



Another Conference to Attend

By Tom Schwab, Manager
O.J. Noer Turfgrass Research and Education Facility

The winter season sure is the time to sit back and relax from the rigors of summer life. Or is it? It seems the winter is getting so filled up with educational opportunities and meetings that it, too, is becoming more hectic. Granted, most of these conferences are great and really needed if we are to stay on top of all that is new in turfgrass management. But with that has come the demise of a slow season.

As the manager of the Noer Facility, I just gained one more conference to attend. A number of you have asked me who I work for out here. The Noer Facility is one of the 13 University of Wisconsin-Madison Agricultural Research Stations (ARS) spread throughout the state. These stations investigate almost every Wisconsin agricultural product, of which turf and urban agriculture is a big one. In early January we had a week long conference with all 20 of the farm managers and assistant managers of the stations.

This is a group of interesting and sharp individuals. I am the only one who doesn't hold a M.S. degree. There were lots of reports on policies and procedures. We also had a report from one of our managers who just returned from an advisory visit to Czechoslovakia to exchange some of his potato production knowledge. The other managers were encouraged to take short sabbaticals around the world to spread our American agricultural knowledge, also. Some day I may spend some time in West Africa developing some golf turf. My wife spent three and a half years there, in the Peace Corps and doing research on a doctorate degree, and just loved it.

There was another talk that encouraged ARS managers to invite the public out to our farms more often to show what the ARS system is about and to do some positive public relations. I thought the Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary Program (ACSP) that many of you use on your golf courses would be a great tool to help educate the public about the Noer Facility. It exists to study environmentally sound and efficient turf management techniques that provide quality plant life with fewer inputs. Why not tell the public about this?

University of Wisconsin-Madison College of Agricultural and Life Sciences Dean, Roger Wyse, came and talked to us. He had a message on how each research station should become more multi-disciplinary. I took that to mean that the Noer Facility should be investigating more than just turf. Golf courses are growing more than turf, so why not have our research station investigate information on ornamental grasses, prairie establishment, perennials and tree care, also? If we could get funding from these other disciplines and sources, like the Wisconsin nurserymen, commercial greenhouses, landscape contractors and other

professional associations, it would help out with the Noer Facility budget.

Lastly, we were presented information on the Worker Protection Standard (WPS) compliance. In the turfgrass business, WPS only pertains to production agriculture like sod farms, but it does include research farms. BINGO! It doesn't include golf courses, athletic fields, parks or lawn care companies. What we have to do at the Noer Facility this year is require that anyone who applies a pesticide must be certified, train everyone working here on pesticide safety, post in a central location notice whenever an application is made (and include specific information on that product), provide decontamination sites and strictly follow any reentry interval stated on the label.

It was great to meet my new Ag Research Station peers at our winter conference. The conference also made me realize my new position is going to be very interesting and challenging. After all, that is what most of these conferences do for us in the winter. They refresh our interest in our professions and give us new challenges and goals to go after.

In closing, I'd like to thank Jennifer Eberhardt for sketching my picture, Monroe Miller for thinking of putting it on the cover of the last GRASS ROOTS, and Frank Rossi for writing such a nice article about me and my family. I couldn't believe I could grace the same cover that has held so many legends in our business. Monroe and Frank both said that I'm going to be more in the limelight now and that people will want to know more about my move to the Noer. I still don't think I am worthy, but it is the highlight of my career. 🌱

**LEIBOLD
IRRIGATION
COMPANY**



Excellence in Irrigation®

Professional
Installation of
Complete Golf
Course Irrigation
Systems.

John Leibold
(815) 747-6024 Bus.
(319) 582-9351 Home
18950 Route 5 West
East Dubuque, IL 61025

"Satisfaction Guaranteed"