



Even his name shows his Love for life

By Lori Ward Bocher

Of all the Personality Profiles I've penned for *The Grass Roots*, why is this one on Prof. Jim Love so difficult to write?

Maybe it's because I realize you superintendents know Jim Love much better than I could get to know him during a two-hour telephone interview.

Maybe it's because, as one of his former students, I'm afraid he's going to grade my paper.

Maybe it's because Jim Love has such a vibrant personality and love for life that I fear I won't be able to capture his essence in a short article.

Maybe it's because, if Dr. Love likes this article, I'm afraid he'll send me a bucket of earth worms in appreciation.

Earth worms? Yes, earth worms. Those of you who know Jim know that he has a great deal of reverence for those marvelous creatures that aerate soil and decompose organic matter.

"Tell me, did you learn anything in my class?" Jim asked after I revealed that I had taken his Soils 301 course in 1981.

"Yes," I said. "Every time I see our friend, the earth worm, I think of you." Some people might take that as an insult. But I could see Dr. Love's smile over the telephone.

"Speaking of earth worms," he said, as he went on to explain how he makes compost. Sometimes he runs the compost through a quarter-inch screen. "You just can't take your hand and run it over the screen because that would smash those beautiful little earth worms. I pick them out. God, it takes me two hours to do a one-hour job."

In case some of you don't know, James R. Love was a Professor of Soil Science at the University of Wisconsin-Madison from 1954 until he retired in 1986. Beginning in 1960, he also started and headed the department's turf and grounds program.

But those facts do little to show the essence of Jim Love. To me, he's a man with many stories, many lessons and many missions. And through it all shines his unending zest for life. That zest shines just as bright in retirement.



A happily retired couple, Jim and Nancy Love.

"Monroe tells me that everywhere he goes, people ask him, 'Have you heard from Jim Love? What's he doing?' What are you doing now that you're retired?" I asked him.

"My retirement is so good, Lori. I tell you, I have to pinch myself. I think I've died and gone to heaven. It is marvelous. I enjoy every day," he answered.

"You made a pretty clean break when you retired, didn't you?" I asked.

"Oh, yes," Jim answered. "I always said, 'When I quit, I'm going to walk out of this office and leave it all behind. Brother Kussow is going to be in charge. I'm not going to be second guessing him, watching over his shoulder. I'm going to walk away because there are a lot of things in life that I haven't done.'"

Reading for enjoyment is one of those things. "When I was working, I could hardly keep up with the literature in my own field," he explained. "But now I can read things that I want to read. I have discovered authors I never knew existed. I love mysteries and travel adventures."

Playing cards is another. "I could get up in the morning, eat breakfast, and play cards all day long except for a break for lunch and supper," he said. Cribbage and bridge are his favorites, and he and his wife, Nancy, have made some major family decisions over the cribbage board.

"We named our first son by playing cribbage," he pointed out, explaining that Nancy wanted to name the first son

James, Jr., and he wanted no part of a "junior" name. "We named our son John. I won that cribbage game."

During his first year of retirement, Jim and the president of the American Cribbage Congress went into Madison grade schools to teach interested third graders how to play cribbage. "I think it should be mandatory that students learn how to drive, learn how to type, learn how to swim, and learn how to play cards before they get out of school," he insisted. "I've often said to my wife, 'I wish I had a billion dollars. I'd start my own school.' I've got definite ideas of what they should be teaching."

The Loves also have been doing lots of traveling since Jim's retirement in 1986. "I hear a train whistle, and I want to be on it. I see that plane in the air, and I want to be on it. I could go tomorrow," Jim pointed out.

They bought an RV for traveling in the U.S. "Our Springer Spaniel, ShyAnne, has been in 42 of the lower 48 states with us since I've retired," Jim explained. "We're gone three and a half to four



Nancy, Jim and Shy outside their RV in Door County.

months each winter." They've also traveled to New Zealand, Australia, China, Hong Kong, Japan, Germany, England, Scotland, Wales, Hawaii and Alaska since retirement. This summer they're taking a five-week trip to France and Italy that includes a barge trip on the Seine River.

While at home, gardening is a favorite activity for the Loves. "I take care of the fruits and vegetables, and my wife takes care of the flowers," Jim said. "Always in my life I've loved to garden. My grandmother had a big farm garden. I'd help her weed it, and I'd get to sell some extra vegetables."

Jim was born on a farm near Rugby in north central North Dakota. "The important thing to note about that little town is that it is the geographical center of North America," he was quick to point out. "This has been confirmed by National Geographic. And they've got a big statue outside of town."

Most of his childhood was spent in Rugby where his father worked at the post office. He was graduated from high school in 1939 but delayed college for a year because a football injury required four leg operations.

Jim attended North Dakota State Agriculture College for four years and received a BS in chemistry in 1944. Then he moved to Chicago to work in the research department at Armour and Company, a large meat packing firm.

"Armour was on S. Archer Ave. in Chicago, one of the few diagonal streets in the city," he recalled. "Do you know most of the streets in Chicago are laid out in a grid? But Archer was one of the diagonals. So every time I go to Chicago I still get turned around about 45 degrees."

After three years at Armour, Jim could see the hand writing on the wall. "If you only had a BS degree, you weren't going anywhere in research," he said. But he hadn't saved any money to return to college. "I was living from one paycheck to the next, living the life of a bachelor."

He happened to read about a school in northern Minnesota that needed a math and science teacher, so he quit his job at Armour and traveled to Minnesota. But when the school principal found out that Jim didn't have a teacher's certificate, he reluctantly turned him away.

So Jim returned to North Dakota—to a teacher's college in Minot where he met his wife, Nancy. He earned his teacher's certificate and taught in a junior high school for two years while Nancy finished her degree. Then in



The Loves are enjoying the good life of retirement, here on the shore of the Rio Grande River.

1950 they moved to Browning, Mont., headquarters of the Black Feet Indian Reservation, where Jim taught science and math and Nancy taught Kindergarten and first grade.

Jim was a demanding teacher even back in 1950, and it almost cost him his life. "I had a student pull a knife on me," he recalled. "I would say to him, 'When you walk through that arch you're in my classroom and this is what we do.' But he didn't want to do all the homework. He was mad. He pulled out a knife. I was so fortunate. I made a pass at it and grabbed it. I closed that blade and banged it down on the table and said, 'Charlie, put this away and let's get back to work.' I still play the old 'what if' game. What if I had missed that knife?"

A lack of pay helped the Loves decide to leave Montana. "They paid me too much to baby sit but not enough to teach," he said. In 1951, they headed to Madison so Jim could attend graduate school at the UW. "I was E.J. 'Pappy' Graul's last teaching assistant in what was then Soils 101," Jim recalled. "I'm real proud of that. Pappy Graul was one of the most marvelous old teachers. Everyone in the state of Wisconsin who ever took a short course or long course in soils took Pappy Graul's course."

Jim received his MS in soil physics in 1953, and then he was asked to teach Graul's old course, Soils 101. "I was one of the few who started out as an instructor because I just had my master's degree," he explained.

For his PhD, Jim switched to soil fertility and plant nutrition, "Which suited well for the eventual work I did in turf and grounds management," he pointed out.

Finishing his PhD thesis was difficult with a job and with two little boys at home. "I said to my wife, you're just going to have to take the boys to your folks' place in St. Paul. I just can't do any writing with all of you here," he recalled.

"They went there for a couple of weeks that summer. I pulled the shades in our apartment and couldn't tell if it was day or night. I finished that sucker up. That's a tough row to hoe, to have a job and work on a degree. I'd never do that again." In 1956, he earned his PhD degree and was promoted to an assistant professor.

In his 30 years as a UW professor, Jim always had an 85 percent instructional assignment. He taught Soils 301 and Senior Seminar every semester, plus Pro-Seminar for juniors each first semester. "We in the Soils Department thought it was very important that students learn to write and communicate verbally," he stated. "So they would write their seminar and then get up in front of their peers to deliver it. It was good training."

Having had Dr. Love for Soils 301 myself, I remember that he had a reputation as a tough professor. In fact, many of my fellow Dairy Science students dreaded his class. "Are you proud of your reputation as a tough professor?" I asked him.

"You're darn right," he answered. "Well, I wasn't proud of the fact that I was tough. I was proud of the fact that I taught the best darn course subject material wise on campus. The students knew exactly what was expected of them. They knew what the assignments were. They knew exactly how their grade would be formulated. I just tried to teach them about soils. It was a challenge to get through that subject in one semester."

When reviewing the Soils 301 evaluations at the end of each semester, Jim found that, "There was never the wishy-washy intermediate. They either loved the course or hated it. I guess I was quite happy with the fact that a lot of students would tell me, when they were out of school, that it was one of the best courses they ever had."

His "tough" reputation even followed him on a trip to Hawaii during his first year of retirement. He met a waitress who was a former UW student. "She said she never took my course because she was afraid of it," Jim explained. "She had heard that it was tough, and it wasn't a requirement for her, so she didn't take it."

As an undergraduate instructor, advising students was an important part of his job. And he's very proud of the excellent advising program in the College of Ag compared to other colleges, such as Letters & Science. "We have a reputation for looking after our students, freshmen through seniors," he stated. "Advising students was a big job. I al-

ways had 25 to 35 students." That included all of the turf and grounds students, of which Jim had up to 15 toward the end of his career.

As an advisor, Jim was adamant that all of his students receive practical work experience while going to school. Nothing was more important to him. "If you're a student in turf and grounds, you go out and you work for a golf course or a company that specializes in turf," he insisted.

"That practical experience, together with the good academic training, is just like two sides of a coin. You don't have a true coin if you only have one," he continued. "We required work experience. Only a few didn't go along with it. I'd say to them, 'You find yourself another advisor, because there's nothing written that says I have to be your advisor. Since you're not going to follow what I'm saying, then go get lost. I'm done with you.'"

Work experience also confirms whether or not a student is in the right field, Jim believes. "When you get done with it, you've either confirmed that, 'Yes, I love this and can hardly wait until I graduate.' Or, equally as important, you say, 'Boy, what did I ever see in this? Let me find something else.'"

Jim spent a lot of time helping his students line up internships. "And I had a rule that, whenever a student indicated an interest in a job, I would personally take him out and introduce him to the golf course superintendent," he added. "I wanted to show students that I truly cared. It became kind of a symbol that I'd always drive them out the first time. Many students later told me how much that impressed them."

"You were instrumental in starting the turf and grounds program at the UW," I interrupted. "How did that happen?"

"O.J. Noer, who earned his PhD in Soil Science at the UW, always felt bad that no one in the department was taking up his work," Jim explained. "He came on campus in 1960 and convinced me that it would be a good field to get into, and he convinced the department chairman that they should allow me to get into that area of work. Boy, I've never regretted it. It's been marvelous."

But it wasn't easy to convince the rest of the College that a turf program was needed. "I spent a summer going to the other departments to try to get an interdisciplinary major in turf," Jim recalled. "I tried to convince agronomy and horticulture. Would you believe, they wanted nothing to do with it.

"I went to the administration in Ag Hall," he continued. "They said there was no demand for it. It's true, we didn't have a program so we couldn't point to students. But there was a demand. People wanted to hire turf students.

"So administration told us that they couldn't do anything in the College, but we had their blessing to do anything we wanted to do in the Soils Department," Jim said. "I was chairperson of the curriculum committee at the time, so we set up the curriculum for the turf program. We made it interdisciplinary. Our students don't take just soils courses. In fact, they have more credits in other departments than in soils."

Turf students take courses in soils, plant pathology, entomology, horticulture and agronomy. And, even though there is only one course in the curriculum with "turf" in the name, students learn all they need to about turf—as well as the basic scientific principles behind everything they learn.

According to Jim, when he retired in 1986, the UW had more four-year graduates from its turf program than any other agricultural college in the U.S. "Penn State, Michigan State, Texas A&M, Purdue, Rutgers, Cornell—they're all big in turf. But they have lots of one-year and two-years graduates," he pointed out.

"I never, ever considered a one or two-year degree program," he continued. "The problem with that is, after you graduate, if you discover that it isn't what you want to do, you're stuck. You don't have the flexibility you have with a B.S. degree or go on for a graduate degree, for that matter."

Jim sounds like a proud father when he speaks of his successor, Wayne Kussow, the current head of the turf program. "I am so proud of Wayne. I had him as an undergraduate advisee. What a joy that was. He just made my

day when he said he'd take over the turf program."

Jim and Wayne worked together during a year of transition, and the turf program has continued to grow under Wayne's guidance. "The program has taken off like a jet. It's just doing great," Jim said. "Wayne has 25 students now, writes for *The Grass Roots*, has a big research project, has plot work at the O.J. Noer Center. I couldn't be any prouder if I were his father."

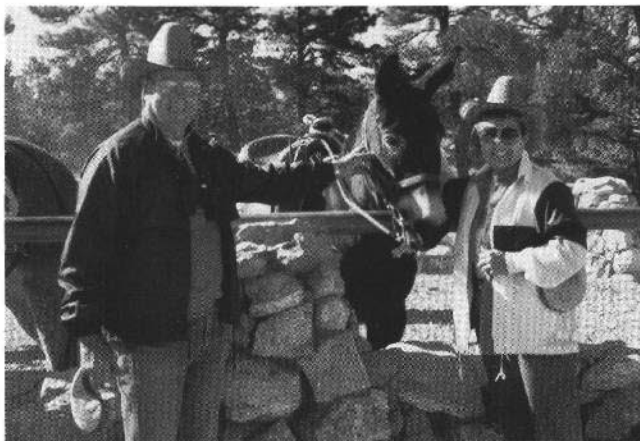
He's also proud of a special wall hanging in his home—a framed program from his retirement party. "I look at that thing and my chest bursts, my throat gets a little dry," he shared. "The most marvelous evening in the entire world was that May 18th, 1986.

"A year prior to my retirement, people asked me what I'd like for my retirement party," he explained. "I said, 'No retirement party for me.' I was adamant against a retirement party."

But others were adamant that he should have one, including Monroe Miller, Randy Smith, Bob Erdahl and others. So they planned a surprise party. "They knew I never would have come if I'd known," he said, adding that he really appreciates all of the planning and work that went into his party.

"Nan made a comment that evening when we got home. I think of it often," Jim shared. "She said, 'Boy, for a guy who never wanted a retirement party, you had the party to end all parties.' It was magnificent. I feel so humble and embarrassed that they would think enough of me to do that. It was a glorious evening to see all of those faces. It was just beautiful."

Well, Dr. Love has more to say. But I've run out of room. Already this is the longest Personality Profile in history. I'm happy to say that it wasn't so difficult to write, after all. Maybe that's because Jim Love has such an interesting personality to profile. But please Jim, no earth worms!



Tex and Nancy prepare to head down into the Grand Canyon on muleback last year.