have the clean bill of health it deserves," said district chairman Dean Showers. Pat Marchese, MMSD Executive Director, said on February 19th that a special team was preparing a plan and cost estimates for that study.

All WGCSA members can help Bob Welch, Jim Spindler and the rest of the MMSD staff most by informing club members, golf players, neighbors and friends that Milorganite is **INNOCENT OF ALL CHARGES**. It is safe to use, as we all knew it was, and it remains one of the premier turf fertilizers ever marketed. As for Benjamin Brooks, I think maybe, just maybe, the humiliation he has suffered has taught him a lesson. I guess we won't have to go to the UW hospital to tape his mouth shut; hopefully we aren't going to hear from or about him for a long time!