

The Grass Roots

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About Our Cover:

The beautiful cover gracing this issue was created from Jennifer Samerdyke's artistic interpretation of original photomicrographs taken by W.A. Bentley. See Bentley's story in "Jottings From The Golf Course Journal."

Growing up in a place that has winter, you learn to avoid self-pity. Winter is not a personal experience; everybody else is as cold as you, so you shouldn't complain about it too much. You learn this as a kid, coming home crying from the cold, and your Mother looks down and says, "It's only a little frostbite, you're okay." And thus you learn to be okay. What's done is done, get over it. Drink your coffee. It's not the best you'll ever get, but it's good enough.

— Garrison Keillor

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(Left to Right): Mark Kienert, Dave Smith, Dan Williams, Kris Pinkerton, Scott Schaller, Dave Brandenburg, Andy Kronwall, Marc Davison, Mike Lyons.

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PRIDE AND TRADITION

By Scott Schaller

The day has come. I have to put together my first "President's Message." For most of you who may know me, I am never really short of words in conversation, but when I have to put them together on paper it becomes more of a challenge.

I would like to thank everyone for the opportunity to become the 34th president of this fine association. Being president of the WGCSA is truly an honor and a privilege. We all know that this association carries much pride and tradition. The past presidents of Mark Kienert, Mike Semler, Bruce Worzella, Rod Johnson, Roger Bell, Bill Roberts, Monroe S. Miller, Jim Belfield and

Wayne Otto are just a few of the gentlemen who have established this pride and tradition. I know that I have a very hard act to follow. I realize the next year will bring new challenges and expectations to the chapter, but I feel confident that the present WGCSA Board of Directors will meet those challenges and expectations through their hard work of serving the membership.

Speaking of hard work, the 1997 Turf Symposium Committee should be commended for all their efforts in putting together probably one of the best Symposiums ever. The speakers and topic information on *Putting Green Construction* was outstanding.

I'm sure the record attendance of 232 are anxiously looking forward to the follow up topic of *Grow In* next year.

The winter season is a relatively quiet time on a golf course in Wisconsin, but there is still plenty for golf course superintendents to do. This is a time to stay current with our profession and industry through educational offerings. I look forward to seeing you at the WTA's EXPO '98 held in Madison on January 13th and 14, at the GCSAA Conference and Show in Anaheim in early February, and the WGCSA Spring Business and Educational meeting held in Fond du Lac on March 3rd. 🏌️

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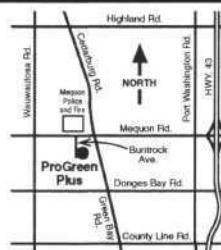
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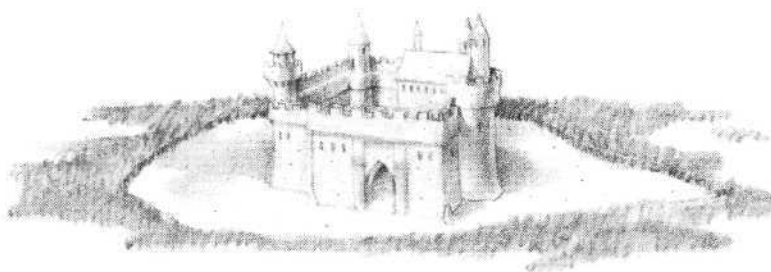


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BRIGHT SILENCE

By Dr. Frank S. Rossi
Department of Floriculture & Ornamental Horticulture
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A surprisingly, unpredictable early winter snow had Tony's crew shackled in the barn with the leaf blowers and rakes primed for the last hold outs on the mighty oaks. So the crew, led by Mario, the equipment technician (aka the mechanic), headed out with shovels to clear the miles of paths to the old clubhouse. The bright silence that accompanies the first snow of the year fills the crew with thoughts of their days as children, ready to romp!

Meanwhile, up on the hill above town, Tony managed to get his pickup stuck in a snowbank. He sat there for a minute in the same bright silence that captured his crew and thought of his days as a child. He remembered when he was stuck under a tree with his best friend, John, during a sleigh ride on the Locust hill.

"When you're young," he said to himself out loud, "the days seem longer and you never think about losing a friend." The 20th anniversary of John's passing was a few days earlier.

Occupied with these thoughts, Tony walked back toward the house. It was still an hour before the kids would be up. He figured to contact Mario on the cell phone and ask him when he had a chance to come with the dump truck and the tow chain to pull him out. On the one hand, Tony felt like the club member who drove his golf cart into the pond. Still, on the other hand, he saw it as an opportunity to get the porridge started, sit with his coffee, and anticipate the glow on the children's faces when they see the white blanket covering the ground.

Maria hit the snooze button endlessly on a normal day, but today, she immediately listened for the news that schools were closed and, in short order, so were her eyelids! Tony recalled his youth and how a

school closing filled him with excitement; now, he felt a deep calm knowing his children would be down soon.

"Yahoo," little Angelo cried out, "I can't wait to call Troy for a sleigh ride behind Schuyler. Dad, do you think Mom will help get the sleigh hitched up to Schuyler today, so Troy can come with us for a ride?"

"Angelo," Tony replied, "Schuyler will need some more work this season before we can hook him to the sleigh. But, after Mario comes to pull my truck out of the snowbank, we can all go to the park next to the course for some serious downhill sleigh riding."

"Da-a-ad," Clelia creaked out of a deep sleep, "is.....school....closed?"

"It certainly is, and I've made some porridge to warm your belly before we head out romping today," Tony replied.

Just then, with Angelo was sitting down with his porridge, Clelia creeping down the stairs, Maria cozy into that deep morning sleep, the phone rang. Tony's good friend from Rhode

Island called to say that Doc Skogley had passed away last night.

Doc, as we all called him, had been struggling with cancer for the last few years. He was able to attend the 1997 Rhode Island Turfgrass Field Day with the help of his friends at the Allen Seed Company. Tony just chatted with Doc a few months earlier about friends, family, and two of his favorite subjects—velvet bentgrass and sweet vernalgrass.

Tony left the children and their breakfast in the kitchen and headed up to see Maria. He sat on the edge of the bed, staring out at the snow, watching the big flakes drop.

"Who was on the phone?" a groggy Maria asked.

"That was Vicki," Tony replied. "Do you remember when we were at the Wisconsin alumni gathering in Orlando and I introduced you to that older gentleman? I said was my advisor from Rhode Island."

"You mean Doc Skogley?" she recalled.

(Continued on page 7)

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(Continued from page 5)

"Yeah, well he passed away yesterday."

Just then Maria sat up and leaned over to Tony, who had tears running down his face. "I didn't realize you were that close to him," she said.

Tony had known Doc since 1982, as an undergrad at URI. But it wasn't until much later that Doc was to have a significant influence on his life. It was 1985 and Tony was becoming disillusioned with being an assistant superintendent. He was applying for jobs, but felt undermined by the superintendent at the club where he was working.

Toward the end of his second year as an assistant, he took a day and headed back to URI for the Field Day. He didn't know many people, so he spent time wandering around the plots. While looking over the bent-grass variety trials, he noticed a selection that stood out from the rest in color and pest resistance. Just then Doc came upon him.

"What do you think of this one, Tony?" Doc inquired.

"Sure looks good, Doc. It seems noticeably darker and more upright than Penncross. What height are these at?"

They chatted for about five minutes, which at Field Day with Doc was surely a record! He was often pulled in so many directions that it was rare to have his attention for that long.

"Have you ever thought about graduate school, Tony?" Doc probed.

"I did a few years ago, but after I got turned down at Cornell, I figured I wasn't grad school material," Tony responded.

"Well, I've got a spot for the fall semester, if you're interested." And Doc left it at that.

Tony looked out over the plots on that bright sunny summer day and noticed how quiet the day seemed, a kind of bright silence. Tony would leave the golf course that fall and join Doc to investigate the use of a naturalized species as a turf.

"It wasn't until the end of my time at URI that Doc and I really became close." Tony continued the story with Maria. "I had just started to write my thesis when Carolyn and I separated. You remember me telling you that she moved out while I was at work."

"I remember you saying what a mess you were then," Maria recalled.

"That's putting it mildly," Tony cor-

rected. "My hair was a mess, my life was spinning out of control. Then I went to see Doc to tell him that I would be quitting and heading back to the golf course."

"Listen Tony," Doc said calmly, "go get your things and move in with Jane and me. You must not let this situation ruin all that you have worked for. Try and work things out with Carolyn, but in the meantime—start writing!"

"I remember that day like it was yesterday," Tony reflected. "Doc and Jane were a second set of parents to me."

Maria pulled Tony back onto the bed, holding him in her arms. "You know Tony, that's what I'll always love about you. Everyone who shares a part of themselves with you becomes family."

"I've never felt like I deserved all the good things that have happened to me, because I always had so much support from my family and friends like Doc," Tony explained. "And you know Maria, I feel like I've lost a lot, too."

"I know it seems like that, Tony," Maria said, "but you have SO much, and besides, as long as you have memories of John and Doc, they will live forever."

Just then, they could hear the kids romping up the stairs to jump on the bed. Tony and Maria hid under the covers and braced themselves for the impact. After Angelo and Clelia landed and rolled around for a minute, it was Tony left in bed while Maria and the kids headed down to finish breakfast and their morning chores.

Tony looked out over the hill, into the snow and thought of his friends and family who have passed through his life. He thought of the many still with him today. He noticed that the bright silence of that summer day and this winter snowfall filled him with peace.

He saw Mario pulling into the driveway, so he headed down to greet him and face the music for getting the truck stuck. One could see a little smile making its way onto Tony's face as he made his way down the stairs. ❄️





He wants to make a difference

By Lori Ward Bocher

You read it here first. Scotts products soon will be packaged in 50-pound bags — not those oddball 35- and 42-pound bags. And you can thank Wayne Horman, former executive technical representative for Scotts in Wisconsin and now the new national marketing manager for fertilizer and seed.

"So whenever a superintendent sees a Scotts product in a 50-pound bag, especially greens fertilizer, he can say, 'Well, geeze, Wayne actually did do something,'" Wayne jokes.

As author of "The Surrounds" column in this publication, Wayne explained in his last article (Nov./Dec. 1997) why he made the career switch: So that he could be newsworthy enough to be featured in "The Personality Profile" column. "Monroe says there is nothing interesting about my life, so I am out to change that," Wayne challenged.

The challenge worked. Here he is. And his life is a little more interesting than Monroe indicated.

All kidding aside, his reasons for leaving Wisconsin for the marketing manager position at Scotts didn't have much to do with *The Grass*

Roots. "It's partly ego. It's also a chance to make a difference," Wayne says. "If I had been a tech rep forever, I would have had a small role in deciding what I was going to do every year. Someone else in a higher position would always decide what I should do and how I should do it.

"I saw the job as an opportunity to be part of a group of people who change things around, whether that's from what type of bag we package our product in, to what new products we develop," he continues. "It's really a control issue. I have a chance to really make a difference. Even though we're a big player in the industry, we could be even bigger if we gave superintendents more of what they want."

Wayne's predecessors at Scotts were marketing specialists who had to then learn the product line. In contrast, Wayne has worked as a tech rep since 1986. "I have actually used the products, sold the products, listened to the superintendents on a regular basis," he explains. "I've been there. I have a better grasp of what superintendents are doing. I can offer that perspective in my new position."

What are his specific job responsibilities? "We have a whole new fertilizer product line coming out," Wayne explains. "My job will be to educate and create all marketing materials for the product. I'll also be involved with developing new products in that line, whether it be a new fertilizer or a new analysis.

"And I'm responsible for the seed business which, in the future, is going to be absolutely huge because of the gene gun," Wayne continues. "You can buy soybeans right now that are Roundup resistant. Well, Scotts has the rights for this in the turfgrass industry. So if a superintendent has poa on his greens, he can use Roundup to take the poa out without killing the bentgrass. That's probably only four or five years away.

"The gene gun can be used for other needs — whatever you want to dream, it will be possible," he adds. "To be a part of that, to help direct the company in where it needs to go, is incredibly exciting."

Wayne officially started his new job on October 1, 1997. His family remains in Madison while he works in Ohio Monday through Thursday. The family plans to move to the Columbus area in February.

Both Wayne and his wife, Susan, are natives of Wisconsin. Wayne was raised in Port Washington where his father was a postal worker and his mother was a chef at a local hotel. During his high school years, Wayne's father helped him prepare for the Air Force Academy. But, for some reason, Wayne had his heart set on studying horticulture.

"I can't tell you exactly why I thought horticulture was so great," he recalls. "Maybe it was because my grandmother had gardens. I really wanted to grow roses. I thought that would be really neat."

During his junior year in high school, he attended a one-day program at the University of Wisconsin-Madison where he learned about the

horticulture program and met people who represented future employers. "It was a great experience — going to campus, seeing the school, meeting people," he remembers.

So when he graduated in 1979, he chose Wisconsin and horticulture over the Air Force Academy. "I nearly broke my dad's heart," Wayne recalls. "But I didn't want to become some sort of a pilot, or anything else that you would go to the Air Force Academy for. I just wanted to study horticulture."

As a hort major, it literally took a broken ankle to get him into the turf end of things. He was paying his own way through college, and his sophomore year he took a job at a nursery in Madison. Due to a broken ankle suffered while working at the nursery over spring break, he had to quit his job and was unable to work most of the following summer. Consequently, he didn't have enough money to return to school.

"So I took a job with ChemLawn as a lawn applicator in Madison," he points out. "I promised them that I would not go back to school for a year and a half minimum so they

would hire me. That's how I was introduced to turfgrass — learning from their agronomic training."

He worked there his year and a half, and he also worked part time in ChemLawn's telemarketing program as he eased his way back into school. He switched to a turf emphasis, thanks to his advisor, Dr. J.R. Love. He gained golf course experience by working at Cherokee and Blackhawk his last two years in school. And he graduated from the UW in December of 1985 with a BS in horticulture and soils.

"I was the only one out of my fellow graduates who didn't become a golf course superintendent," Wayne recalls. "I didn't have a good mechanical background. I can't rebuild engines. If you work on a small golf course, you have to be a jack of all trades. I really respect the superintendents who know a little bit about everything."

"I also longed for the sales side of the turf industry," he adds. It was another UW grad who helped him land a job with Scotts right out of college. "A gentleman named Jerry O'Donnell, one of the original turf

graduates from Wisconsin, was at Scotts. So I called him to ask about job opportunities. He set up an interview, and somebody flew to Madison to interview me during finals week."

Wayne got the job, and he actually turned in a blank chemistry final because he hadn't had time to study. "I already had a job lined up. I had a B going into the course and found out I'd pass no matter what. So I knew I'd graduate," he explains.

For his initial job, he worked out of Marysville, Ohio, as a tech rep. "I covered the whole western part of the U.S. calling on lawn care companies and sod growers," he points out. "I would get up on a Sunday, fly some place, travel for a week, and come back."

In January of 1990 he transferred to Wisconsin where he initially covered the entire state visiting golf courses only. As new reps were brought to Wisconsin and his geographic territory shrank, he started handling schools and athletic fields, too. "I've been lucky enough to have Lambeau Field and the Milwaukee County Stadium as accounts since

(Continued on page 11)

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