



A FOND FAREWELL TO THE TURF DOC

By **Oscar Peterson**, Golf Course Superintendent, Watertown Country Club

When University of Wisconsin - Madison turf students and faculty, both past and present, recall their experience with UW-Madison's Soil Science Department, many undoubtedly remember the impact that one person had on their lives. That influence is Dr. Wayne Kussow, who after nearly twenty years of service to turf students, will be retiring this summer.

To commemorate his retirement, a celebration was held at Blackhawk Country Club in Madison on June 7th. Approximately 80 well-wishers attended the party; old advisees, current students and the entire UW-Madison turf faculty. Many took this opportunity to give a long deserved thank you to a man who has given so much to so many people. His passion for his work and in helping others influenced years of students as shown by the attendance and the positive comments that echoed throughout the evening.

The party began with a receiving line as Dr. Kussow greeted familiar faces from past and present. Some were current students and others were faces from twenty years ago. He recognized everyone and remembered individual accomplishments. Some were from Wisconsin and others traveled from long distances: Tennessee, New York, Florida, California and even Barbados.

Oscar Peterson welcomed everyone and began the evening with an informal interview of Dr. Kussow. Attendees were given a little history right from the horse's mouth. Oscar went on to relay his experience as a turf student, advisee of Dr. Kussow and as a graduate. His was an experience

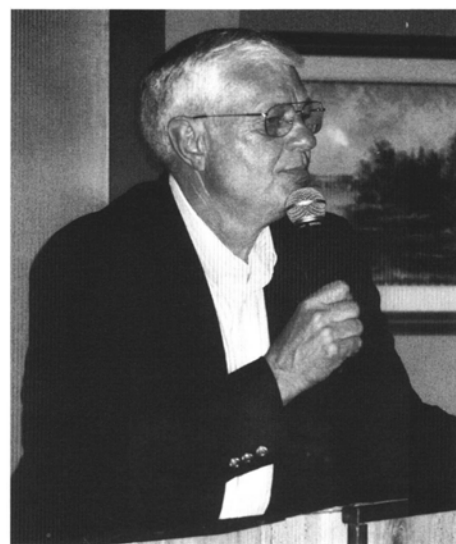
similar to others in the room with many accolades going to the positive influence and advisement from the Turf Doc. Oscar stressed that over the years there was no formal way as students to thank him for his work; no gold watch to give or plaque to hang on the wall. Therefore the party, a ball rack with enough spots for all of his graduates to display a golf ball from their club, and a lifetime of golf shirts were presented to him. These were small gifts in comparison to the words of praise received throughout the evening.

The night continued with an invocation from graduate, Kendall Marquardt. He asked for thanks in bringing everyone together for such a meaningful occasion. He, along with the others, wished Dr. Kussow well with his future endeavors.

Doug Soldat, currently finishing up his PhD at Cornell University, was next at the microphone for a toast. He recalled some interesting stories while obtaining his Masters degree under Kussow's advise-

ment. He enlightened us with some of Dr. Kussow's common sense approaches to problems and how they have helped him out in his career.

During the dinner, guests made good use of the open microphone. Praise was given for publishing useable, common sense research when he was capable of more chal-



Honored guest, the retiring Professor Wayne R. Kussow.



Wayne and Carol Kussow were guests of students, both former and current.

lenging, career profitable research. Tributes for teaching class material that is still relevant in today's world were mentioned. People shared stories of Dr. Kussow's help in landing internships, that difficult first job, and ultimately obtaining people's dream jobs. Professors lamented about him being on their tenure advisement committees. Students also remembered him for helping out in times of crisis, not always having to do with coursework or college careers. He was always there for everyone at anytime.

We were fortunate to have Dr. Jim Love present. This was fitting because he was the one who interested Dr. Kussow in first entering graduate school. Consequently Dr. Kussow ended up being Dr. Love's replacement twenty years ago. Dr. Love shared some history about the college and the politics and processes of appointing Dr. Kussow to the post, a decision that he influenced and ended up being very proud of.

All three of Dr. Kussow's sons were there to talk about fond memories of their childhoods as kids of the Turf Doc. We all discovered he might be the only turf care professional in the industry that actually does have a nice lawn! Good thing my wife wasn't around to hear that one.

The celebration continued with a photo taken of all in attendance, a great keepsake for Dr. Kussow to remember an evening of thanks and praise from years of lives that he has impacted. A wonderful dinner and drinks, along with plenty of "Wisconsinizing" concluded a memorable evening with friends and colleagues.

To an outsider, this would have appeared to be a celebration for an extremely well liked man who did an exceptional job spanning his entire career, which it was essentially. But upon closer examination, a common link repeated itself with



Carie and Aaron Goninen, Chad Grimm and George Magnin were happy to celebrate with Dr. Kussow.



Oscar Peterson, Watertown CC superintendent, organized the recognition dinner and served as MC. Josh Lepine constructed the ball rack to Oscar's right



Dr. Chris Williamson, Wayne's colleague, shared a few stories.



Mike Semler, like so many others, expressed gratitude to the Turf Doc.



The evening concluded with a class picture!

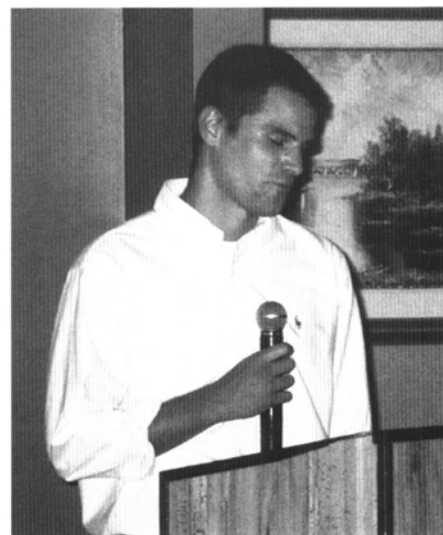
every story told and every comment shared. Dr. Kussow has the remarkable ability to make each and every student feel like a special individual. Everyone felt at one time or another that he/she received special considerations and extra time that they didn't necessarily expect or even deserve. They were thanking Dr. Kussow for something that isn't in any job description. They thanked him for taking that extra time and just for caring. Everyone was pleased to have this opportunity to finally say "thank-you" to the Turf Doc.

Dr. Kussow retired? We all know that he is still only a phone call away. No one really believes that he is ready to hang up his soil probe for good just yet. Just as he has always had the time and interest to help each of us, he will undoubtedly remain influential in our lives and careers. It is his time now to take some well-deserved vacations, maybe even during the summer months! Keep him alive in the industry; give him a phone call when you get that next job or just when you want to hear a familiar, encouraging voice.

For all that he has given, we are all better people because of his guidance. Thanks for being an outstanding friend, colleague, and the ultimate Turf Doc. 🌿



Dr. Kussow recognized the great impact Dr. Jim Love had on his career.



Doug Soldat made the long trip from Cornell University to Wisconsin to toast Wayne Kussow.

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