



“Don’t Look Back”

By Dr. Doug Soldat, Department of Soil Science, University of Wisconsin-Madison

Just the other day, I pulled out a back issue of *The Grass Roots* from a manila folder that I have been carrying around with me ever since it was published in 2001. The issue held special significance for me for two reasons. First, it contains my very first research publication; and second, I kept it for a short paragraph written by the editor of *The Grass Roots* in an article discussing the recent (and hard won) stability of the turfgrass program at the UW. At that time, the last remaining question for the turf program was how Dr. Kussow’s retirement would be handled by the University. Here is the paragraph in question:

“I am not exactly sure when Wayne Kussow plans on retiring. We can hope “never” but that’s foolish. There aren’t many Phds coming out with a soil science background and a turf specialty; I can see a bad moon on the rise. I was thinking the other day as I read Doug Soldat’s article in this issue of *The Grass Roots* that somehow a deal should be struck with the “University” that would allow him (assuming he is willing) to finish his PhD and step up to Wayne’s job when Wayne does retire. That way the prof and student could plan course work and research that would match what Wayne thinks would be best for his position. Probably won’t happen, but it makes sense and ought to be discussed with someone.” (Miller, 2001)

I clearly remember stumbling upon this article back in the summer of 2001 and thinking that Monroe had finally fallen off his rocker. How could I be worthy of consideration for such a position? Well, the simple fact was that I wasn’t worthy and I knew it. I kept the issue to remind me of the all the hard work that lay ahead.

Depending on your perspective, 2001 can seem like just yesterday or a lifetime ago. For me, it tends towards the latter. More than a few things have changed in my life since that date, including moving miles away from family and friends to Upstate New York, earning a Ph.D., and starting a family. But the first of all of these changes was when I decided to work toward my Master’s degree under Dr. Kussow. I believe I learned more from Wayne in those two years than I had in all my years of formal education. Some of the things that stick with me were the subtle lessons that were periodically interjected while we were working together.

One such episode that sticks out in my mind was the time the Turf Doc and I re-grassed a very large sand research green at the O.J. Noer Facility. Wayne told me that cutting the sod would remove too much soil, requiring us to add more sand and thus potentially creating an undesirable layer in the root zone. The solution to this would be to break up the sod with a tractor-mounted rototiller and then hand rake out all the broken pieces, and by doing so very little sand would be lost from the root zone mix. Breaking up the



**Don’t Forget
Milorganite in
next year’s
budget.**

For Better Results.
Naturally.

Milorganite®

www.milorganite.com

1-800-287-9645

Partnering with:



(920) 849-2341



(608) 752-8766

sod took thirty minutes - at the most. Hand raking all the little pieces, however, took close to forty hours. That's five straight days of hand raking for eight hours a day (and I think it was 90 degrees that week). Needless to say this was a slow and arduous process. We began raking at the south end of the green and raked the sod pieces in to small piles that would be shoveled into the back of a utility vehicle. As we progressed we'd move with our backs to the north, looking only at the part of the green that had been raked. At one point I remember complaining about the seemingly endless amount of work left to do. Wayne's reply was "Doug, we're facing this way for a reason. Don't look at how much work remains; just try to focus on what we've accomplished so far."

I can look back now on all the progress that I have made to get to this point since the article Monroe wrote in 2001. It is a tremendous honor to be selected as the replacement for the person that has had such an influence on me. The raking analogy breaks down at this point for me because I am really looking forward to the years of work that lay ahead. And I think

it is an incredible opportunity to be put in the position to work for the university and turf industry in the state that will always be home for me.

As for the Turf Doc, he now stands with his rake at the end of the proverbial green. He is looking back at a tremendous body of work that has been invaluable turfgrass managers in Wisconsin and nationwide. He's retired now, and can certainly do as he pleases with his time. However, one thing I'd like to see Dr. Kussow do is write a book so all the insight that he has acquired throughout the years (which now is only found scattered throughout publications like *The Grass Roots*, Wisconsin Turf Research Reports, or still locked up in his head) can be collected in one place. I know I am not the only one who harbors this wish. Probably won't happen, but it makes sense and ought to be discussed with someone.

Miller, Monroe S. 2001. CALS, UWEX Keep UW - Madison Turf Program Moving Ahead. *The Grass Roots*. 30(4):39. ♣



CHAMPION GREENS
Aerification Services

Greens • Tees • Fairways
 Deep tine with hollow or solid tines
 18 Greens, \$1100 plus tines used
Travel charges may apply



GOT THATCH?

Get SISIS VEEMO
Unrivaled Fairway Dethatching
 High Speed • Scalpproof
 Rental \$500 day, 2 day minimum
 Blade & Travel charge apply

KEITH 920.894.4857
JOHN 920.467.9737
www.championgreens.net