



RESPECT and ACCOMPLISHMENT

By Michael J. Lee

As I sort through various biographical sketches, press releases, journal articles and personal data sheets, I quickly develop a meek feeling. You see, that task at hand is to organize some words regarding the retirement of Dr. Gayle L. Worf.

Gayle is a Professor of Plant Pathology at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. To help illustrate this meek feeling, I offer some perspective on just how much experience Gayle has. I am 26 years old. Gayle is 62 years old. Gayle began his professorship in 1961, four years before I was born. I have four years of professional work experience, Gayle has more than forty years. He will retire in 1991 and I will retire in 2030 assuming I retire at age 65 (big assumption).

The point is that an overview article of Gayle's work is like a black and white single line sketch. The real picture is a wonderful display of brilliant colors, texture and fine details.

Highlights: Forty Years of Accomplishment

Gayle's education began at a time when the people of our country were united in a feeling of pride from the service and victory of their people in World War II. It is appropriate that he is retiring during a period of similar feelings and emotions.

Gayle, then 18, enrolled at Garden City Junior College in 1947. The college is located in his home town of Garden City, Kansas. After Junior College, he attended Kansas State University. There he received his Bachelor of Science degree in Agronomy and Master of Science in Agronomy and Plant Pathology. During this time Gayle also provided military service in the Air Force. He served as county agent in Ness County, Arkansas from 1955 to 1958. His next move was to the UW-Madison campus to continue his graduate education. In 1961 he was awarded his Doctorate degree in Plant Pathology and Botany.

Still on the move, Gayle went to Iowa State University as an Assistant Pro-

fessor of Plant Pathology. In 1963 Gayle accepted the position of Associate Professor at the University of Wisconsin-Madison and was promoted to full professor seven years later.

A modest and simplified sample of Gayle's career highlights follows.

1) Identification and isolation of *Leptosphaeria korrae* as the fungal pathogen of necrotic ring spot, formally known as *Fusarium blight*.

2) He has developed an extensive list of educational programs. The programs have organized and educated growers about the nature of plant diseases on woody ornamentals, field crops and turfgrasses. He has improved and expanded control measures to significantly reduce plant loss.

3) He has consistently assumed a leadership role in professional affiliations. He has chaired and served on many committees for the CALS, UW-Extension and Phytopathological Society. Recently he assumed the responsibilities of Dean of Extension.

4) He played a formidable role in the development of the plant pathogen detection clinic. The clinic has proved to be an ace in the pocket for plant managers throughout the state.

5) He is a major contributor to the popular publication *The Urban Phytonarian*. This rather large three ring binder is a compendium of plant disease bulletins pertaining to nearly all plants found in an urban setting. Gayle's publication list is a medley of nearly 200 titles.

6) He is a member of the Wisconsin Turfgrass Association's advisory staff. His expertise and thoughtful guidance shaped the WTA in its formative years.

7) He was one of the first pathologist to recognize and describe the significance of the susceptibility of Texas male sterile cytoplasm corn hybrids to a fungal disease.

Fun Experiences:

I worked for Gayle during the years 1987 and 1988 while going to school. I helped conduct field trials of turfgrass diseases and assisted with lab and

greenhouse work. I also accompanied Gayle during extension calls and association field days. We did a lot of day trips from Madison and this afforded many enjoyable and instructive conversations while driving through Wisconsin's splendid rural communities. Numerous events made a lasting impression of the high degree of reverence Gayle receives from friends and colleagues.

Gayle's recommendations are conservative and sure-footed. Years of repetitive work and experiences back Gayle's conclusions. This was evident during extension calls. Usually by the time we arrived, our client was visibly uptight and stressed. He or she just wants to know the quickest solution.

Gayle remains calm. After an hour or two of background discussion, epidemiology, stories of similar experience and an update on experimental fungicides we head back to the truck. As we'd get into the truck, the clients face would swell. From the window Gayle would say "you might want to try two ounces of Metalaxyl in late April and decrease your seasonal nitrogen to two pounds." Whoosh the client's face shrinks to normal size. As we drove off I wondered if the client realizes that learning about the problem is sometimes more important than the solution.

We made several trips to McKay Nurseries to look at Ash Decline. On one trip we passed through the administration office located in Waterloo, Wisconsin. We were looking for Ken Altorfer, and as we did, I recall the office staff leaning around their cubicles, "Hi, Gayle, how have you been?" they cheered. It was evidence that Gayle is well established and very welcome by all. On another trip, we were to meet a plant propagator at one of the greenhouses. The greenhouse was small and located amidst a thousand acres of plant material. I would not be able to find it again in a million years. Gayle drives right up to it, gets out and says hello to the employees on a first name basis. I also

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recall the enormous mosquitoes and wishing I had worn longpants.

Like most turfgrass managers, I find maintaining a basic understanding of patch diseases difficult. Nobody uses the same common name (so why are they common?) and all the common names are crossed referenced to *Genus species* nomenclature. And these names change like the weather. Then some people use the perfect stage name of the fungus rather than the imperfect, and so on.

Anyhow, on one trip to Stevens Point via highway 51, I asked Gayle to explain the history of how *Fusarium* patch evolved into Necrotic Ring Spot. He finished the answer on the way back to Madison! Ask him how the turf disease diagnostic kits were developed; the answer will take you at least to Rhinelander!

I really admire Gayle's personal style. He is just a darn likable guy. He radiates warmth and charm indicative of a seasoned gentleman. He has an abundance of natural humility and patience.

Gayle has the Wisconsin touch. His responsibilities have taken him to virtually all of Wisconsin's crossroads. His research is focused on solutions for problems here at home, rather than over

publicized national topics in the spotlight. One WGCSA member referred to Gayle as "Wisconsin's local hero".

A Parting Thought

Retirement is a faint image for many people and a prevailing one for Gayle Worf. There is, however, a very important linking similarity. The similarity relates to goal setting.

I believe that there is an enormous goal that motivates people as they work. I am not referring to money. For some people, the energy to achieve this goal is powerful enough to light a path through forty years of work. The goal is subtle; to achieve respect and meaningful accomplishment. They ask "will my accomplishments really make a difference? Will I leave a lasting impression on others?"

In our own eyes, many of us will achieve this. We are forgiving. An objective assessment is less forgiving. It is in this light that Gayle is an inspiration to anyone walking the same path.

EDITOR'S NOTE: Mike Lee is a graduate of the Turf and Grounds Management program at the UW-Madison. He currently is the assistant golf course superintendent at Blue Mound Golf and Country Club in Wauwautosa.

ANSWERS

(For Photo Quiz on page 24.)

1. Stan Zontek
2. Back row (L to R): Rod Adel, Peter Sarin, Dale Berthlein, Jeff Ruesch, Greg Sens, Brian Bruns. Middle row (L to R): Jeff Radder, Jeff Rodencal, Norman Ray, Carl Dowse. Front row (L to R): Joe Pittner, Jeff Parks, John Wilkie, Cal Couillard, Bob Avenius.
3. Tom Harrison
4. Wayne Otto
5. Rod Johnson
6. O.J. Noer
7. Roger Larson and Jerry O'Donnell (Jerry was expecting high water!)
8. Deke DeCramer

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