



He wants to make a difference

By Lori Ward Bocher

You read it here first. Scotts products soon will be packaged in 50-pound bags — not those oddball 35- and 42-pound bags. And you can thank Wayne Horman, former executive technical representative for Scotts in Wisconsin and now the new national marketing manager for fertilizer and seed.

"So whenever a superintendent sees a Scotts product in a 50-pound bag, especially greens fertilizer, he can say, 'Well, geeze, Wayne actually did do something,'" Wayne jokes.

As author of "The Surrounds" column in this publication, Wayne explained in his last article (Nov./Dec. 1997) why he made the career switch: So that he could be newsworthy enough to be featured in "The Personality Profile" column. "Monroe says there is nothing interesting about my life, so I am out to change that," Wayne challenged.

The challenge worked. Here he is. And his life is a little more interesting than Monroe indicated.

All kidding aside, his reasons for leaving Wisconsin for the marketing manager position at Scotts didn't have much to do with *The Grass*

Roots. "It's partly ego. It's also a chance to make a difference," Wayne says. "If I had been a tech rep forever, I would have had a small role in deciding what I was going to do every year. Someone else in a higher position would always decide what I should do and how I should do it.

"I saw the job as an opportunity to be part of a group of people who change things around, whether that's from what type of bag we package our product in, to what new products we develop," he continues. "It's really a control issue. I have a chance to really make a difference. Even though we're a big player in the industry, we could be even bigger if we gave superintendents more of what they want."

Wayne's predecessors at Scotts were marketing specialists who had to then learn the product line. In contrast, Wayne has worked as a tech rep since 1986. "I have actually used the products, sold the products, listened to the superintendents on a regular basis," he explains. "I've been there. I have a better grasp of what superintendents are doing. I can offer that perspective in my new position."

What are his specific job responsibilities? "We have a whole new fertilizer product line coming out," Wayne explains. "My job will be to educate and create all marketing materials for the product. I'll also be involved with developing new products in that line, whether it be a new fertilizer or a new analysis.

"And I'm responsible for the seed business which, in the future, is going to be absolutely huge because of the gene gun," Wayne continues. "You can buy soybeans right now that are Roundup resistant. Well, Scotts has the rights for this in the turfgrass industry. So if a superintendent has poa on his greens, he can use Roundup to take the poa out without killing the bentgrass. That's probably only four or five years away.

"The gene gun can be used for other needs — whatever you want to dream, it will be possible," he adds. "To be a part of that, to help direct the company in where it needs to go, is incredibly exciting."

Wayne officially started his new job on October 1, 1997. His family remains in Madison while he works in Ohio Monday through Thursday. The family plans to move to the Columbus area in February.

Both Wayne and his wife, Susan, are natives of Wisconsin. Wayne was raised in Port Washington where his father was a postal worker and his mother was a chef at a local hotel. During his high school years, Wayne's father helped him prepare for the Air Force Academy. But, for some reason, Wayne had his heart set on studying horticulture.

"I can't tell you exactly why I thought horticulture was so great," he recalls. "Maybe it was because my grandmother had gardens. I really wanted to grow roses. I thought that would be really neat."

During his junior year in high school, he attended a one-day program at the University of Wisconsin-Madison where he learned about the

horticulture program and met people who represented future employers. "It was a great experience — going to campus, seeing the school, meeting people," he remembers.

So when he graduated in 1979, he chose Wisconsin and horticulture over the Air Force Academy. "I nearly broke my dad's heart," Wayne recalls. "But I didn't want to become some sort of a pilot, or anything else that you would go to the Air Force Academy for. I just wanted to study horticulture."

As a hort major, it literally took a broken ankle to get him into the turf end of things. He was paying his own way through college, and his sophomore year he took a job at a nursery in Madison. Due to a broken ankle suffered while working at the nursery over spring break, he had to quit his job and was unable to work most of the following summer. Consequently, he didn't have enough money to return to school.

"So I took a job with ChemLawn as a lawn applicator in Madison," he points out. "I promised them that I would not go back to school for a year and a half minimum so they

would hire me. That's how I was introduced to turfgrass — learning from their agronomic training."

He worked there his year and a half, and he also worked part time in ChemLawn's telemarketing program as he eased his way back into school. He switched to a turf emphasis, thanks to his advisor, Dr. J.R. Love. He gained golf course experience by working at Cherokee and Blackhawk his last two years in school. And he graduated from the UW in December of 1985 with a BS in horticulture and soils.

"I was the only one out of my fellow graduates who didn't become a golf course superintendent," Wayne recalls. "I didn't have a good mechanical background. I can't rebuild engines. If you work on a small golf course, you have to be a jack of all trades. I really respect the superintendents who know a little bit about everything."

"I also longed for the sales side of the turf industry," he adds. It was another UW grad who helped him land a job with Scotts right out of college. "A gentleman named Jerry O'Donnell, one of the original turf

graduates from Wisconsin, was at Scotts. So I called him to ask about job opportunities. He set up an interview, and somebody flew to Madison to interview me during finals week."

Wayne got the job, and he actually turned in a blank chemistry final because he hadn't had time to study. "I already had a job lined up. I had a B going into the course and found out I'd pass no matter what. So I knew I'd graduate," he explains.

For his initial job, he worked out of Marysville, Ohio, as a tech rep. "I covered the whole western part of the U.S. calling on lawn care companies and sod growers," he points out. "I would get up on a Sunday, fly some place, travel for a week, and come back."

In January of 1990 he transferred to Wisconsin where he initially covered the entire state visiting golf courses only. As new reps were brought to Wisconsin and his geographic territory shrank, he started handling schools and athletic fields, too. "I've been lucky enough to have Lambeau Field and the Milwaukee County Stadium as accounts since

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1990," Wayne points out. "It's been wonderful. I have a Reggie White autographed football that Todd Edlebeck (grounds supervisor for the Packers) got for me. One of the perks of the job.

"The ultimate experience was being on Lambeau Field, looking at the turfgrass with Todd, and having Brett Favre walk across the field, look at us, and ask us what we were doing," he continues. "It was our chance to educate Brett Favre on grass."

During his nearly eight years on the job in Wisconsin, driving was his least favorite and most favorite part of the job. "It's ironic," he admits. "But driving was the worst part because I was away from my family a lot, which isn't easy. It's funny how some superintendents will look at sales reps and think their job is easy because they don't have to work on weekends. But superintendents can go home every night. They're both difficult jobs with their pluses and minuses.

"The best part of the job was also driving," Wayne continues. "Getting around, seeing different people, visiting all types of superintendents with all types of backgrounds. I'd get to know all about their families. Sometimes it was kind of like being a therapist. I'd hear about their problems and issues, whether it would be in their personal lives or dealing with the greens chairman, the crew, or just the golf course itself.

"I really learned to respect superintendents. They put their whole life into something that everyone else takes for granted. For most people, golf is a game you play for entertainment. For superintendents, it's their whole life," Wayne adds.

He also enjoyed the variety of things he'd see while traveling down the roads of Wisconsin. "An Amish buggy one day, a road I'd never traveled on the next day, a new sign I'd never seen before. I used to take a map and put lines on it to indicate, 'Hey, I've been on this road.' Wisconsin is a great place to live and travel because there's so much to see."

His travels led him to "The Surrounds" column because he was always out on the road visiting superintendents. "Monroe is very persuasive," he emphasizes. "He suggested that I owed it to The Grass Roots, as

well as the industry, to provide a service that, in his words, everyone wanted to read.

"I tell you what, superintendents weren't all that helpful in sending me the information," he admits. "I really had to pull teeth sometimes. I think some people saw it as gossip. Others wanted to remain modest. So it was rare when they called me. But I'd hear about their news eventually — from other superintendents or at the association meetings."

Wayne served the industry as president of the Wisconsin Turfgrass Association in 1995-96. "That was interesting," he recalls. "It was during the time we were trying to find a replacement for Dr. Frank Rossi. It was a down time. We lost a really good person in Frank, someone who really made a difference in the turf program. We had to keep the ship afloat and try to make it better."

Having traveled to golf courses in other states, Wayne believes the superintendents in Wisconsin are especially friendly. "They're more receptive to letting people come into their shops. It's like letting people into your home," he says. "I don't know if you'd see that in every part of the country.

"And the courses here are great," he continues. "Obviously, the more money available to spend on a course, the better the course. But where I think Wisconsin really makes a difference is with its modest-budget courses which still are able to give such a quality product."

How? "I think it's education," he answers. "More and more education is being provided for superintendents these days. There's also better communication between superintendents. I'm not saying there's not competition out there. But I think that Wisconsin superintendents, for the most part, are willing to share information.

"They're also using better products today, whether it's the equipment or soft goods, like fertilizer and fungicide," Wayne continues. "The unfortunate part of that is that the better equipment sometimes makes the job more difficult. The equipment lets you cut at a lower height, but the turfgrass itself hasn't changed that much. You're trying to have that plant do some things it's not accustomed to doing."

Wayne's favorite courses to play in Wisconsin are the River Course

at Blackwolf Run and Stevens Point Country Club — the former because it's challenging and unique, and the latter because it's such a "great product."

Other hobbies include volleyball, softball, and being a Packers fan. "Probably the most fun I have is with gardening and landscape design," he relates, adding that it was especially fun when his wife's uncle named new day lily hybrids — Little Josh and Little Ben — after their two sons.

Joshua is 5 years old and Benjamin is 18 months. "Fortunately, they look like their mom," Wayne adds. "Susan is a first grade teacher who has been job sharing since the children were born. She won't be able to job share in Ohio, so she won't be teaching for a few years.

"My claim to fame is my wife's dad, Jerry Apps," Wayne says of the celebrated author of textbooks and of Wisconsin history and folklore. Wayne hasn't read all of his books, but he is excited to see pictures of his kids in some of them.

Wayne hasn't convinced his father-in-law to write a history of golf courses in Wisconsin. "He wants Monroe to do that," Wayne points out.

Think Monroe will include a section on when Scotts finally put its golf course products into 50-pound bags, thanks to Wayne Horman? We'll see. 🍀

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