



As Usual, It's Politics and Weather

By Monroe S. Miller

As we drove past the golf course on the way to church on December 2, Cheryl remarked "the golf course looks like it usually does in May."

She was right on; my main thought was that the fairways actually needed mowing. The entire one hundred acres was a beautiful shade of green.

What a fabulous autumn 1990 gave us. We actually had two Indian summers—the entire week of the Symposium and the week surrounding Thanksgiving. What a treat!

And what a time of golf players to enjoy the golf course. Pretty decent conditions were at hand right into the month of December.

When I take pause, however, I remember another oddity of the past couple of months—the record 3" snowfall on October 10th in our town. It was the earliest snowfall recorded where I live and work, and quite obviously set the record for the amount of snow for the date. There was considerable damage done by that storm—accidents, electrical outages, broken limbs and branches. Funny how nice the weather turned afterwards.

I should have knocked on wood the minute Cheryl's comments came forth. I didn't, and sure enough, Monday, December 3rd saw a blizzard move across the state. Record amounts of snow for a single day welcomed everybody in town that morning. Schools, government and even shopping malls were closed.

While others were grouching, I was cheering. A warm, thick white blanket of snow makes almost every golf course superintendent in Wisconsin smile from ear to ear.

The first snow (actually second snow in this case) almost always begs the question of "how many more snowfalls will we have?"

An older fellow in Madison, who is usually quite accurate, says we have 29 more snowfalls coming our way this winter. To count as a snowball, there

Must be enough snow to tract a cat.

He uses an old Indian formula to predict the number of snows. It involves the age of the moon and the day of the month when the first snowfall arrives.

I never have liked the politics of state senator Russell Feingold, but once he took what was (and still is) essentially a scientific issue and turned it to a political one, I dislike him even more. He used the bovine growth hormone issue for his own petty purpose—he lusts to become one of Wisconsin's U.S. senators.

His campaign to cloud the real issue included bringing an anti-BGH zealot to Wisconsin. That person is Jeremy Rifkin, and he came to Wisconsin from Washington, D.C. to meddle in our affairs.

The group Rifkin works for has now sued the National Dairy Research and Promotion Board over some technicality relating to the bovine growth hormone.

Rifkin, like Feingold, doesn't really care about BGH, Wisconsin dairy farmers or the College of Agricultural and Life Sciences at the UW-Madison. Feingold is a selfish politician. Rifkin is a hardcore "animal rightist" who won't be happy until all animal agriculture ends, along with all hunting. To him, it's no big deal to threaten a \$20 BILLION industry in our state.

In our business, we must be on guard for similar attacks by radicals using the environment as a front.

The disgusting tactics of people like Rifkin and Feingold may be part of the reason why there was so much pleasure in reading about a different lawsuit.

From Yakima, Washington comes the news that Washington state apple growers are suing CBS and an environment group over a "60 Minutes" report they say damaged their livelihood by creating a cancer scare about the growth chemical Alar.

The lawsuit seeks unspecified damages running to millions of dollars for losses caused by the program's "false, misleading, scientifically unreliable statements."

The industry has estimated growers lost more than \$100 million following the 1989 broadcast which was based on a report by the National Resources Defense Council, a group supposedly representing "consumers".

Russ Weisensel tried to reason with legislators in our state, but they imposed a ban on Alar anyway. It was banned nationally last May.

Alar is sprayed on trees to improve the appearance and shelf life of apples.

My hope is that they win their suit and that the judge triples the damages.

Cases like this which are successful will go a long way in impressing on radicals that all any of us wants is a fair presentation of the facts. We want them to understand that scare stories full of untruths can be costly.

Victory is always sweet, but seldom more than on the day following the November 6th election.

That's the day we learned the "Big Green" proposition was soundly turned away by voters in California.

The sweeping proposal, supported by the likes of Tom Hayden (imagine that!), would have banned pesticides even if they contained only a trace amount(s) of some chemical.

Estimates were that the first year, had Prop 128 passed, would have cost consumers in California nearly \$100 million; the cost would have risen after that.

What a relief that the California voters weren't frightened by the phoney bogeymen promoting this initiative. There is little doubt similar legislation would have hemorrhaged into other states, especially states like Wisconsin, if the voters had okayed it.

'Tis the season for educational conferences. I'm looking forward to the Wisconsin Turfgrass Association Winter Conference and the GCSAA Conference and Show. Additionally, there are GCSAA seminars being held all over in the north central region, including right here in Wisconsin.

I was flattered when Wayne Kussow invited me to be an ex officio member

of the examining committee that graded Larry Lennert's Masters Degree thesis. That committee included Professors Kussow, Helmke and Lowery.

It wasn't an easy task; it required, for me, the very deliberate reading of Larry's thesis. But what an educational experience that was!

Larry's thesis was extremely well written; it turns out that I wasn't the only one who noted that. Each professor commented on the same.

The document is absolutely loaded with information—practical and pragmatic information—that will help turfgrass managers in Wisconsin and elsewhere. Golf course superintendents will be especially helped.

Part of a thesis defense in the Department of Soil Science is a seminar open to anyone. It was clear during Larry's lecture that this young man is also very articulate and an excellent speaker.

My primary concern is that Larry and his major professor get this information published, first in a "juried" technical journal so that it can be referenced. Then they need to write about a half dozen articles for the popular literature for use by people like me.

As you know, the subject of his research project was "iron and its use in turfgrass management in Wisconsin". It was supported by the Wisconsin Turfgrass Association.

By the way, he passed his examination, and was given permission to pursue a PhD if he desires.

Quite frankly, I was very proud of the kid. You would have been also. Our business needs bright and educated people like Larry Lennert. His dedicated performance in completion of his thesis will make it easy for the WTA to fund another project in the future.

Nice work by the major professor, too!

The whole world probably knows by now that Jim Spindler left the Milorganite Division of MMSD. He left his position as Marketing Director there for a similar position with ENVIRONMENTAL TECHNOLOGIES in Lancaster, Pennsylvania.

Jim, his wife Missey and daughter Kiersten will move to the Lancaster area around the time you receive this issue of *THE GRASS ROOTS*.

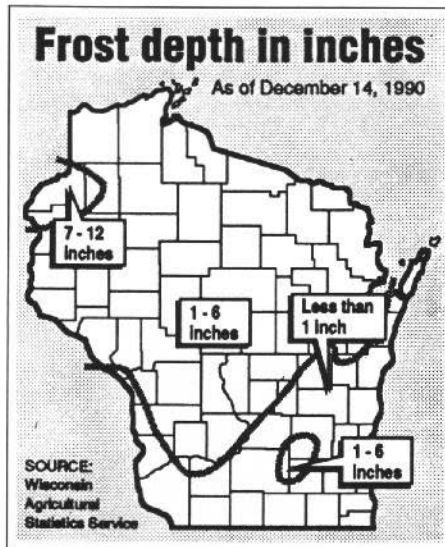
Spindler has become one of us since he accepted the MMSD position in 1985. He started as field agronomist, moved into the market development

manager's position and finally was appointed Acting Director of Marketing.

We also knew him as the coordinator for the annual Wisconsin Golf Turf Symposium. He will continue to serve as research director for the O.J. NOER RESEARCH FOUNDATION.

Jim was a very active, capable and visible person in our Wisconsin golf course industry. We are going to miss his presence. He has promised to return to next year's Symposium, a promise I hope he'll be able to keep. Congratulations and good luck.

The accompanying graphics showing frost and snow depths around Wisconsin at mid-December indicate why state climatologist Pam Naber offers up such positive reports these days.



The mild weather that followed the December 3rd snowstorm across Wisconsin really helped to recharge underground water supplies in our state. We are continuing to recover

from the prolonged drought.

The snow fell primarily on unfrozen ground. The warm temperatures melted a lot of the snow and it infiltrated the soil instead of running off.

The water tables in most parts of Wisconsin have gradually risen through the wet periods of autumn. The deficit has shrunk so significantly that in many areas the water level is within a few inches of normal.

For three consecutive years, rainfall lagged behind the normal total of 31.3 inches, causing the water table to drop and topsoil moisture to disappear.

It is always sad to learn of someone's passing; it may be more true when that someone made unusual contributions in a way you appreciate. Such was the case when Bob Sommers sent USGA Green Section Committee members the obituary of Fred Grau.

This is as it appeared in the December 6, 1990 issue of *The New York Times*. Dr. Grau was a former national director of the Green Section.

Fred Grau, 88, Dies; Developer of Grasses

Fred V. Grau, an agronomist who developed a grass that is used widely to prevent soil erosion and beautify highway slopes, died Saturday at Prince George's Community Hospital in Cheverly, Md. He was 88 years old and lived in College Park, Md.

He died of congestive heart failure, his daughter, Ellen Mentzer of Silver Spring, Md., said.

Dr. Grau received his doctorate in 1935 at the University of Maryland. He was the founder of Grasslyn Inc. and developed crownvetch, a perennial that is widely cultivated for its pink flowers and tenacious roots. He also helped develop zoysia varieties that require small amounts of water and fertilizer and are used on athletic fields.

He was a specialist in turf grasses and from 1945 to 1953 was director of the United States Golf Association Green Section. Dr. Grau was an agricultural extension agent at Pennsylvania State University and was later with the Department of Agriculture's Beltsville Agricultural Research Station of the Department of Agriculture.

In addition to his daughter, he is survived by a son, Fred Jr. of State College, Pa.; a sister, Edith Reynolds of Pensacola, Fla., and six grandchildren.