



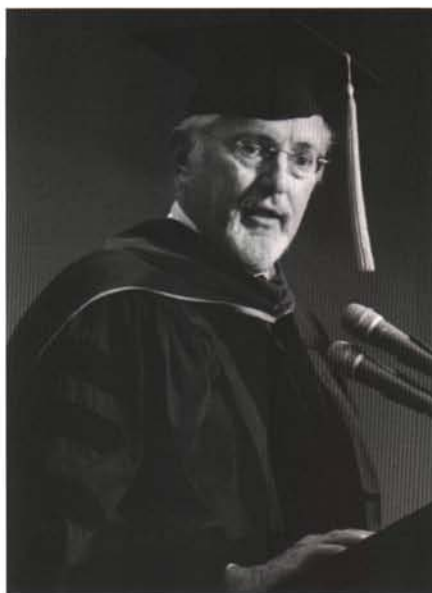
Engelke Returns to Wisconsin to Receive Honor

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

There aren't many faces in the turfgrass academic world more recognizable than Dr. Milt Engelke's. He is a Wisconsin born and educated person who has done extremely well in his career as a turfgrass plant breeder and educator.

He has, for years, been actively involved in GCSAA's education program, as a presenter at our annual conference and as a seminar instructor. Milt has introduced bentgrass varieties in use on America's golf courses, and directed the graduate education of students who have found their way into our profession.

Born and raised in Platteville, Engelke graduated from the UW - Platteville in 1968 with a degree in



technical agriculture. He earned a master's degree from the University of Wisconsin - Madison in 1972 in agronomy and a PhD from Madison in plant breeding and genetics in 1974. Then, Oregon State University in Corvallis, in the grass seed production region of America, offered him a post-doctoral research position. Milt currently is a research professor at Texas A&M University in Dallas and works as a Texas Agriculture Experiment Station Faculty Fellow. He is also a project leader for the turfgrass breeding, genetics and management program at the Texas A&M Research Center.

Jacobsen Division of Textron, Inc. has taken advantage of a close rela-

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tionship with Dr. Engelke and he advises the manufacturer on those issues he has expertise in.

Milt's alma mater honored him at this year's spring graduation at Platteville with an invitation to serve as the Distinguished Speaker. He was in Wisconsin for a few days preceding the May 13th commencement and I was lucky to have him stop by the course for a visit. He was with Ralph Nicotera, Jacobsen VP, Barry Larson and Mike Werth. It was pure pleasure to visit with all of them - they are all Wisconsin guys - and talk about old times we've shared.

Milt was especially glad to return to Platteville and reconnect with Professor Emeritus Roger Higgs, a crop and soil science faculty member who encouraged Milt to attend graduate school. Engelke has never forgotten that powerful advice. Higgs, in turn, is very proud of his former student.

In addition to 19 plant patents, Milt has published many articles, book chapters, technical papers and training manuals. He also works with the USGA. Texas A&M, GCSAA and the UW - Platteville have all noted his work with various awards, including the Outstanding Alumni Award and the Distinguished Alumni Award from Platteville.

I asked Milt if he would send me the text of his graduation remarks since I wasn't able to attend. He was kind enough to do so, and that speech appears here in full for you.

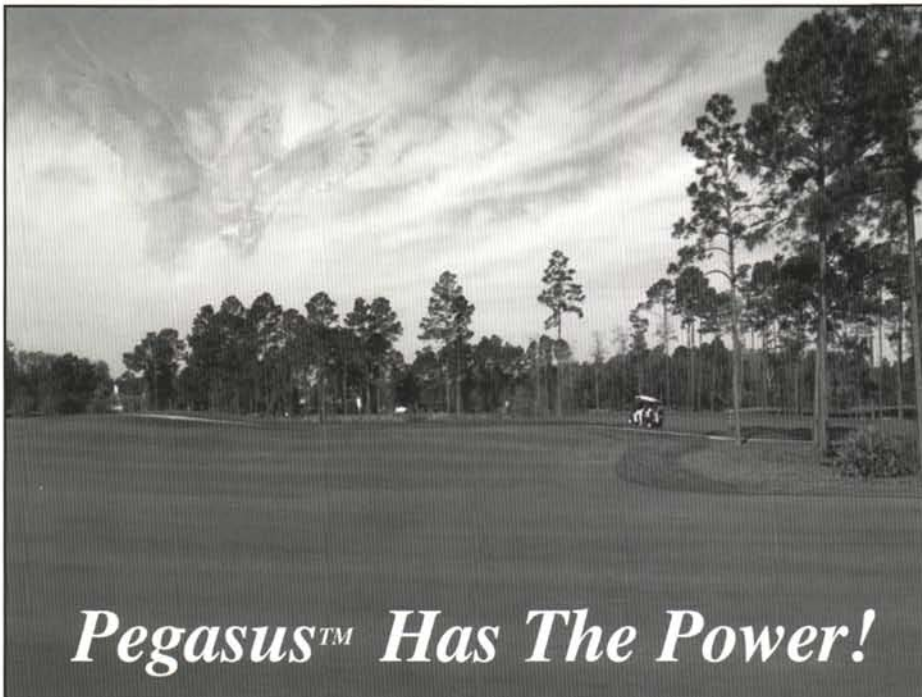
It's Your Journey

Chancellor Markee, Dr. Li Buhai, distinguished faculty, graduates, alumni, parents and families: I am honored for this opportunity to join in this celebration. I also appreciate that you have arranged this commencement to coincide with Mothers Day week, giving many of us the opportunity to be with our moms. Through our life we have been encouraged by our moms, dads and others to set goals and as those goals have been reached, to

set new goals. A milestone has been reached in your lives today as we are celebrating the graduation of over 560 students from the University of Wisconsin - Platteville. This morning there are 238 baccalaureates and 143 masters of Science degrees from the College of Business, Life

Sciences and Agriculture being recognized. Also of significance is the number of students receiving their degrees from the world campus of UW - Platteville.

Of note are 38 graduates from South Central University for Nationalities in Wuhan, China. President Li and a number of his



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faculty join us today. Some of these students are on campus for the first time. Welcome to Platteville; welcome to UW – P and to all students — my personal congratulations as each of you has reached a significant milestone in your journey in life. This degree will be with you always; it is yours; it marks the accomplishment of completing a major goal in anyone's life.

All of you will go into the world today seeking your fortunes, preparing to leave your make on life, as you are invincible. The path you choose will be totally under your control. Just know that statistics suggest that less than 30% of you holding the baccalaureate will be employed in your chosen field of study in 10 years, and at the master's level this rises to nearly 70%. For those of you who choose to go on to the PhD or MD or other advanced educational program,

you will find your path even more focused. Just so you understand that the more educated you become, your knowledge level (although becoming more refined) also will restrict the size of the box in which you reside. More simply put, the better educated you are the more you will know about less and less. So what does that mean to you? You are getting ready to take the next step in your journey in life, and it will be an exciting adventurous journey. It is likewise obvious that UW – Platteville has also had an interesting journey and is stepping forth into the world economy, making its mark. I can't help think that some of you are asking yourself – WHERE WILL I BE WHEN I GET AS OLD AS THIS GUY?

My words to you are "Don't worry about it." You will be somewhere – that is a given. The real questions you might ask

yourself are, "Where have I been? What will I have done? What will I remember? Will anyone care?" When my journey started from this very auditorium 37 years ago, I honestly didn't have a clue that I would be back here today.

So my words of encouragement to you relative to the rest of your life is (and I know that you have heard this before, but it is worth repeating), "Take the very next step as though it will be your last." Take time to smell the roses, make certain that the people you care about the most know it, make certain the next step is an experience to be remembered, make certain that you live your life inside your own skin, inside your own soul, that the decisions you make – make sense. It isn't important that you become a hero or martyr; it is not important that you become a Nobel Laureate – those aren't practical goals; those are accomplishments

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that will be achieved and recognized by your peers, bad or good, as measured by your actions as you make your journey through life.

The very day Chancellor Markee called and asked me to stand before you with this commencement address, my journey changed, partially for the good, partially for the sad. You see, on that day I realized that my journey must have had an impact somewhere to be asked to make this presentation and to receive the honor of being asked. The sad part was the constant reminder that I was on a journey that brought life as it was. I was also going to a funeral of a young Texas Ranger – a highway patrolman who was killed in the line of duty. This young ranger was one of my former employees, a former student and a friend. As I listened to the eulogy for this young father of four, I reflected on how his journey and mine had intertwined, and I was better for it. I reflected on how his destination impacts the journey of his wife and children from now on. It will not be an easy road, but without his brief journey they would have no journey at all. Matt loved his wife, kids, mother and father and family. Matt loved life and lived every moment of it as though it was his last. I was touched by those words and reminded myself – “You already know your destination and what you will make of your journey.”

Harvey, another dear friend of mine, has a philosophy of life he calls EMBRACING THE MOMENT. Although Harvey is many years my junior, he is also my mentor and will be through the rest of my journey. As he reflects on his present position in life, he credits the journey he has taken. He fully acknowledges there may have been an easier way; he also fully acknowledges that he has forgotten more than he remembers. But everything he has done and all that he is remembered for is because he is the way he is; he did it his way. He lives life as though there is no tomorrow; he lives his life in such a way that if anyone speaks badly of him, those listening know him for who he is and who he has become. They don't judge him based on words of others, good or bad.

In my early years, at about your age, I found a mentor in Dr. Roger Higgs, professor emeritus of crop science here at the UW – Platteville. I was a junior in college when this young professor, fresh out of school, PhD from Iowa State, came into my life and changed my life forever. Each step that I have taken since, I reflect on the unselfish, dedicated deeds of this man. Over his professional career he touched more than 12,000 students at this university and I am proud to say that I was one of those. Although Dr. Higgs retired in 2004, his journey continues closely tied to this campus as his passions for life are centered on UW – Platteville. This university

has been his life, is his life and for such he will, at least in my mind, always be what the University of Wisconsin – Platteville stands for.

Take every moment and **MAKE THE BEST OF IT.**

I appreciate the opportunity to be you and with my family. I appreciate what the UW-Platteville has become and am proud to be an alumnus. I want for each of you to step forward, boldly controlling your life. Make an exciting journey for yourself, knowing you make a difference.

And I will close with the words of Winston Churchill: “You make a living by what you earn; you make a life by what you give. Give generously and enjoy your journey!”

It's a great day to be a Pioneer! Thanks for the opportunity to be here. Good luck. God bless each of you and God bless America! 🌿

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