



# Now It's Time to Say Good-bye

By Lori Ward Bocher

In the words of the immortal Bob Hope, "Thanks for the memories." After writing 95 Personality Profile columns in 15-1/2 years, it's time to step down. It's not that I don't enjoy it – I could go on doing this for years. But I've stepped up to a full-time job – 40 hours a week at work, 10 hours a week commuting until my husband finds something closer to my job. Kids in middle school and high school. There's just no more time left in the week.

For this final column, I chose to interview myself about my 15 years as a writer for *The Grass Roots*.

## How did you first come to write the *The Grass Roots*?

It all started back in 1990 when Monroe Miller and I served together on the WALSAA (Wisconsin Ag and Life Sciences Alumni Association) board together. I was doing some free-lance writing for a turf publication and

he was looking for someone to write a new column he had in mind – The Personality Profile. The rest is history.

## What's it like to work with Monroe as an editor?

Without a doubt, Monroe is the most appreciative editor that I've worked for in 17 years of being a free-lance writer. He is always quick to praise my writing and my knack for drawing information out of people. He always conveys comments from the people I write about, telling me how much they enjoyed working with me and how excited they were to have their day in the sun. Some editors get used to your writing over the years and cease making any comments about it. Monroe never failed to compliment me.

One thing you readers may not know is how much Monroe agonizes over who will be featured in The Personality Profile. He has always tried to cover

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everyone involved in the different professions, organizations and companies. It took many years before he assigned a still-working golf course superintendent because he didn't want to offend everyone else; so he chose superintendents with something unique going on in their work or lives.

## Has your job changed much in 15 years?

Not too much. Monroe gives me a name. I call to set up a personal or telephone interview. I conduct the interview, transcribe it, write the article, send it to the interviewee for approval, and send it to Monroe. For years I sent a paper manuscript to Monroe. The past few years I've sent most articles electronically and directly to the printer. Even Monroe has entered the electronic age! He has also eased up on his deadlines a bit!

## Do you have a favorite article?

Not really. Some were easier to write than others, some turned out better than others. But, like a parent who can't choose a favorite child, I can't choose a favorite article.

## Was there an interview that was most memorable?

I'd have to say one of my most memorable interviews was with the late great Wayne Otto. For years I had heard other golf course superintendents talk about Wayne in both glowing and humorous terms. When Monroe chose Wayne for a Personality Profile because he was retiring soon, he asked me to do this interview in person.

When I set up the interview I told Wayne that I'd have to bring my 9-year-old son with me. When we arrived at Ozaukee Country Club a few days later, Wayne greeted my son with his dog. "Would you like to take Max for a walk on the golf course?" he asked. He put a leash on Max and gave Andrew a two-way radio in case he got lost on the course. "But Max knows his way around the course," he added.

Now 3-1/2 years later, my son still remembers that nice superintendent who let him walk his dog on the golf course. "He was so nice to me," Andrew says. "And the golf course was just perfect. The sand in the traps was as white as snow."

Another interview high on my "most memorable" list was when I interviewed Monroe and many of his colleagues. This assignment came from the WGCSA president after Monroe received the 2004 USGA Green Section Award. The hard part about interviewing Monroe is that he has so many interests in his life! It was a long, but cherished, interview. I'm just dying to get into his house to see his many collections and his farm museum in the basement.

## Any other memories you'd like to share?

Many, but this article is past due, so I'll keep it short. In no particular order, here are a few things I easily recall:



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**Count on it.**

Finding out I am related to Ed Hasselkus and that my husband is related to Ed Kirchenwitz. Must be something about the name Ed!

Interviewing my former Soils 301 professor, J.R. Love, who asked, "Tell me, did you learn anything in my class?"

The willingness of so many people to open up their lives to a total stranger – usually over the telephone! I especially remember learning about one person's Vietnam War experiences and another person's tragic accident that left him a paraplegic.

Interviewing all four Shaw brothers at the same time. Whew! It was difficult to keep up with four people talking at once!

The similarities between farmers (my background) and golf course superintendents, such as: Second and third generation golf course superintendents, some of whom grew up in the old farm houses on the courses where their fathers worked; being at the mercy of mother nature; having a love for the land and a sense of stewardship; working long days in the summer; appreciating a good rain.

Realizing how many people in the golf and turf businesses grew up on a farm or had their first job on a golf course.

Appreciating the many different skills and personalities that can be found in the industry. University researchers, entrepreneurs, sales and service representatives, golf course superintendents, golf course architects and builders, organizational leaders - it takes everyone to make the industry work.

**So, tell us what you're doing now.**

In July of 2005 I starting working as the Agricultural Information Specialist for the U.S. Dairy Forage Research Center, which is part of the USDA's Agricultural Research Service. Although I work for a federal agency, my office building is on the

UW-Madison campus, right next to the College of Veterinary Science. With my degrees in Dairy Science and Journalism and my life-long experience in the dairy industry, I truly feel like I've landed in the right place for now.

I'm still writing about grass - the kind that cows eat or that gets cut for hay. One of my former 'subjects' is now a co-worker - Mike Casler, a plant geneticist (grasses, mostly) who did some turfgrass research while working at the UW-Madison. He remembered being interviewed by me and being written up in *The Grass Roots*.

One of my first tasks at work was to create a logo and slogan for the Dairy Forage Research Center. The slogan I came up with is, "Greener Horizons for Crops, Cows, and Communities;" growing and feeding more forages is good for cows and for the environment. As golf course superintendents, you, too, are providing greener horizons. So we still have something in common.

**Did you use Monroe as a reference for this job?**

Funny you should ask. Yes, I did use Monroe as a reference - listed him as editor of *The Grass Roots*.



A few weeks into the job my new boss was introducing me to someone. "She used to write for *Grass Works* (a dairy grazing magazine)."

"Ah, Neal," I interjected. "That was *The Grass Roots*, not *Grass Works*. It's the publication of the Wisconsin Golf Course Superintendents Association."

"Oh, I thought it was *Grass Works*," he said. "The editor went on and on telling me all about you and I never caught on." Lucky for me, my new boss likes to golf. So he wasn't too appalled that I wrote for the turfgrass side of grass, not the grazing side.

For the time being, my husband and kids are still in New London while I work 10-hour days in Madison

four days a week and return home for three-day weekends. As soon as my husband finds employment in this area (anyone need a United Church of Christ pastor?), we will be moving our household south.

### Any final word?

To my 'subjects' through the years, thank you for sharing your lives with me so that, through my writing, I could share your lives with so many others. Everyone has a story to tell, and I thoroughly enjoyed hearing 95 life stories in the past 15-1/2 years.

God Bless all of you for the fine work you do by creating greener horizons on God's green earth. ♻

## Personality Profile 'subjects' for 15 years:

### 1990

J/A Lee Bruce  
S/O Eugene Haas  
N/D Egon Herrmann

### 1991

J/F no article  
M/A Lois Latham  
M/J Leo Walsh  
J/A Christine Faulks  
S/O Gayle Worf  
N/D Russ Weisensel

### 1992

J/F Bob Newman  
M/A Bill Roberts  
M/F Jerry O'Donnell  
J/A Jim Love  
S/O Curtis Larson  
N/D Ed Devinger

### 1993

J/F John Mortimer  
M/A Bob Lohmann  
M/J no article  
J/A Lori Bocher  
S/O Wayne Kussow  
N/D Chuck Koval

### 1994

J/F Jim Latham  
M/A Roger Wyse  
M/J Milt Engelke  
J/A Charlie Wilson  
S/O Ed Hasselkus  
N/D Woody Voigt

### 1995

J/F Al Vrana  
M/A Bill Sell  
M/J Dan DeVault  
J/A John Buck  
S/O Dick Nugent  
N/D Terry Ward

### 1996

J/F Mark Kienert  
M/A Tom Emmerich  
M/J Doug Maxwell  
J/A Dick Reinders  
S/O Randy Smith  
N/D Bob Reinders

### 1997

J/F Jeff Gregos  
M/A Don Stein  
M/J Alan Nees  
J/A Todd Edlebeck  
S/O Shaw Brothers  
N/D John Stier

### 1998

J/F Wayne Horman  
M/A Jennifer Samerdyke  
M/J Michael Lee  
J/A Steve Scoville  
S/O Ray Knapp  
N/D Elton Aberle

### 1999

J/F Vince Johnson  
M/A Phil Pellitteri  
M/J Chris Williamson  
J/A Charlie Kisow  
S/O Laura Jull  
N/D Mike Casler

### 2000

J/F Geunhwa Jung  
M/A Charles Shiley  
M/J Peter Vea  
J/A 10th anniversary column  
S/O Tom Schmidt  
N/D Kris Pinkerton

### 2001

J/F Dave Weber  
M/A Roy Zehren  
M/J Scott and Tom Schaller  
J/A Dan Quast  
S/O Ervin Graf  
N/D Bill Vogel

### 2002

J/F David Brandenburg  
M/A Ed Kirchenwitz  
M/J Wayne Otto  
J/A Joe Deschler  
S/O Dean Musbach  
N/D John Turner

### 2003

J/F Kevin Hensler  
M/A Bob Emmerich  
M/J Steve Abler  
J/A Gabe Lopez  
S/O Bill Kazda  
N/D Gary Huenerberg

### 2004

J/F Marc Davison  
M/A Monroe Miller  
M/J Carl Grassl  
J/A Tom Wentz  
S/O Terry Kurth  
N/D Bill Linneman

### 2005

J/F Dennis Robinson  
M/A Alan Nees  
M/J Ed Witkowski  
J/A Ray Shane  
S/O Grant Mortimer  
N/D Farewell column