



Spring Harvest

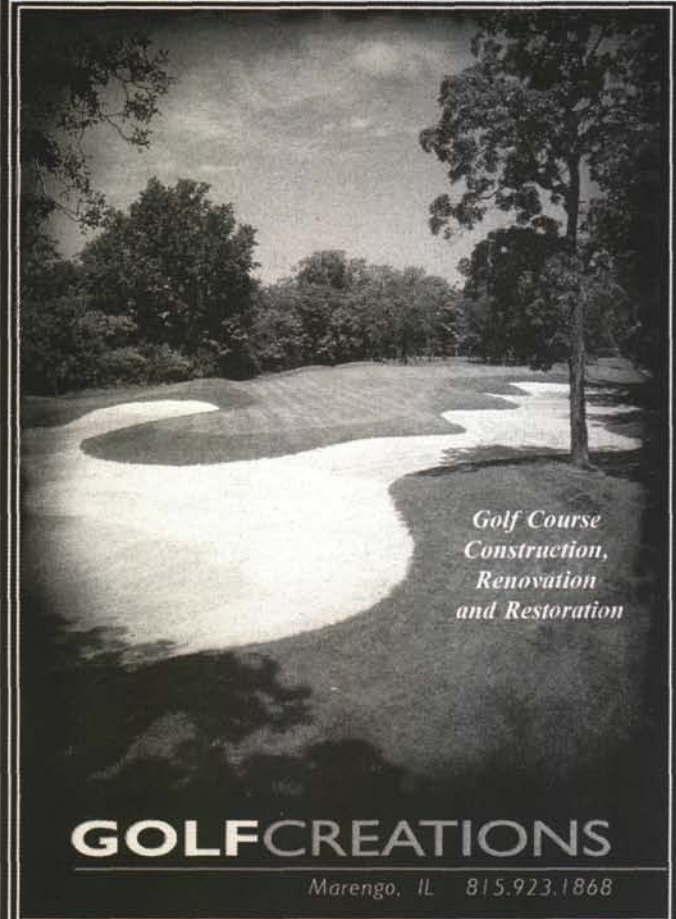
By Krome Burke-Scoll, Department of Plant Pathology, University of Wisconsin-Madison

Greetings, although I've already met many of you, at both field days, or through our snow mold collection project, I'd like to introduce myself for the first time in *Grass Roots*. I work as a Research Specialist, and Lab Manager for Dr. Geunhwa Jung in the Department of Plant Pathology. Most of you have had occasion to meet Geunhwa and appreciate his enthusiasm and the commitment he brings to the turfgrass program. I am excited to play a part in the development of his research extension program, and help determine its future direction.

A brief synopsis of my history; I graduated from the University of Wisconsin-Madison, in 1998 with a B.S. in Agricultural Science, as well as a high school teaching certificate. I worked a variety of jobs, and then joined the Peace Corps, and worked in Niger, Africa for a time. Upon my return to the U.S., I promptly left again to spend time exploring the terrain and culture of Eastern Europe (sorry to say I didn't tour a single course while there). Once again in Wisconsin, I began to feel the urge to do something of more value to my locale, I did some prototype work for a

large Wisconsin bicycle manufacturer, who shall remain nameless, but still was unsatisfied. I decided to make a return to my first love, and begin a professional approach to science. The marvelous and mysterious interactions between plant and pathogen have always fascinated me, so the Department of Plant Pathology was an easy choice. Lucky for me they had a new professor, who was hiring.

Through my work with the turfgrass program I have been exposed to an industry I had very few dealings with before. I have taken a lot of criticism from



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friends and associates involved with "serious" plant research, I have been told that I am wasting my time on improving the situation for a game of leisure for the wealthy. Honestly at first I was worried, maybe these people were correct? Maybe I was wasting my time, and valuable resources. Then I began to explore the history of the turf industry, and most importantly I began to become involved in the activities where I could meet and talk with people who make up the industry. I realized that the critics were mistaken, on several counts: golf is a game of leisure, this is true, as is fishing and auto racing, or cross-country skiing, but it is not for anybody to judge someone on their method of relaxation. Also, I found many people from all financial levels and all walks of life who loved the game, correcting for me another common misnomer. Finally, and most importantly for me to feel committed to the cause, I discovered almost universally, folks working in the turf field are not the water wasting, chemical

crazed (in the application sense) resource wasting demons that seems to be a popular caricature at the moment. In fact all of you expressed deep interest in completely the opposite, creating beautiful places where a person can shrug off the problems of our

fast paced society and play a game with their friends.

I met one superintendent after another this spring who was feeling annoyed at the popular portrayal of the industry as a relic unfit to exist in this modern world. People who felt daily chal-

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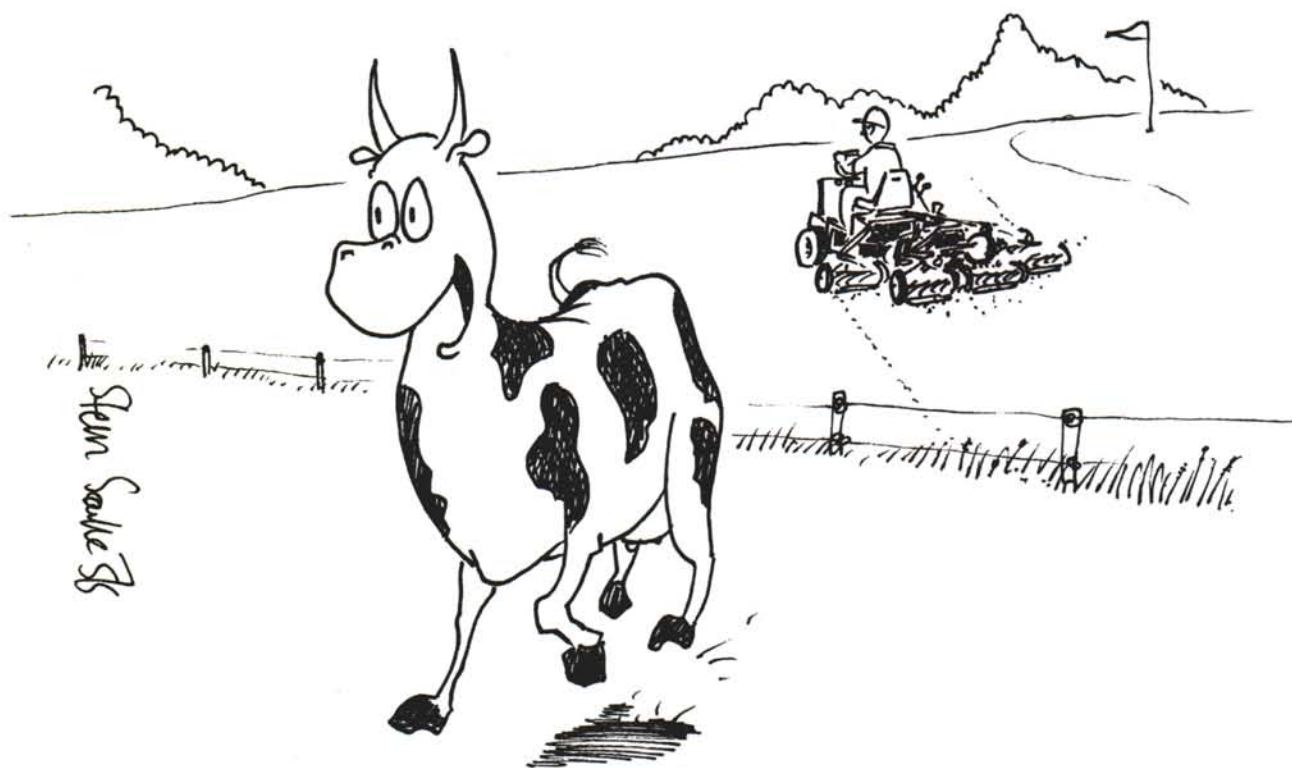
lenged to reduce their environmental effects from the inside of their being, and from without. I can empathize, there is absolutely nothing more exasperating than wanting and trying your best to achieve a level of performance and then having others jump down your throat before you can try. Or even worse assuming you were only making the changes due to fiscal concerns or a new statute in the law. It can make one feel like being a scapegoat is their lot.

No one wants a filthy environment, not me, not you (the entire turf industry), not the golfers. I don't believe this is or should be a point of contention. The general public wants to feel safe, the

golfers want a clean, attractive place to play, and you want to provide these assurances. Almost all of you fall into both of these groups, so I have great difficulty buying into the popular trend to "beat up on golf courses" as the source of our environmental problems. I feel in Wisconsin a strong chain has been formed between the turfgrass industry and research. I strongly believe research can help provide some answers to the misguided voice of media concern. We can help you achieve your goals as turf professionals, and the potential is there around each corner that we can do it with less waste, less money, and more efficiently than ever

before. These are some of my feelings on the current venue we are all playing in; let me elaborate some on what we are doing from the research end to help reach many of our goals.

It's been a bit more than a year since I took this position, and I'd like to take this opportunity to cogitate briefly on the development of our research agenda. Aside from the basic challenges of creating infrastructure, training employees and graduate students, our lab has done some deep searching to determine what to study. Quite a question really, these beginning years will form the foundation of this budding endeavor. With that in mind, we



"HEY! GUESS WHAT, EVERYBODY!
HE SAID I COULD LICK THE REELS
WHEN HE'S DONE MOWING!"

thought about many areas of study and their potential value both to you, our extension constituents, and the scientific community.

Aiding the turfgrass professionals and homeowners in our region is our highest ideal; subsequently we selected several key turfgrass species and some of their prevalent pathogens as targets for our efforts. Currently we are working heavily with bentgrass species (*Agrostis* spp.) to find genes of disease resistance to both snow molds, (*Typhula* species, *Microdochium nivale*) as well as dollar spot (*Rhizoctonia floccosa*) and to utilize them for a breeding program. We are also working with Kentucky bluegrass (*Poa pratensis*) cultivars to help resolve the difficult question of blend design, and to help illuminate the sketchy practice of phe-

notypic grouping based solely on observation. Additionally as laid out in last month's *Grass Roots*, by Dr. Geunhwa Jung, we have just completed a mega-collection of snow molds. These were sampled from over 100 courses across the state representing all temperature and snow cover duration regions. Currently three people are spending eight hours a day preparing these samples for analysis. Soon we hope to critically examine the variety of snow molds that occur in this state with more alacrity than ever before. We hope to use this information to aid the industry in adding a new degree of efficiency and precision to snow mold control.

We are preparing for the future problems of the Wisconsin turf industry by starting an ambitious ryegrass: gray leaf spot (*Magnaporthe grisea*) resistance

project now before the problem is lurking on our collective doorsteps. Also a list of Kentucky bluegrass cultivars will be screened for resistance to fungal pathogens *Bipolaris sorokiniana* (called Helminthosporium leaf spot), *Leptosphaeria korrae* (called necrotic ring spot), and *Drechslera poae* (called melting out) in our program. In short, after a tad over a year of interaction with you, we have designated many of your problems as our challenges. We are rapidly moving in a direction of becoming experts in the above subject areas. Our aim is simply to dissect and elucidate them to your benefit.

We certainly have been blessed with a dedicated team, most scoffing at the idea of a 40-hour workweek. Geunhwa Jung, Jeff Gregos, a great group of three new graduate students (see last issue) each of whom bring new outlooks and critical skills to the program. We also continue in our vein of recruiting hard working undergraduate students for both Jeff's team and our staff here in the Russell Labs. These folks are really dedicated, and my constant hope is to entice them to somehow remain in the field.

As for me, it has been a year of discovery. There is a great deal to learn about the turf industry and its supporting faculties. I have thoroughly enjoyed the chances to meet with you, learn about your programs, facilities, and concerns. I think the tighter linked science and industry are, the better both will be served. It's ludicrous to research in a vacuum, as it is to do business in an uninformed state. To that end I see forging ahead and strengthening the relationships we already have, and building new ones will be fortuitous for all of us. As you have the time, the door to the lab is always open, and we look forward to seeing you all at field days. ♣

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