



The Dean DOES Matter

By **Monroe S. Miller**, Golf Course Superintendent, Blackhawk Country Club

My father was a big influence in my reverence for the dean of the College of Agricultural and Life Sciences at Wisconsin. He had that same respect. I have heard many stories about his freshman year at the UW - Madison, and the most oft repeated involved the dean's horse.

Dad had a room in the Stock Pavilion on campus and earned that room by doing chores - cleaning pens and barns, and feeding livestock housed on campus. In 1940, the College still had livestock at what is now Eagle Heights graduate student housing a mile or so west of campus. He usually rode a horse there from campus. He especially enjoyed those chores at Eagle Heights when he rode the Ag dean's horse to get there. Apparently it was a "spirited" animal and Dad said he wasn't quite as spirited after he rode him through the University Bay marsh to get to Eagle Heights. He was sure Dean Christensen would have approved!

Dean Christensen was a favorite, but Dad also spoke of fondness for Dr. Ira Baldwin and Dr. E.B. Fred. He was familiar with those CALS deans because of WW II; Christensen left in 1943 and was succeeded by Dr. Fred. E.B. Fred was named president of the University in 1945 and when Dad returned from overseas in WW II, Ira Baldwin had succeeded Fred as dean. Since both Baldwin and Fred were bacteriologists, many students had them as classroom instructors; that included Frank Miller.

Dad often told another story that related to the atmosphere in Ag Hall and the concern administrators had for students. He needed permission to miss a few days of classes to go home and help get the crops planted in the spring. Associate Dean Kivlin gave him that permission and asked, "Frank, do you have any money to get home on?" Of course he didn't, but hitch hiking didn't require money. Dean Kivlin gave him a couple of bucks "just in case you need it."

Dad gave the money back to Dean Kivlin after he returned from planting. He never forgot the gesture and shared the incident with others many times in his life. My daughter Christie, a CALS grad with a degree in Genetics, tells similar stories, especially with undergraduate advising and help she received directly from Associate Dean Paul Luden.

In my life, several men who have held the top spot in CALS have influenced me. My freshman year - 1964 - was the same year Dr. Glenn Pound started his

tenure as dean. He was a high-energy guy who provided visionary leadership in the position until 1979. Anyone enrolled in CALS during those years probably had the chance to meet and talk with Dean Pound.

Dr. Leo Walsh, known to many people in the golf course industry, succeeded Dean Pound. Students in the Wisconsin turfgrass science major were housed in the Department of Soil Science, the same department Dr. Walsh served as a professor and chairman. We knew him as a bright, ambitious, decisive man who could be as affable as he could be tough. He had experience in research and Extension in the department and was extremely well prepared for the duties of dean of the College.

We prospered under Leo's leadership because he encouraged and supported the creation of the O.J.

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Noer Turfgrass Research and Education Facility. It wouldn't exist today without his efforts, and every summer at the Wisconsin Turfgrass Association Summer Field Day at the Noer, Leo Walsh is there, shaking hands, kicking tires, visiting with old friends and checking out the latest in turf research. He's a personal friend to many of us and a real friend of our industry. He stayed in the dean's position for ten years.

When Donna Shalala was in charge of the Madison campus as chancellor, she appointed a man to the CALS dean position that had no previous connection to Wisconsin, a mistake in the minds of many people associated with CALS. I think his lack of history in Wisconsin had little to do with his failure, and character had everything to do with his short tenure in the position. It was a short chapter we would like to forget. Shalala made a number of bad appointments that have become part of her legacy at Wisconsin.

A great man rose to the task of righting the ship. Dr. Neal Jorgensen had a successful career on the CALS faculty, following a path somewhat like Leo Walsh's. He was a farm kid from Luck, Wisconsin who also had a successful Extension and teaching and research program in the Dairy Science Department. He had some experience as an associate dean, so when he stepped into the dean's office he knew what was going on. He always was grateful for the support of the turf industry and appointed the first turfgrass professional to the board of visitors. Neal returned respect to the position.

When the selection process was going on for Neal's replacement, guys like me hoped for several things - an applied scientist, a plantsman instead of an animal scientist, a great intellect with a strong background in administration, high ethical and moral standards, and a Wisconsin person.

We were introduced to a person with all but two of our requirements; Dr. Elton Aberle was an animal scientist most recently from the University of Nebraska who grew up in northeast Kansas. That was seven years ago.

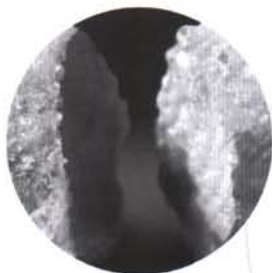
Dean Aberle is retiring this summer, and once again I am left with an empty, hollow feeling, thinking he is going to be nearly impossible to replace. Abe, to anyone who has spent even a little time with him, is one of the finest individuals you could ever know. He is an excellent administrator and has earned respect from faculty and deans all across campus. He is fair, listens when you talk to him and has an easygoing style that is enormously appealing.

He also enjoys golf; many WGCSA members have gotten to know him from our WTA annual golf fundraiser in the fall because he is frequently there. You have also seen him at the Summer Field Day

and the WTA EXPO each January. When he arrived from Nebraska, he had an appreciation for turf programs and knew the turf faculty there. In fact, he told me that he and Bob Shermann attended the same church. He has continued to appoint turf professionals to the board of visitors; Mike Lee is the most recent.

The next while will be pins and needles time. I cannot find anything out about the search and how it is going - rather secretive, it seems. Ultimately John Wiley, the Madison chancellor, will make the choice. It is a critically important selection, to all of us. And whoever is chosen has a mighty big pair of shoes to fill and traditions to live up to. About all we can do is hope for wisdom on the part of those making the decisions, pray that objectivity will prevail, and the best choice for the citizens of Wisconsin is made.

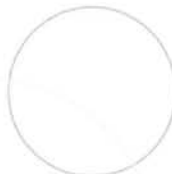
And to Dean Aberle, thanks for a job very well done. You have spoiled us all. ✦



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