

# Noted Turfgrass Scientist Remembered

By Dr. R.Chris Williamson, Department of Entomology, University of Wisconsin-Madison



The turfgrass industry has recently suffered the loss of a highly acclaimed scientist, person, teacher, and mentor to all. On May 15, 2001, Dr. Michael G. Villani died following a lengthy illness with pancreatic cancer. Mike was a professor of entomology at Cornell University at the New York State Agricultural Experiment Station, Geneva, NY. He specialized in ecology and control of soil insect pests of turfgrass and horticultural crops. Much of his research concentration was on a complex of scarab beetle species (white grubs), which as larvae damage a wide range of food and cash crops. In addition, Mike focused on both abiotic and biotic factors affecting the behavior and survival of insects within the soil environment. His projects on soil insects placed himself and Cornell University in the limelight as the center of excellence for this type of research. Mike developed an unique radiographic technique (X-ray) to study the behavior of soil insects. He also intensively studied and made recommendations regarding the use of Integrated Pest Management (IPM) strategies for controlling insects. Such strategies included the impact of soil physical properties on chemical and microbial insecticides, the use of pheromones in grub monitoring and management, the use of fungal pathogens, and the use of nematodes to control turfgrass insects.

Mike served as a co-author with Drs. Haruo Tashiro and Patricia J. Vittum on a revision of a book originally written by Dr. Tashiro on *Turfgrass Insects of the United States and Canada*. This book is considered by many as the most useful resource for identification

and management of turfgrass insects, and it is the manual of choice among golf courses including golf courses such as Pebble Beach.

During his career, Mike received numerous awards and honors including the Outstanding Service Award from the Turfgrass Council of North Carolina in January 2001, a Citation of Merit from the New York State Turfgrass Association in 1999, the National Recognition Award in Urban Entomology from the Entomological Society of America in 1997, the Distinguished Achievement Award in Urban Entomology from the Eastern Branch of the Entomological

Society, as well as several others. He also had participated in the program of the Wisconsin Golf Turf Symposium.

Mike is survived by his wife, Connie; two daughters, Sara (18) and Kate (14); his parents, Salvatore and Concetta Villani, East Meadow, New York; a sister, Susan (Tom) Capasso, East Meadow, New York; two brothers, Thomas (Elizabeth), Point Lookout, New York and John (Gilda), Durham, North Carolina; niece Marie Capasso, nephews Andrew Capasso and Christopher Rodriguez Villani; and several aunts, uncles, and cousins. ♣



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