The Grass Roots

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About the Cover:

Jennifer Eberhardt has created a splendid collage of the diverse elements of the Wisconsin TDDL-from microscope and spores to Maxwell and Millett. The lab adds another helping hand to WGCSA members in a way that is the very definition of a land grant college. It also is an excellent example of the Wisconsin Idea --- "the border of the campus is the border of the state."

Do your job. Get it done on time. Do it well."

 Advice of John Coolidge to his son, the President of the United States, Calvin, From the Book "Grace and Cal-A Vermont Love Story."

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(Left to Right): Mike Semler, Kris Pinkerton, Charlie Shaw, Dave Smith, Scott Schaller, Gary Tanko, Dave Brandenburg, Andy Kronwall, Mark Kienert.

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The President's Message



A Broken Promise

By Mark Keinert



I was looking over the PC on my desk the other day when I realized that I must confess to you that I'm taking back one of my political promises. This year, being a presidential election year, I figured that you would accept this type of rhetoric and could handle it. I know that your senses, like mine, are numb by all the hollow promises made by now. (Middle income tax cut for anyone??)

For you see, I promised to bring you a chapter sponsored Computer Bulletin Board System (BBS for short). We had even floated a couple of names for this board service as the opening screen welcomed you as you logged on. Bucky Bytes or Cheddar Bytes were my two leading favorites for this superintendent driven service.

I was even in the process of developing on-line forums for superintendents to use. These "chat rooms" would have quickly allowed the user to transfer information of disease problems to fellow superintendents or alert others of a potential tank mix problems that were encountered with the use of two incompatible products.

It would also be an inexpensive way to advertise those secondary pieces of turf or irrigation equipment that take up entirely too much of your warehouse space. All of us have those pieces of idled equipment that are worth more than the trade-in price, less than the price of rebuilding, but have too much life to simply through away.

I wanted this BBS service to supplement (not replace) the Turfgrass Hot-Line that the University of Wisconsin-Madison uses to post messages of a timely nature forewarning us of disease or insect problems. I wanted the professors of various disciplines to monitor our conversations and to feel free to jump right in and post their responses and give users timely feedback.

But now, I've changed my mind. I'm taking it all back (Well some of it anyway. Please read on.). For you see, I've been caught up in a net. Yes, pun intended, the internet. I have marveled at the information that is available to computer users in just a matter of nano seconds. The knowledge base of millions of individual users puts at your finger tips more information than what can be found in all the libraries from around the world. That's right. There is more is more information stored on computers disks today than what can be found written in books in all of recorded history. We are truly becoming a global community.

The problem is you have to learn how to get to that information. It has been written that 85% of the information found on the web is worthless junk and I would have to agree to this to some extent.

But, I have witnessed a changing attitude that is developing by the user of the net. It is an attitude that is very much like every business in the world knows, that if it's going to survive, it had better offer a worthwhile product or the certain laws of economics will prevail, and the people will stop coming. They will be out of business. In other words, you must build a better mouse trap or people will stop buying your product. "If you build it they will come" simply does not work on the internet.

What I have utilized the most is the instantaneous exchange of messages called e-mail. To me this form of communication is simply priceless. My wife tells me that it is too impersonal and she is right. But there is nothing better than getting to the point and having your message answered almost as quickly.

This is the same complaint that many find with the answering machine, that it is too impersonal. For me, the time saved not playing phone tag or listening to elevator music while you have been parked on hold, has benefits that far outweigh what (Continued on page 5)



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(Continued from page 3)

I feel is this perceived impersonality. I can get on with my business.

I've communicated with professors in turfgrass management at the University of Wisconsin-Madison and other turfgrass institutions. This form of communication has allowed me to convey messages to a WGCSA Board member in a rapid manner when we needed to exchange information in a hurry. I've been able to track down manufacturers and ask my questions.

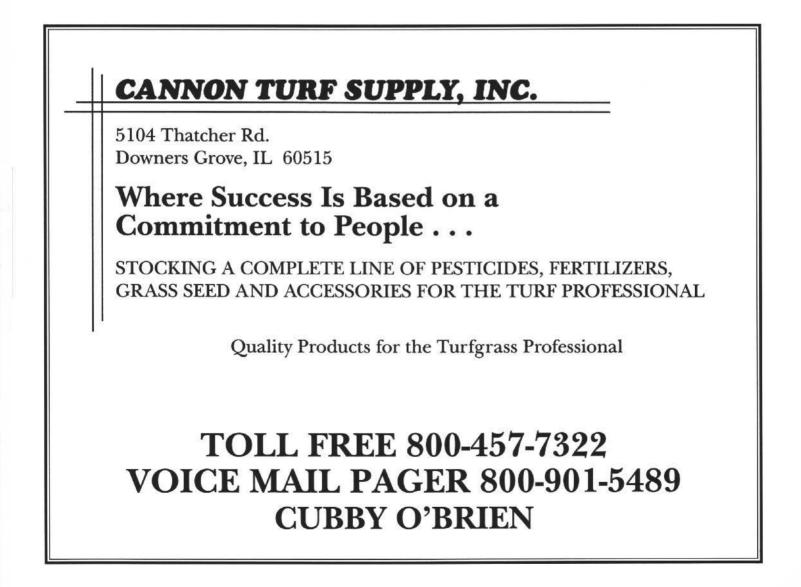
So I have changed my mind. I feel a better use of our time and efforts will be to see that we get a home page set up on the internet. Tom Schwab, Superintendent of the O. J. Noer Turfgrass Facility, has agreed to set up a "list server" network for us on a secured part of the University of Wisconsin-Madison computer network. This will give allow us to interact with one another through the rapid dissemination of e-mail messages via this network. If this list server goes as planned, we will have the ability to ask professors questions and they will not have to pick up a phone.

In the future, I would like to see the WGCSA and the O. J. Noer Turfgrass Facility have their own home page with links to other parts of the university, GCSAA, the USGA, TGIF and other universities as soon as system security issues can be resolved. It has the potential to become a world wide link, to serve as a source of information for superintendents through out the Midwest. Its uses are limited only by the mind.

I have been asked by Dr. Douglas Maxwell to gather as many e-mail addresses as I could possibly find. This would serve as an initial network database for informational exchange. If you have one, and would like to be a part of this system, please contact Dr. Maxwell (dum@plantpath.wisc.edu) or Steve Blendel (westmoor@globaldialog.com) They are collating the names and e-mail addresses for us.

So what can you do to insure that you are on the leading edge of technology? Take computer classes at your local technical college or university. They are very well worth the investment of your time. Then, subscribe to a local internet server, or one of the subscription services that are stuffing your mail box with free trial offer diskettes. Do your homework before investing as they are changing very quickly.

We are still planning on a computer forum for next Winter. Please let me know what topics you would like to have discussed and I'll see what we can do. Until next time, I can be reached at 4kienert@wctc.net.



Gazing In The Grass



One Hell of a Ride!

By Dr. Frank S. Rossi Department of Horticulture University of Wisconsin-Madison

I can tell when spring time is coming in Wisconsin. In general, there is a lull in phone calls for 2 to 3 weeks when everything is still dormant; then the grass pops and all hell breaks loose. The peacefulness feels awkward this year as I know many people may no longer be calling because they probably think I've already left. By the time this piece gets into print I will be on the faculty at Cornell. While I have this short reprieve I will attempt to put words to my feelings, realizing that it seems impossible to do.

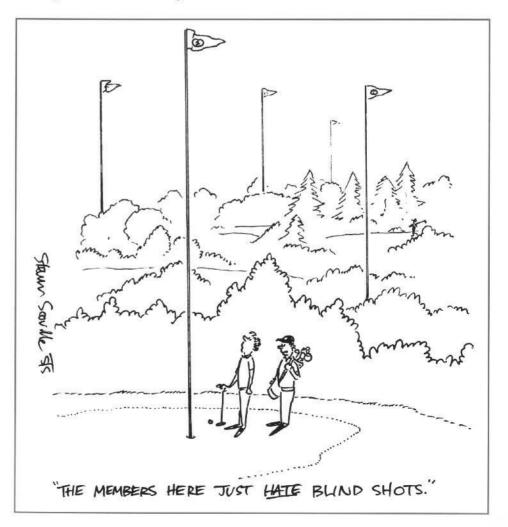
I arrived in Wisconsin almost four years ago with a single purpose in mind. My goal was to help make the Wisconsin Turfgrass Program one of the top ten quality turfgrass programs in the country behind the strength of a supportive industry. The stars were aligned, Drs. Newman and Worf left an enduring and supportive legacyeverybody liked those guys. Drs. Kussow and Koval were the experienced and stable voice of reason that I knew I would need. The University, in particular Dr. Larry Binning, had a sense of the potential of the partnerships with the industry. Dr. Meyer and myself brought the new energy and enthusiasm. I took one look at the Noer Facility and thought I died and went to turf heaven. I'll always remember what Dr. Al Turgeon told me when he visited not long after my arrival in Wisconsin. He said, " Frank, you may well have the best turf job in the country".

My first week on staff, I got in the car with Chuck Koval and off we went to Antigo and the Northern Great Lakes Superintendents meeting. It could not have been a better start. I could sense the passion Chuck had as a native Wisconsinite for the UW and his love for Extension. I began to sense the road ahead for the program would be one worth traveling.

My first Field Day was the first of many growing pains for the program, as Tom Salaiz announced he would leaving in December. The momentum and excitement raging from the first Field Day at the Noer Facility would not be contained. I remember feeling sad for losing Tom and for the great ride I knew he was about to miss. I had the same feeling almost a year and a half later when Scott MacKintosh decided to leave. You can imagine how I feel being the one leaving this time. I know I will be missing a hell of a ride.

Tom's departure, then Scott's, allowed Henry Berg, my partner in crime, to demonstrate his ability to manage "the farm". Quickly I learned the important role that a solid technical staff would play in the long-term success of the program. I looked upon Henry as a father—always willing to lend a hand, sometimes let me learn from my mistakes, and always there when I really needed him.

My first fall and winter brought my travels with Catherine Smejkal. Catherine and I were communicating with Dr. Meyer, still in North Carolina, regarding the snow mold studies. I was eager to learn more about this important area of research. Once again, as with Henry, I began to realize the dedication and heartfelt commitment in



Catherine that would enable our program to achieve excellence. Not only did we lose a gifted staff member, but a fine person, who always seemed to put her own wishes behind the wishes of others. I miss her....

My first year brought many other changes. However, the biggest change probably was the WTA Winter Conference—now known as the EXPO. At the time, I did not fully appreciate the trust that the WTA Board of Directors had given us. The big move to Madison has seemed to work out for the best; however, we still must find a way to reach more people.

The WTA Board meetings were always lively, as we openly debated new directions, revisited ideas that previously seemed unsuccessful, and occasionally dismissed ideas out of hand. The ride never seemed as bumpy as it was in those board meetings where an occasional mean streak would be evident. Still, I can't remember a time when level heads did not prevail. Good thing for shock absorbers!

I've enjoyed seeing new faces join the leadership ranks of the turfgrass industry, such as Chris Wendorff, Bob Erdahl, Wayne Horman and Paul Huggett. These guys represent the progressive and innovative professionals who will help guide the WTA into the next century. Now we need to get a little diversity on the board!

There are few organizations of any kind that I have interacted with that are as professionally run as the Wisconsin Golf Course Superintendents Association (WGCSA). The sense of purpose runs in the members veins. Whether you are speaking with the President or the newest member, the commitment to professionalism is evident. My involvement with the educational and research events has always brought satisfaction. When you know you have a demanding and intelligent audience it forces you to provide a high quality product. This philosophy will always set the turfgrass industry ahead of many other agricultural industries with the high value placed on educational and research efforts.

I have experienced many honors in my short career; however, none compare to being asked to be the Keynote Speaker at the Symposium and then the Luncheon Speaker the following year. To be thought of as someone with something worthwhile to say, by the industry that I have worked in since I was a child, makes all those long days and long nights worth it.

Wisconsin is a fun place to work in turf, for many reasons that I have stated and some that might not seem so obvious. I've been to the John Deere Horicon Works and the Jacobsen Plant to view state of the art manufacturing processes. Last week I toured the Metropolitan Milwaukee Sewage District, Jones Island Plant, where Milorganite is made. I got the signature of the engineer, Dan Landis, responsible for making Milorganite. Later, I ate a sub with Al Nees and Tisa Overmann while viewing the O.J. Noer slide collection in the basement of the old Blatz Brewery bottle cleanina buildina.

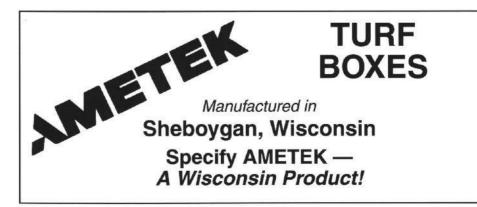
As a sports fan, I have loved cheering for the Badgers and Packers. I think the Rose Bowl win a few years ago was one of the most exhilarating moments I can remember since the Yankees won the championship in 1978. Still, the one thing about rooting for these teams, especially the Packers, is that they build you up with expectations and then break your heart. How on earth did the Packers lose to the Tampa Bay Bucs at the end of the season last year? Dallas would have had to come to Lambeau—that would have been a game!

Speaking of Lambeau, I have had the privilege of walking on the field several times and visiting the facilities with my class. It's almost like going to church. I do wish the field was in better shape, but green grass in December in northeastern Wisconsin is no small task. I've already ordered the satellite to get the Packer games—I'm hooked!

I've been to Aldo Leopold's Shack, north of Baraboo, and had his daughter chat with myself and Monroe about her Dad and Rachel Carson. I've stayed at the Chequamegan Inn on frozen Lake Superior and the Pfister Hotel in downtown Milwuakee. I've walked the halls of the Green Bay Reformatory; and I have shaken hands with Sen. Russ Feingold. And just last night I met Sen. Bill Bradley from New Jersey. He was in town for a book signing.

I've given presentations in truck stops, hospitals, church basements, at the zoo, on buses, at the airport, in the Memorial Union and even in a Curling Rink! In each place, I've met people who have taught me something, criticized me for something or shared a laugh. The genuine nature of the Midwesterners I have met is something I will always miss. This is a proud and progressive State that still believes in trusting people to do the right thing. I always liked that people did not need to be charged a deposit to recycle their cans-recycling cans is a good things and everybody should just do it!

As I've developed as a professional, I've learned that each person matures in different ways as they understand and accept their strengths and weaknesses. My biggest weakness is that I can't seem to keep my mouth shut. I have something to say about almost anything; it's my curious nature, I think. Anyhow, at times this makes me a difficult person to interact with. Of course this also made for the rather odd couple that Dr. Kussow and I have been, since my arrival. Wayne has always been on the quiet side, which back in New York is perceived to mean that he is up to something. It took me a little while, but I came to believe that, in fact, Wayne wasn't up to something and just operated with a different style than I did. I thank goodness today for our different styles. As I've matured I've noticed that we complement each other well. We might not always agree and we may talk behind each other's back, but we have always had the shared goal of providing high quality information that serves the citizens of the State-unbiased and uncensored. (Continued on page 9)



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(Continued from page 7)

I have been blessed to work at a University and in particular in a Department that is one of the finest in all the world. People come from far and wide to study with our faculty. The history is rich and the most recent leadership provided by people like Larry Binning, Brent McCown, Rick Vierstra, and Mike Sussman has enabled the Department to be the envy of the College. Still, a talented faculty needs a gifted support staff to provide consistent service to its clientele. Judy Barth, Jane Anderson, Sharon Jaekel, Kathy Pryes and Karen Denk set a positive tone that seems unflappable (you may have met them at the Field Day registration booth). If something needs to get done, the staff motto is do it legal, act fair and be creative. They must have really liked me because they trusted that I would be willing to break in new staff. I've had more assistants in my 4 years here than Lloyd had in 40 years!

No one person knows the challenges I have faced and can quantify the amount of energy I've given to the program better than my wife Barbara. I have always loved my work to the point where it became a "cruel mistress". I have this overwhelming desire to solve every problem that the turf manager is facing. The other day, I looked back at an old essay I wrote to get into grad school. I stated that my primary reason for continuing my education was to contribute information to a discipline that would benefit society—I like helping!

My love for Barbara and our two girls is literally indescribable. It is a feeling that comes from weathering the hard times, savoring the peaceful moments, embracing the joy of our children and in our own lives. It's a feeling that comes from commitment to stick it out when it seems that the easy thing to do is run.

Most people have a few relationships before they realize they are ready to settle down. I had my share. At some point I realized that no matter what relationship I was in, whether it is with another human being or the relationship with my career, there are going to be times when I am disgusted and unhappy. Riding those times out to the other side where you find the joy again is what makes life worth living. I feel it everyday with my family, and I feel it everyday at the UW-Madison.

It feels risky to be so personally revealing in such a public forum, yet, writing for THE GRASS ROOTS has been like writing a letter to the family back home. I trust you guys, and have tried to give of myself so that all of our lives are improved—even if it was just for a laugh.

The feeling of being appreciated for the work that I set out to do is one I will cherish for all my days. When you stood up to clap at the March Business Meeting I can say I have never been so emotionally overwhelmed as a professional. I could not get out of there fast enough to get into the car and cry half the way home to Madison. As always it was a pretty ride from Fond-du-Lac, as it is from Antigo, where it all began for me here in Wisconsin. Still, no ride in any car could compare to the ride I have had as your Extension Turfgrass Specialist. I may be moving back to my home, but a part of me is a Badger Forever. Thanks for the ride W





YELLOW FLAGS FLUTTERING – The REAL Start of Spring

By Monroe S. Miller

It seems almost everybody I know has a very specific, very individual sign of spring.

Cheryl Miller has a traditional one the first robin to arrive in Middleton. That is an exciting event, for sure, but it is too often premature. Spring doesn't really get here in early March, but sometimes a lonely robin does.

A lot of golf course superintendents call opening day the first day of spring. There is powerful sentiment in me that understands that logic.

Others use the calendar—it says March 21 is the start of spring, so it must be so. In our town, Badger football practice at the UW-Madison escorts in springtime. The NCAA championship basketball game does it for some people. Aldo Leopold ignored all signs of the seasonal switch until he saw a skein of geese flying north. He knew that event to be the surest sign.

For me, I know spring has really arrived when the Masters begins. The CBS-TV ads (announcement is a more accurate word than ad, I suppose) for the tournament started in the third week of March, tantalizing even nongolf fans. These visual pieces show green grass and the white austere antebellum clubhouse, pink azaleas and white dogwood. The images and the peaceful music are very inviting.

I have had the incredible good fortune to have attended the tournament twice. Really, when I think back, I can hardly believe it. When you talk about highlights of one's life, in my life those Masters trips rank near the top.

Wisconsin is lucky to have Gene Haas and the Wisconsin State Golf Association. The annual trip he plans gives a plane load of Wisconsin golf fans a chance they likely wouldn't have otherwise. A ticket to the Masters is tougher than a Super Bowl ticket, a World Series ticket, a Final Four ticket or even a pass to the Kentucky Derby. A Masters ticket is a lot like Green Bay Packer season tickets—they are willed down the family tree. It has gotten so it is even difficult to buy a pass to see a practice round, so popular and singular has this event become.

This year was made even more interesting by the release of two new books, each about Bob Jones' life. Jones and his career and his memoirs are intimately tied to the Augusta National Golf Club and the Masters. The books were inspired by the fact that this year's Masters was the 25th since Jones died in 1971. Sid Mathew wrote one of them-The Life and Times of Bobby Jones-and he was at our Orlando conference to sign copies of his book for golf course superintendents. The book made the Masters even more relevant to me.

So what is it about the Masters that makes it so special? There are much older tournaments with traditions decades and decades longer than the Masters. Among the four majors of a grand slam, the Masters didn't even begin until almost 75 years after the start of the British Open, 40 years after the US Open and 20 years after the PGA. Regardless, the Masters seems to have a sense of tradition and history the others do not. It could be because the tournament is played on the same course every year.

Could it be the players? No. You can seem those players at the US Open in Detroit or Chicago or Minneapolis—all close to us—and some even play in the GMO.

So, it is clearly the golf course that appeals to me and almost every other golf fan. The WSGA tour enters a gate near the fifth green. The first sight a winter weary Wisconsinite sees is that green. The surrounds are to a scale we seldom see here. The green is big, with big rolls. All of the grass you see is cut short. And my first sight of that green and its surrounds had Jack Nicklaus in it! Who could ever forget? The golf course is awesome. It isn't long. I am not positive, but I doubt even stretched to the back of the back tees and pins tucked away it isn't over, or much over, 7,000 yards. I was startled by the total lack of rough. There isn't any. It has fairway turf from tree line to tree line, a formidable width on most holes. The greens aren't as big as they look on TV, but they are big. It is a golf course that is lightly bunkered.

Obviously, it isn't an easy golf course, but you aren't struck by features that would seem to make it overwhelmingly difficult.

What the golf course is, is overwhelmingly beautiful. It occupies the land of a former nursery—about 370 acres worth of nursery. The gentle hills and valleys and the sparkling streams are framed and accented by plants from that nursery—magnolias,

