

plan these kinds of events can really appreciate the enormous work that goes into them. To Ed Devinger and his crew at Reinders, and to the USGA regional office and Bob Vavrek's green section office, a sincere "thank you". Our golf courses will be better for your efforts.

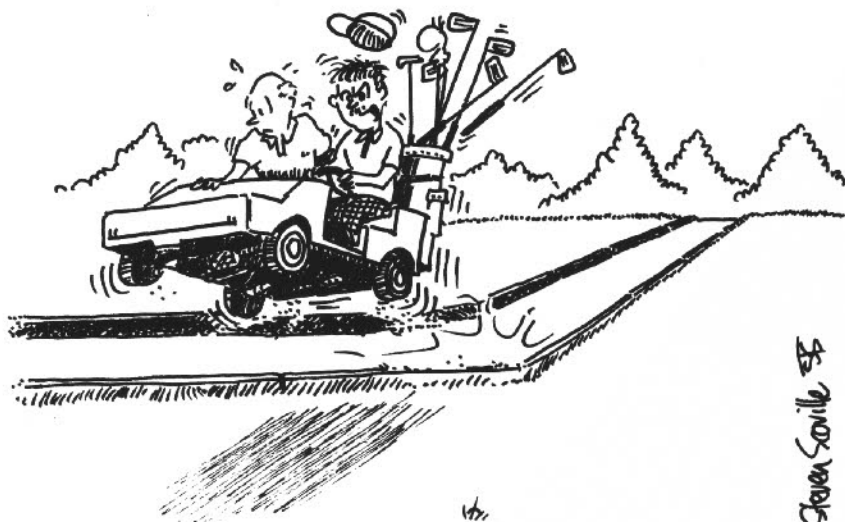
Remember last October when a Packer fan won a radio contest and received two game tickets and a "Packer Backer Tractor"—green and gold with a big "G" on the hood? Well, Wisconsin manufacturer Simplicity, which has made millions and millions of pieces of grass and landscape machinery for the world over the years at its Port Washington factory, has taken the next logical step. It has added several teams to this special tractor lineup—joining the Packers will be the Vikings, Chiefs, Colts, Steelers and Panthers from the NFL, and Wisconsin, Iowa, Michigan, Michigan State and Penn State from the Big Ten.

The Simplicity CEO described them as "tough as a linebacker, agile as a wide receiver and pinpoint accuracy of an all-pro quarterback!

We are in the "inbetween" days now, the time that straddles Wisconsin's two most harsh seasons. Spring is synonymous with hope and fresh beginnings, and there could be no better symbolism of that than a

golf course as new grasses rise from the ground. The new season came into our city like a lamb on March 21, nice and calm.

My hope is that the new golf season starts and finishes the same way for all of us. 🍷



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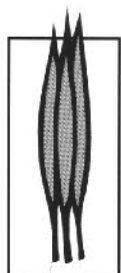
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Noer Turf Group Anticipates Important Season

By Tom Schwab, Superintendent
O.J. Noer Turfgrass Research and Education Facility

The Noer Facility professors and staff are bracing for an action packed summer in 1997. Four main areas signal an exciting year: 1) more faculty and staff will be bringing their energy and ideas to the turf program, 2) new and interesting research will be added in 1997, 3) more assistance with turf problems will be provided and 4) a rejuvenated summer field day is planned. Each of these will benefit the turf industry and help build a stronger turf program at the University.

The big news in the personnel area is the addition of the new turfgrass/horticulture faculty position, Dr. John Stier. John recently acquired his Ph.D. from Michigan State University (MSU) and he will be working in Wisconsin by the time you read this. Reports from MSU say we are getting a top-notch researcher who is also very good with students. John was responsible for the research and installation of indoor turf for the 1992 World Cup Soccer Tournament at the Pontiac Silverdome. This kind of research should be a valuable addition to the questions being asked about natural turf at County Stadium, Lambeau, and also if Camp Randall ever returns to "the real stuff." John has experimented with different forms of sod production and has also done research to learn characteristics and possible uses for a relatively new selection of turfgrass—*Poa supina*. He'll be an asset for the many different turfgrass industries in Wisconsin.

Jeff Gregos, the new manager of the Turf Disease Diagnostic Lab, is another positive addition to the UW-Madison turf program. He started late last fall and has been traveling Wisconsin extensively to install research and meet the state's turf people. You probably already have met him — if not, come meet him

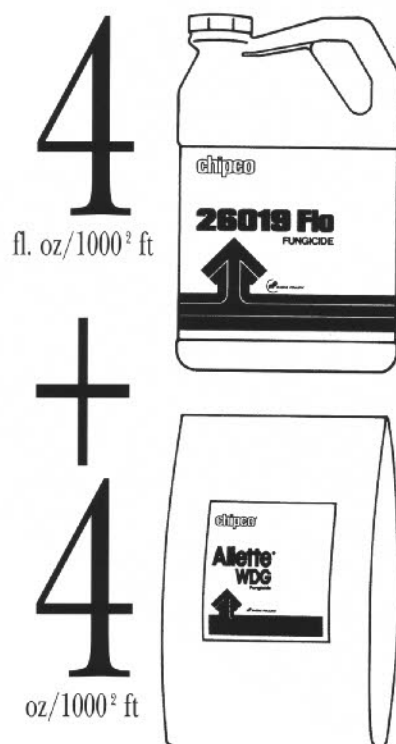
and see his research during one of the spring snow mold field days or at the WTA summer field day. Although most of those snow mold field days will be done by the time you read this, if you have missed the other ones, the last one will be hosted on May 12 by Todd Renk at Gateway Golf Club in Land O' Lakes.

Jeff will be making some big changes at the Noer Facility this summer. He needed a larger short-mowed bentgrass area to do fungicide trials, so he is constructing a half acre putting green to carry out those investigations. A familiar Wisconsin turf professional, Randy Smith of Admire Greenscapes, will be the contractor on that large project. The green is funded half by the WTA and half by the UW Department of Plant Pathology. Jeff is confident he will have that green established and producing lots of diseases and information by Summer Field Day.

In addition to the above two researchers, Dr. Wayne Kussow hired a skilled graduate student to help him study the WGCSA funded Putting Green Management Systems study. Late last fall, Wayne also built another new putting green where he will be investigating some organic supplement effects on putting green quality. There will be plenty of other new soils and nutrition information from Wayne again this summer.

Gary Gaard, who operated the Turf Disease Diagnostic Lab (TDDL) last summer, will be doing the lab work for homeowners this year. Gary has also taken the lead on getting the Noer Facility certified in the New York Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary Program. There is a part of the Noer's Audubon program that could benefit you. Dr. Scott Craven from the UW-Madison Wildlife

Ecology Department is on our Audubon resource committee. Scott gave a great talk at the 1997 Turfgrass EXPO on nuisance and beneficial wildlife. The benefit to you



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could be that by getting Scott more involved at the Noer Facility, he may become a valuable resource about the wildlife concerns at your golf courses.

Another revision to the Noer activity is a change in the format of the WTA summer field day. For the first time ever, it will be extended to a two-day event planned for August 19th and 20th. The price will remain the same as in 1996! What a bargain! We hope that at least one day of the two-day field day will fit your schedule. On the first day the hours will be from 11:00 a.m. until 4:30 p.m. and include lunch, plus an optional barbecue dinner the first evening. The later starting time the first day may work better for people who like to get their crews out and working before they go to a meeting. The second day will be a morning show from 8:30 a.m. until 2:00 p.m.

which will allow people to get home at an earlier hour. The second day will include a continental breakfast. You will be able to attend one day or both days for the same low price. The main goal is to allow an opportunity for more professionals to attend this once-a-year event.

The research tour is often the main draw for field day. We're hoping the new and abundant research will draw more people than ever. The tour has been extended to three hours each day and each tour will be a repeat of the other. Send your assistant or some crew members on the day that you're not attending; then you can compare notes when you get back to the shop. Hopefully all of you can attend the optional Tuesday night barbecue since it offers a great time to meet other turf professionals and share stories with peers. We hope you'll partake in the

barbecue whether you're staying late the first day or coming the night before to attend the second day.

The trade show at field day will take place on the new six acre addition at the Noer Facility. The vendors wanted more room and this site should provide that. The additional space will allow us to increase the number of vendors, which will make the show even more valuable for you. So mark the dates for summer field day 1997 on your calendar — Tuesday and Wednesday, August 19th and 20th.

There are some ambitious projects being undertaken at the Noer Facility this summer and some positive additions both in personnel and education. The faculty and staff at Noer are looking forward to a positive and productive season and hope that their work will benefit you in your operations. 🌱



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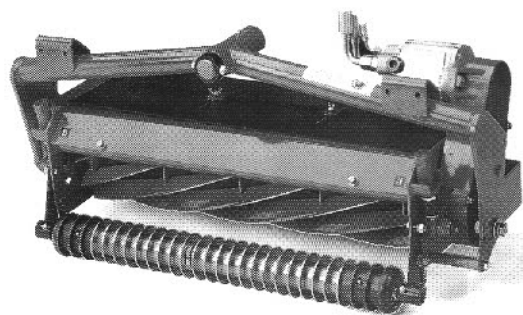
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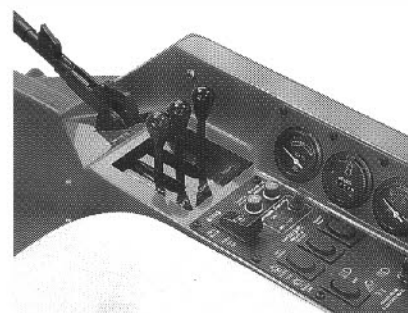
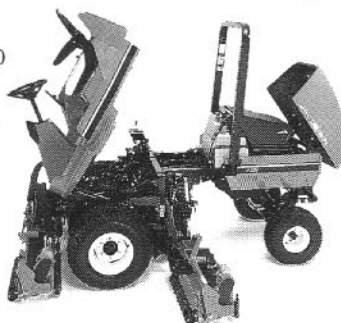
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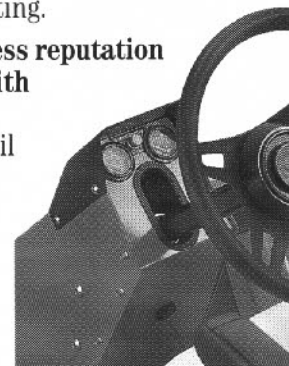
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SENTRYWORLD To Host 2nd Annual Golf Course Tour

Following the great success of last year's walking tour of Whistling Straits, hosted by Mike Lee and the Kohler Co., the WGCSA is offering members a similar event on Monday, June 2.

Gary Tanko, WGCSA board member and golf course superintendent at SENTRYWORLD in Stevens Point, has invited his colleagues for a safety, OSHA requirements and shop tour of his golf course maintenance

facility. Don Jankowski, Large Account Loss Control Consultant for Sentry Insurance, will lead a walk through visit with demonstrations and discussions of safe work practices, OSHA requirements, pesticide mixing site and other golf course shop requirements.

The compliance tour runs from 10:00 a.m. until noon. Lunch will be served at the Sportscenter.

Two other activities are available

as well. At 7:30 a.m., WGCSA members can participate in a 9-hole shotgun start for golf, which includes a golf cart. And also, between 9:00 and 9:45 a.m., a walking tour of the famed flower holes on the golf course will be led by SENTRYWORLD staff.

Watch your mail for the official announcement and registration for this event. You will not want to miss it. 🌿



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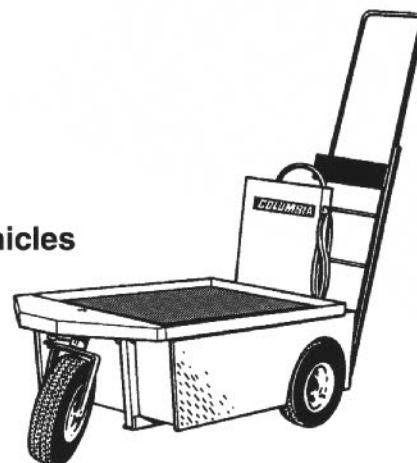


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AFTERGLOW

By Dr. Frank S. Rossi

Department of Floriculture and Ornamental Horticulture
Cornell University

Tony always loathed the long winter nights. "I really don't need to sleep all those dark hours," he explained to Clelia, "when it stays dark so late in the morning, I have a difficult time getting up and going."

"It sure would be nice if you helped a little more with Angelina," Clelia informed. "Seeing her smiling face, even on the darkest of mornings, brightens my day."

During the long winter nights, like the dog days of summer, Tony loses perspective. The cabin fever sets in, he has attended too many educational seminars, and he wants to grow grass so bad he can taste it.

He stops over to see Granny, who always seems to be able, "to shine some light" on a situation like this. "Just think," Granny reflected, "the buds will swell, the smells will thicken, Angelina will grow, and a tradition unlike any other will remind you that all is peaceful."

At that moment, Tony recalled the year past, and his visit to Augusta. A warm, bright feeling came over him as he reflected on the anticipation, the boasting, and the moment he stepped on the "sacred ground". "Boy Granny," Tony said in a peaceful tone, "I have so many memories of that one long day." He paused. "The azaleas, the close-cut ryegrass, the glistening white sand bunkers, the bright sunny day, and of course the well oiled golf course management staff were an inspiring site."

Tony wandered home as he always did at lunchtime to meet Clelia and Angelina. Except now in the dark depths of winter, he seemed to have a twinkle in his eye and a bounce in his step. He strode into the kitchen, whisked Angelina into his arms and proceeded to waltz.

"Tony, have you been to the Bar Angus this morning?" Clelia asked. Tony visited the local watering hole on occasion during the long winters, especially when he had ice on his greens or an early snow prohibited him from finishing his snow mold treatments.

"Clelia, can't I dance with my daughter without suspicion of my past errors in judgment?" Tony sarcastically questioned. He did remember the winter of '92-'93 when the ice was around for almost four months and he was more than a little punchy by mid-March. But today, he would have none of that. Today he was basking in the afterglow of his singular experience one year ago at Augusta.

The smile on his little girl's face touched him deeper than it had for many months. He leaned over to Clelia and said, "why don't you invite the family up for Sunday dinner." Americans of Italian descent regarded Sunday as family day, although it usually took Tony until sometime in May before he wanted a hectic household on a Sunday.

After a wonderful lunch of frittata, roasted peppers, fresh mozzarella cheese, crusty peasant bread, all followed by

an elegant cup of espresso with a drip of sambuca, Tony took Clelia over to the shop.

"*There's a cobbler down the street, fixing shoes for people's feet,*" Tony and Angelina sang in unison, "*with a bang and a bang and a bang, bang, bang.*" Angelina loved to sing this song on the way to the shop because Mario, the mechanic, was always banging something.

When they arrived at the shop, Mario immediately took Angelina to his office where he had a little tool set for his son, Pasqual. "Little bambina, let's go play with the tools," he joyfully prodded. "We can bang, bang, bang."

The excitement was too much for her and immediately looked to Tony and said, "pee-pee."

In a flash, Mario brought her to the bathroom, realizing she did not have a diaper on since she was one week into "big girl" panties and potty training.

From a distance, Tony heard "uh oh," and just like that a smile came to his face and a tear to his eye as he thought of the great joy he had in his life each day with

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Clelia, Angelina, Mario and Granny. Once again, his mind wandered and a stream of consciousness with links known only to Tony washed over him.....

Tony was standing off the fifth green at Augusta, watching a crew member mowing a surface that was so undulating that when the person was mowing the front of the green, he was not visible from less than 15 yards away. Tony noted the old Toro "thatch-master" 500 the guy was using—the hand mowing unit with the floating head. He had just spoken with Ole, the Toro salesman about purchasing a couple of the 500s.

"I just seeded two of my greens to the new Penn A-4," he informed Ole, "just like Augusta did on a few greens, and I heard from a fellow superintendent at the National in Vegas that the fixed-head mowers might dig and scalp these new tight bents on more undulating greens."

Angelina's cry brought Tony back to reality. He rushed into the office and found her in Mario's arms crying. "An-lina, go boom," she muttered.

"She was trying to climb onto the little toy mower," Mario explained. "She didn't expect it to start moving." "She might be a golf superintendent in the making, Tony," Mario noted. Once again, Tony's mind wandered away.....

Angelina Facebella, the first woman superintendent at Augusta National being interviewed by Pat Summerall during the television coverage. Tony continued down this stream of consciousness.....

Angelina was revered by her colleagues, male and female alike, because of her deep devotion for the land, the game, and her profession. Everyone around her marveled at her consistently positive attitude and how her enthusiasm for life was contagious. Her staff regularly commented how great she communicated her thoughts and noted the "glow" that came over her during the tournament.

Pat Summerall asked her how she was able to balance the pressures of the tournament, raising her two children, and maintaining such a positive attitude?

Almost immediately, a radiant smile came to her face. "When I was a kid, we lived in the Adirondacks," she explained. "My dad was a golf superintendent at the country club in town. Each winter he would struggle with the long nights and then right around the beginning of spring, he would tell me the story of his first trip to Augusta. He described the afterglow of his experience so vividly that I could actually feel it and see it in his eyes. I

simply followed that beam of light I saw from him and it took me to this place."

Summerall interrupted, "Do you see your dad much these days?"

"Not as much as I'd like to," she replied. "But from February through May, he and my mom live with my husband and me, spending time with their grandchildren. Which, of course, is part of the reason I am able to balance my life during tournament time."

Summerall concluded the interview, then stayed to chat more with Angelina.

She continued, "You know Pat, my dad doesn't mope as much in the winter anymore, now that he is retired. He misses growing the grass, but he has replaced his passion for grass with his beautiful wife and grandchildren. His glow of light beams through them now, all year long....."

Tony's eyes were all welled up with tears as he felt a tug on his pant leg drawing him back to today. He reached down, scooped up Angelina, said good-bye to the crew, and headed home.

The car ride home was filled with Angelina jibber-jabber. This time Tony's mind didn't wander away. He stayed right there basking in the glow of his daughter's life, his own hopes for her, and the thought that life, with its many challenges and mysteries provides regular opportunity to dream.....

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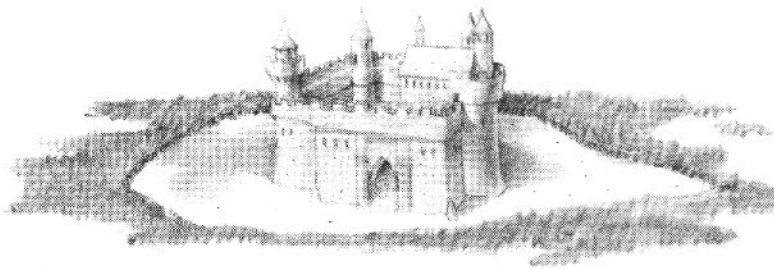
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Golf leads to successful turf career

By Lori Ward Bocher

Of the 39 Personality Profiles I've written for THE GRASS ROOTS since 1990, no one has had as diverse a background in turf as Alan Nees, Director of Marketing for the Milorganite division of the Milwaukee Metropolitan Sewerage District. He's worked on golf courses, in irrigation design and sales, in lawn care, in turf product sales, and as a turf agronomist. He has both a sales and science background.

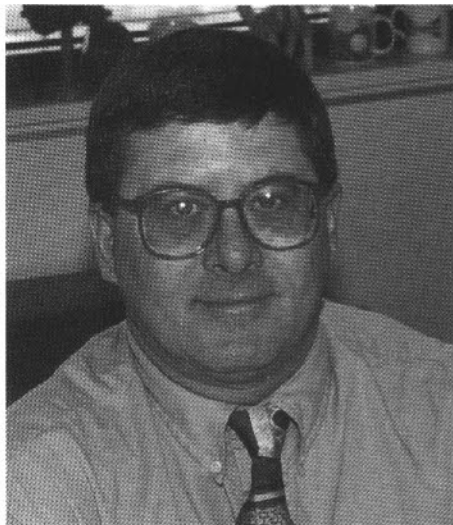
And it all started with an 11-year-old boy who decided to play golf.

Alan was born in Fort Wayne, Ind., where his father worked for U.S. Steel. The family lived for a time in eastern Pennsylvania, then moved to Chesterton, Ind., where he graduated from high school in 1970.

At the age of 11, Alan started to play golf. "As a junior golfer and high school player, I was marginally good to the point where I entertained some thoughts of turning professional — not with a playing career but as a club pro," he remembers. "But I looked at turfgrass management as an alternative opportunity, depending on which way my career path took me, so that I could somehow remain in the golf or turf field."

So it was off to Purdue University where he majored in agronomy with an emphasis in turfgrass management. He received his BS in 1974 and spent one summer in graduate school at Purdue. "I ran out of money at the end of that summer, and I ran out of sanity, so I opted to leave graduate school," he explains.

It was during his college years that Alan decided to pursue a career in turf management and not as a golf pro. "In the summers, I would work on golf courses, including the summer between my junior and senior year when I worked at Firestone Country Club in Akron, Ohio," he recalls. "At that time, the south course at Firestone hosted up to three PGA tour stops a year. It was



Alan Nees

one of the top five courses. That was absolutely the best summer of my life. It was a marvelous experience."

Alan notes that Pete Miller, a Wisconsin native, was superintendent at the time. And Pete Sinnott, the assistant superintendent, served as a great teacher for Alan.

His summers on the golf course made Alan realize that he didn't want to pursue a career as a golf course superintendent. "I saw too many people who had chosen that career path always being on the bubble," he says. "The politics and the musical chairs of the private club were just more than my professional sanity could bear."

"And I think I developed a bit of a knack on the sales end of things," he continues. "I tend to look at sales differently than a lot of people. I think the function of a sales person is to solve somebody's problem, not just write an order. If you can solve that problem, whether you use your catalog or even a competitor's catalog, the numbers will come."

So his first job out of college was at a Toro distributorship in Pontiac, Mich., where he worked in the design and sales of irrigation and pumping

equipment and systems for golf course, residential and commercial properties. After two years there, he moved to the Chicago area in the summer of 1976 and worked for Chemlawn.

"My branch manager purchased one of the first Chemlawn franchises that was made available, and it was in the Fox Valley area of Wisconsin," Alan recalls. "He and his partner hired me as their first employee in 1978. We started that business with just the three of us and the owner's wife who worked in the office. We grew it from \$20,000 in sales to about \$1.2 million in sales by 1984 when we had two branches, 12 lawn care trucks, two tree and shrub trucks, and a lawn maintenance division."

It was an exciting time in Alan's life. "We were growing by leaps and bounds," he recalls. "Just to know that you were intimately involved in that growth was very fulfilling and exciting. It was very challenging because I was directly involved in business decisions that a lot of people my age, and with my background, probably wouldn't be involved in. I learned a great deal."

But in 1984 the principal owner sold the franchise. "We had built our business in the Fox Valley differently than normal Chemlawn type operations," Alan explains. "It was built on very good service and technically very strong programs. That was different than even the Chemlawn corporate branches in Chicago."

"I had the bright idea that I'd be able to bring that same attitude and level of service to the Milwaukee area," he continues. "I bought a franchise of Spring Green Lawn Care. Unfortunately, the Milwaukee culture was different than the Fox Valley culture. The Milwaukee market didn't appreciate, and show as much loyalty for, that level of service relative to being able to get what they perceived

(Continued on page 20)

(Continued from page 19)

as the same thing for a cheaper price. I hated it. I sold that franchise one year later. I was darn lucky not to lose my shirt."

At that point, Reinders Brothers was looking for a salesman. "So I hooked up with Ed Devinger and that group and spent the first year with them in Racine, Walworth and Kenosha Counties," Alan reports. A year later he was transferred to northeastern Wisconsin where his territory ran from Fond du Lac up through the central slice of Upper Michigan. He stayed there until May of 1989.

"I really enjoyed my position at Reinders," Alan says. "I especially liked the fact that, besides selling equipment, I could use my background in offering a full line of turf products such as fertilizers and things like that."

In 1989, the position of head agronomist opened up at Milorganite. Alan decided to apply. "Lo and behold, I was offered that position," he recalls. "It gave me an opportunity to concentrate on fertilizer from a technical standpoint, to use my skills nationwide, and to grow my knowledge into warm season grasses, desert soils, the sandy soils of Florida — all kinds of things."

He didn't know it at the time, but he was about to take off on a roller coaster ride at Milorganite. "In the next year and a half, we had some turnover in management here for a variety of reasons," he explains. "As people kept leaving, I had to assume their roles along with more and more responsibility. By the time the shake out was over, I was about the most senior person here after only two years. I was promoted to Director of Marketing in 1991, the position I still hold."

There were some real critical issues facing Milorganite at the time. "The EPA was developing a new set of rules and regulations for the disposal of bio-solids — our feel-good term for sewage sludge," Alan explains. "If that rule, which was 15 years in the making and very technical, was not put together the right way, it would have been absolutely devastating for Milorganite. I had to jump right in the middle of that. I went to the EPA offices in Washington a number of times to negotiate and educate and make sure the rule was

crafted so it was technically sound and fair for everybody."

Much of the negotiating revolved around the "exceptional quality criteria" of the EPA. "That's a three-pronged set of criteria," Alan explains. "The first is for heavy metals. Yes, there are heavy metals in Milorganite. But we were able to demonstrate to the EPA that there are heavy metals in other fertilizers as well and, in many cases, in higher levels in Milorganite — and certainly higher than the exceptional quality criteria."

"We argued that the EPA couldn't impose additional rules and regulations on us than what it would impose on normal fertilizers. They agreed with that, eventually," Alan adds.

"For the other two prongs, we had to demonstrate pathogen reduction and we had to show that the product was stable enough to meet vector attraction rules — that it wouldn't attract things like flies and mosquitoes that are vectors of disease," he continues.

The negotiating success with the EPA led directly to Milorganite's next major challenge. "The new set of rules opened the door for a number of other municipalities who thought that what we were doing was a pretty good idea," Alan points out, adding that cities like Tampa, Boston, New York, Baltimore and Houston installed equipment and entered the fertilizer market. "Product availability jumped from 80,000 or 90,000 dry tons in 1990 to nearly 300,000 dry tons today."

At the time other municipalities began entering the market, nearly half of the Milorganite being produced wasn't being used on turf; it was sold in bulk to citrus and vegetable producers in Florida. "When

the others entered the market, they put us right into their sites and went directly after that Florida market, actually subsidizing costs and giving the material away. They took that non-turf market from us," Alan points out.

"But that's OK," he adds. "Our strategies have been fairly clear since then. We have the name brand. We have the marketing effort and a marvelous distribution network out there. We needed to shift what we lost in Florida into the bag market. We've just about successfully completed that transition."

About 35 percent of Milorganite's market is now retail. The rest is sold in bag or bulk primarily for the golf and landscape markets. "Those two businesses, the retail and commercial, are very, very different," Alan points out. "We package the product differently. The distribution channels are different. The instructions are different. They're registered differently."

The Milwaukee Metropolitan Sewerage District has two waste water treatment plants — the one at Jones Island where Milorganite is produced, and the other at Oak Creek where they have a land application program called "Agri-Life" in which liquid sludge is injected into agricultural fields. The majority of MMSD sludge, however, goes into Milorganite — perhaps 80 percent, Alan estimates.

Although not directly involved with the project, Alan was at Milorganite during a major reconstruction project at Jones Island. "Our old drying and dewatering plant, the plant that makes Milorganite, was constructed in the 1920's. It was in need of replacement if we were going to stay in the Milorganite business," he explains.

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