



Walsh faced challenging decade

By Lori Ward Bocher

"Early in my career I never had any thoughts about becoming dean or even being in higher administration," says Dr. Leo Walsh, who soon will be stepping down as dean of the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences (CALs) at the University of Wisconsin-Madison.

Not only did he become dean, but he led CALs through one of its most challenging decades—a decade in which the agricultural economy plummeted, the university faced severe budget cuts, and special interest groups fervently challenged the university's role in research and technology.

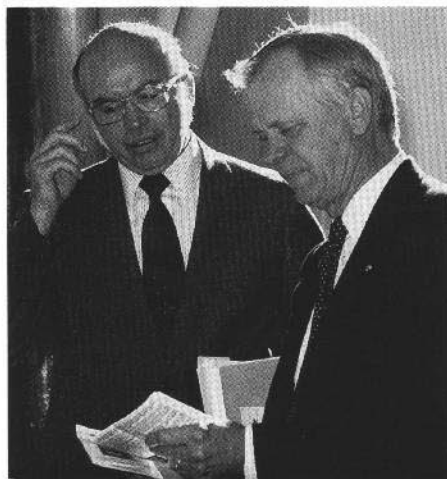
"Since the 1930's, agriculture probably never faced a decade more difficult than the 80's," said Walsh, who was named dean of CALs in 1979. "We experienced the demise of a lot of family farms due to the farm financial crisis. Subsequent to that we had two or three years of some pretty severe, dry weather that exacerbated the already difficult situation. It meant that farmers and most people living in rural areas were under a lot of financial pressure.

"This backed up into the college in that we had difficulty maintaining the number of students that we should have had," Walsh continued. "A lot of people from rural Wisconsin simply were not very excited about a career in agriculture or rural-related industries."

The farm financial crisis also fostered new ideas about research and technology. "Historically, we have looked at technology to help reduce the cost of production, help improve profitability," Walsh explained.

"Somehow, that got twisted around in the 1980's so that some critics felt that technology was the root cause of the problems that were experienced," he continued. "These people basically believed that, if we were to reduce or shut down technology so that additional production did not occur, the whole agricultural sector would be healthier.

"The problem with that idea is that we're not isolated," Walsh empha-



Dr. Leo Walsh with former U.S. Secretary of Agriculture, Bob Bergland.

sized. "We compete with other states, other nations. Unless there were some way to impose rigid trade barriers, there would be no way that you could maintain a profitable farm operation if the price of your corn or milk had to be 30 to 50 percent higher than some other part of the country simply because you didn't use technology and they did."

Another substantial challenge faced by Walsh and CALs during the 1980's was budget oriented. "Not only did the agricultural sector have difficult financial problems, but we did as well, primarily because budgets at both the state and federal levels didn't meet the inflationary increases and salary increases that we were experiencing in the 80's.

"As a result, we had to cash in positions in order to balance the budget," he continued. "That was particularly true in Extension. We lost about 25 percent of our total Extension staff in the college.

"The greatest satisfaction that I had as dean was being able to meet these challenges and come through the 80's in a way in which I think the college is as strong or perhaps stronger than it's ever been," Walsh said.

"We have a tremendously capable faculty. They continue to excel in terms of the research grants that they draw

to the institution. They continue to get more of the prestigious awards, national and international, than most other institutions.

"And we continue to have a tremendous relationship with the people of the state, the people that we serve," Walsh said.

Walsh was born in 1931 and raised on a livestock and grain farm near Moorland, Iowa. He received a B.S. degree in agricultural education from Iowa State University in 1952. When it came time to select an institution for graduate studies, he chose Wisconsin.

"I chose Wisconsin primarily because it had a reputation as being a very strong graduate and research institution," Walsh recalled. "This was particularly true in soil science."

He received M.S. and Ph.D. degrees in soil science in 1957 and 1959. He remained in Madison to accept an assistant professorship at the UW, and subsequently was promoted to associate professor and professor.

As a faculty member in the 1960's, Walsh was fully engaged in research and Extension education. His transition to administrator began in 1973 when he was elected as chairman of the soil science department.

"After serving in that administrative position for seven years, I felt that I had learned a good deal about administration," Walsh recalled. "So when the position of CALs dean opened up in 1979, I thought I'd give it a try."

During his years in the soil science department and as dean, Walsh witnessed the evolution of the turfgrass program at CALs. "When I first came to Wisconsin there was not a turf program," he pointed out. "Like they say, 'Necessity is the mother of invention.' It's the same with the turfgrass program."

Walsh credits Prof. Jim Love with getting the program started. In the 1960's, he was doing some research on the nutrient requirements of turfgrass. Consequently, people in the industry began to contact him about management problems. And students with an interest in turfgrass wanted him as an advisor.

At the same time, the horticulture and agronomy departments were working on the management and breeding of turfgrasses. And plant pathology developed a strong program which gradually evolved into the turf area.

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"From the mid-60's on, the turfgrass program evolved among the various departments," Walsh pointed out. Today, it is an interdisciplinary program among the soils, agronomy, horticulture, plant pathology and entomology departments.

"Jim Love was probably the principal person who devoted the time and effort to make the program more visible, to bring the program together in a way in which it attracted substantial numbers of very good students," Walsh said.

"He had a tremendous record in terms of getting these students placed in absolutely top notch golf courses around the country. Once you start achieving success—getting good students, having those students well trained and having them get good jobs—the program builds through word of mouth."

The O.J. Noer Center for Turfgrass Research is another example of how the turfgrass program has matured. Walsh gives credit to faculty members, industry representatives and former turfgrass students. "They worked hard to put this together, and they got the job done," he said.

"It's going to benefit the industry for many decades. I can't see our society not having a substantial need for quality recreational opportunities. Turfgrass is going to be a part of that."

The University of Wisconsin Golf Course also will benefit the turfgrass program. "It's something that we have some control over," Walsh pointed out. "Whenever we wanted to give students experience or do some research work, we always had to go out and beg for help from the people who were managing golf courses.

"While they were all very cooperative and certainly helped us out to the

extent that they could, it's not like having your own facility where you can control all of the variables."

Leo Walsh may be stepping down as dean of CALS, but he's not retiring; he's returning to the soil science department. "I'm going to be doing some water quality and conservation Extension programming, especially as it relates to plant nutrients that are in the environment," he explained.

"I hope to use my technical background and experience in soils, and the contacts I've made as dean, to try to coordinate and bring together some of these programs in a more effective way. I'll also be working part time for the Cooperative States Research Service of the USDA, helping to coordinate water quality and conservation programs across the North Central Region," Walsh concluded.

Reinders Conference A Huge Success

By Randy Smith

Reinders Turf and Irrigation Conference, Equipment Show and Service Clinic was held this past March 13 and 14. Approximately 1500 registrants, 24 guest speakers and 35 exhibitors participated in the 10th biennial "Mini National" held at the Waukesha County Expo Center. Some of these notables attending all 10 Conferences include Dr. Joe Vargus—Michigan State University, Dr. Bob Newman—University of Wisconsin, Don Maske—Nor-Am, and of course "Mr. and Mrs. Donut" Pam and Rick Lieburg—Hol 'N One Donut Co.

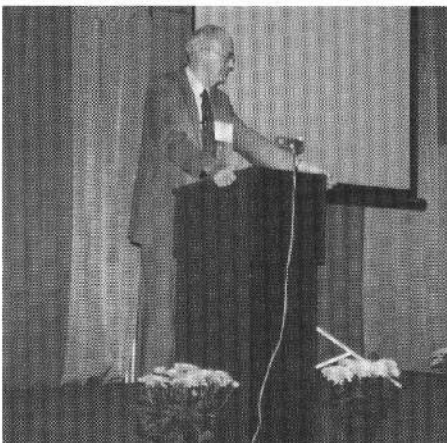
The equipment and supply exhibits filled the floor and balconies with a

wide variety of items. Among those was the new Hydro-Jet aerifier by Toro that may have been viewed for the first time by those not attending the GCSAA Conference and Show. There was a huge Olathe "clipper" that eats logs

and pallets, and a large Hahn topdresser on display outside of the Arena. The OSMAC by Motorola was also a popular booth.

Also highlighting this event were two days of customer-oriented engine and equipment service clinics, irrigation workshops, and timely educational seminars. Refreshments, door prizes and a lot of good shop talk made this a successful event.

By the way, if you are into planning your busy schedules well in advance, please note that the 11th Reinders Conference and Show will be Wednesday and Thursday, the 17th and 18th of March 1993.



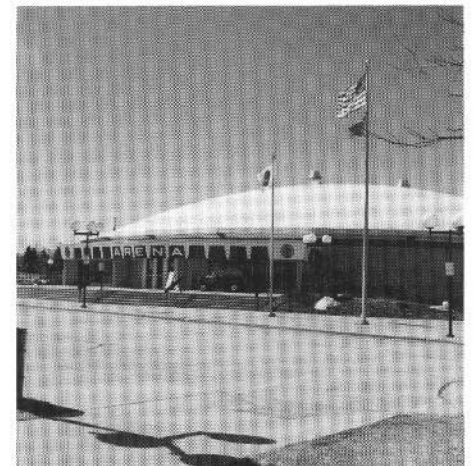
Plant Pathologist and Associate Dean Gayle Worf summarizes "Turf diseases and what have we learned?"



Toro's 5-Plex 223-D for light weight mowing.



New equipment draws a crowd



The Waukesha County Expo Center-site of the 10th Reinders Conference and Show