



Get answers to just about  
**ANY** questions you have —  
from rolling greens to Frank Rossi!



# THE GRASS ROOTS

an official publication of the Wisconsin Golf Course Superintendents Association

Volume XX, No. 5

September/October 1992

## Here We Go! Rossi Joins UW Turf Team

By Monroe S. Miller

Dr. Francesco Salvatore Rossi (a.k.a. Frank Rossi) has arrived in Wisconsin. He assumed his duties on the faculty at the University of Wisconsin-Madison in the Department of Horticulture on August 10th.

The following interview with Dr. Rossi took place while he was vacationing with his family in the finger lakes region of central New York state.

You'll know him a lot better once you've read our conversation. One thing is clear to this editor: Frank Rossi is **very** happy to be on the UW-Madison turf team. His enthusiasm will prove a valuable asset.

I predict all WGCSA members are going to like this young man. We'll be happy, in short order, that he came to Wisconsin!

**GR:** Tell us a little bit about yourself—you know, things like your age, where you're from originally, something about your family, colleges you've attended, etc. And is it true, as the rumor mill has it, that you are a former assistant golf course superintendent and served as a superintendent for a short period?

**FR:** I was born Francesco Rossi in the fall of 1962 (the official end of the Baby Boom) into an Italian family, the son of a Locomotive Engineer in New York City (Fordham Hospital, Bronx, NY). I have 2 older sisters, both married with children. I have always been vivacious and enthusiastic about life whether I was playing in the streets and hanging out on the stoop, working at the Italian Delicatessen at the



Professor Frank S. Rossi

corner, or pushing a lawnmower during my youth.

I started in the turf industry at the age of 12, mowing (postage stamp) lawns around the neighborhood. By the age of 13, I was a partner in my brother-in-laws' company, Salvatore Cognetta Landscaping. We went out of business when I was 15 and I went to work for a landscaper in Westchester County (an affluent suburb of NYC). A year later they scaled back their operation and the owner got me a job at Leewood Golf Club in my hometown, Eastchester, pushing a rotary mower up and down the fairway. I always say I came into this business through the maintenance shop, not the pro-shop, I have never caddied.

During high school, I lettered in track (100 & 200 m) and baseball all

4 years and worked at the golf course on weekends. Two memorable events of my youth were not the most pleasant; when I was 15 my next door neighbor and best friend died of Reyes Syndrome and when I was 17 my mother suffered a cerebral aneurysm and had a seizure right in front of me. She always says I saved her life, but, I just did what had to be done. My mom fully recovered and is your typical loving Italian mother and a great cook.

I started out in a 2-year Junior College in Cobleskill, NY majoring in Dairy Farm Management. I can't entirely explain why, seeing as I only saw cows on TV. I feel I have always longed to be in the wide-open spaces working with the land. Needless to say, once I began barn duty and taking classes, I realized I was the only student who wasn't from a farm and was encouraged by my instructors to pursue another major.

In the Fall of 1980, I met Bob Emmons and I knew what was going to do, I wanted to be a golf course superintendent. Bob served as a mentor and friend both during my early education and 8 years later during my graduate work at Cornell. I was never a straight A student, but I always worked hard. I received my Associates degree (AAS) in Agronomy from Cobleskill and went on to the University of Rhode Island (URI) where I met my next mentor and friend, Dr. Dick Skogley. I should mention that the summer between Cobleskill and URI I was fired from Leewood Golf

(Continued on page 20)