

Turf Industry Loses One Of Its Best Friends

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Howard E. Kaerwer, Nationally Recognized Turf Agronomist, Dies

MGCSA, GCSAA and the turf industry as a whole lost one of the best friends we have ever had on November 10, 1993. Howard (Bud) E. Kaerwer died of heart disease at the age of 74.

Howard was the first director of research services for Northrup King Co. His specialties included the development and testing of alfalfa and turf grasses, although his involvements were far more extensive than those two areas.

He was best known for his work in turf breeding and consulting. He was also responsible for developing new technology for storing and testing seeds, and launching alfalfa, soybean, corn and forage crop breeding programs.

A native of Oshkosh, Wis., Howard served in the U.S. Navy Submarine Command during World War II and retired from NK in 1984 after a 37-year career with the company.

He received a bachelor's degree in agronomy from the University of Wisconsin, Madison, and a master's degree from the University of Minnesota, St. Paul.

After retiring, he became an adjunct professor at the University of Minnesota, served with the advisory committee for the USGA Green Section and was treasurer of the board of trustees of the University of Minnesota's Landscape Arboretum. In addition, he continued to work on projects involving turf and other types of plant materials in a variety of locations.

The GCSAA awarded Howard its Distinguished Service Award in 1988 in recognition of his extensive efforts in developing improved turf varieties and his untiring work with turf managers around the world.

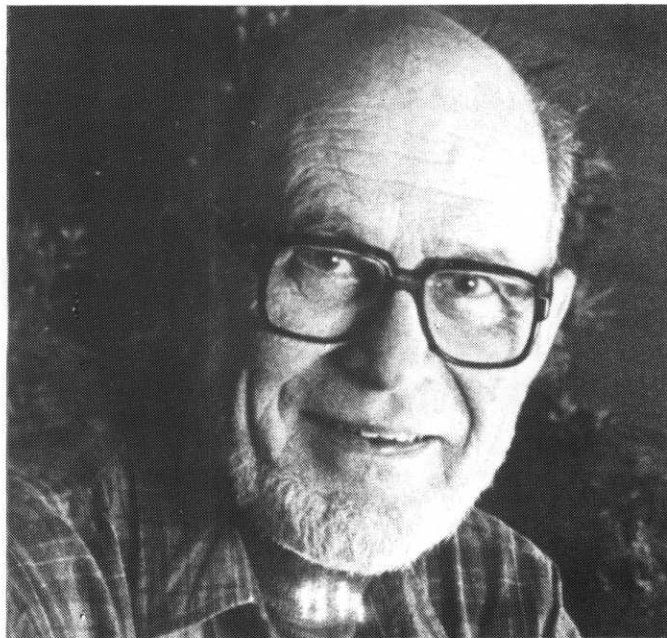
Kaerwer was a member of the American Society of Agronomy, Council for Agricultural Science and Technology, American Seed Trade Association and an honorary member of the Minnesota Golf Course Superintendents Association. He was also a member of Delta Upsilon Fraternity, University of Minnesota Alumni Association, University of Wisconsin Alumni Association, The Minneapolis Institute of Arts, Walker Art Center and was a life member of The Nature Conservancy.

He is survived by his wife Barbara, Eden Prairie, Minn.; sister Elizabeth Mason, Glenview, Ill., sister-in-law Kay Dalgety, Evanston, Ill., nieces and a nephew.

Memorials may be sent to the University of Minnesota Landscape Arboretum Foundation. A private memorial service was held in his honor.

The Minnesota Golf Course Superintendents Association (MGCSA) awarded Howard its Distinguished Service Award at its awards luncheon on November 17, 1993. I was honored to accept this award for his wife, Barbara, in Howard's name. There were several hundred turf managers present at this luncheon.

Following the presentation of the plaque, the general text of my acceptance remarks follows:



Howard Kaerwer

One of the greatest things about the turf industry is the calibre of people that you meet in it. Most within the industry are extremely honest and hard-working people who have a genuine love of Nature. In an industry filled with people like this, one of the nicest and most genuine people that I have ever met was Howard Kaerwer.

I first met Howard back in the '60s when I was still at Minikahda Club in Minneapolis. He would come out with a handful of seeds and ask me to plant them on a certain site. You see, Howard was always looking for things that would make our jobs easier and allow us to provide better turf quality for our memberships.

He had the foresight to see the need for low-management grasses long before it became fashionable. He single-handedly pioneered the use of fine-textured perennial ryegrasses for Southern golf course winter overseeding. Today, in one form or another, this is a common practice employed by all quality clubs down South.

He was one of the best friends that the golf course superintendent ever had. He had a unique ability to speak to us in terms we could understand as he did so frequently at turf conferences around the country. Yet I observed him at those same conferences engaged in conversations with the Jim Watsons, Jim Beardes and Don Whites of the world, and they would be asking him questions!

They say that many times timing is everything. Well, in this case, the timing was very fortunate, because the

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MGCSA's president called for Howard one week ago last night to tell him of this award. His wife, Barbara, said that Howard was in the hospital, but she would relay this information to him.

"He was absolutely delighted," according to Barb. During that night, Howard passed away. But knowing him as I did, knowing that this group had honored him in this way undoubtedly filled him with pleasant thoughts for his journey.

There are two ironies that come to mind as I stand here today accepting this award. The first is that I suggested to Howard years ago that he should start doing some breeding work with *Poa annua*. He said, "I'd love to because there's a wealth of germplasm there. But I'd get fired!" Those of us in the golf course industry realize that, in those days, *Poa annua* was, and many times, still is, a "dirty word" in the seed and turf industries. One of his last involvements, however, was working with Dr. Don White on a *Poa annua* selection and breeding project.

The other irony is that it was Howard's heart that finally did him in, and he had one of the biggest hearts of anyone that I have every met!

When I visited with Barb last week at her home, she said that she hadn't really realized how many friends "Bud" had had. She had already gotten calls from six foreign countries and so many states that she had lost count. This before any public announcement of Howard's death had been made! She, in fact, was running between the telephone and the FAX machine in an attempt to keep up with all the communications that were coming to her home.

The turf industry has lost a true and genuine friend and one of the nicest people to have ever walked on this earth. On behalf of Barbara Kaerwer and in Howard's name, I thank you for this award.

These remarks were made by me as someone who has had his life touched in a very real way by a man who never sought recognition and awards, but who genuinely loved his work and cared about the people who would benefit from that work. There is no way to chronicle all of Howard's achievements and involvements throughout his career in such limited space. However, as someone who was acquainted with Howard throughout much of my career in the turf industry, both as a golf course superintendent and then in commercial endeavors that followed, I am confident that I speak for all who knew him by saying that Howard was viewed as a genuine friend, not just an industry acquaintance, who worked tirelessly and unselfishly toward making this world a better place in which to live.

His smiling face and gentle nature will be missed at our meetings, on our golf courses, parks, playgrounds and athletic fields. We will miss Howard Kaerwer, but he would probably tell us not to spend too much time at that, but rather to continue on with his work of making this world a better place in which to live.

—Larry Vetter



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