

### PEOPLE

## Grau left his heart to the green industry

CHEVERLY, Md. — Dr. Fred Grau closed all of his letters with, "Sincerely yours, for better turf."

In a life devoted to the research and development of improved turf species, his accomplishments and discoveries were many.

Grau, 88, died here Dec. 1, 1990 of congestive heart failure.

Born in Bennington, Neb., Grau earned his Ph.D. from the University of Maryland in 1935. In Pennsylvania, he was the nation's first extension turf specialist.

Perhaps Grau's most enduring accomplishment—and what he himself called "the discovery of a lifetime"—was finding crownvetch along Rt. 222 in Berks County, Pa. Grau later remembered standing at a fork in the road, wondering which way to turn.

"I turned right, and discovered a cinder-and-shale pile covered with beautiful pink blossoms. That was the crownvetch industry in its infancy. Had I turned left, I would never have stumbled upon it."

Grau and his first wife Anne developed and promoted Penngift Crownvetch. Today, it's Pennsylvania's official beautification and conservation plant, and is used along roadsides worldwide.

### A time of discovery

Grau's timely presence during the most important period in turf science history cannot be overstated.

His contemporaries in the early 1930s included O.J. Noer, H.B. Musser and Lawrence Dickenson. Grau was considered to be the last remaining research giant from among the earliest turf industry pioneers.

Grau's enthusiasm for Alta and Kentucky-31 led to the later development of the fine leaf tall fescues. In 1950, he played an active role in the research and release of Merion Kentucky bluegrass and Meyer zoysiagrass.

Grau and Musser collaborated to develop Penn-cross bentgrass in 1950-51.

### Friend to students

As director of the USGA Green Section, Grau established fellowships that enabled more than a few research students to earn advanced degrees.

Dr. James Watson—for whom Grau obtained a grant in 1946 for Ph.D. studies at Penn State—said that Grau never lost interest in his work.

"He was dedicated to the improvement of turfgrass throughout his adult life," said Watson, "and he continually sought new avenues to enhance the practical and scientific aspects of the industry. No question about it, he loved the industry."

### Designed equipment

Grau also found ways to improve turf equipment. In 1938, he and Dr. C.N. Keyser built the first hydro-seeder for use on the



FRED V. GRAU  
1902-1990

Pennsylvania turnpike.

As a consultant to West Point Products in Pennsylvania, Grau worked with Tom Mascaro to develop and patent the "Aerifier," a spoon-type turf cultivator.

"He was the most knowledgeable man I ever met in my whole life," recalled Mascaro. "He was a brilliant speaker and lecturer who could inspire many people."

Grau and retired superintendent Eb Steinecker were friends for 60 years. Steinecker visited Grau the day before he died.

"He could hardly talk, he had such a bad cold," said Steinecker. "So I said, 'Let me do the talking for once.' He said, 'Let's keep in touch; I have so much to tell you...' He was always clicking."

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'Sincerely yours, for better turf...'

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In 1968, Grau organized the Musser International Turfgrass Foundation to develop qualified leaders in turfgrass science and promote safer sports turf. The National Sports Turf Council followed in 1986.

Stricken by polio in later years, Grau's pace was slowed. However, his enthusiasm in turf research remained vibrant.

Grau was a prolific and opinionated writer. Whether in his "Musings" and "Gleanings" columns, "Grau's Q&A" (which he wrote for 30 years for *Golf-dom* magazine) or his informal, handwritten notes, Grau provided his fellow turf professionals with direct, honest observations.

A memorial service was held on Dec. 8.

—Terry McIver □

## **LETTERS**

### **Remembering Fred Grau**

To the editor:

In the summer of 1986, as the managing editor of *LANDSCAPE MANAGEMENT*, I traveled to Fred Grau's home in Maryland to talk turf. When he opened the door, I saw a large, elderly man with failing eyesight, sitting on a cart that seemed almost an extension of himself.

He looked up with a big smile and asked, "What would you like for breakfast?" But before I could answer, he took out the eggs (farm fresh, brown ones) and began scrambling. The eggs...and my mind. Fred, after all, was always coming up with new ideas and inventions, though he's best known for crown-vetch.

My first image of him as "elderly" was completely wrong. He was perhaps the most youthful, energetic person I have ever met.

I followed Fred down the street as he whizzed ahead on his cart, eagerly telling

me about his neighbors with the brown lawn. Later we had homemade ice cream at the University of Maryland's dairy farm. The ice cream tasted rich that steamy day. But the richest experience was just getting to know Fred Grau.

He sent me home with stacks of his writing, and ideas on improving the safety of athletic fields and—most importantly—educating field managers.

Although I saw Fred many other times at trade shows, it is that day I remember most. The athletic turf articles were published with a special thanks to Fred. And the editorial I wrote then, about injured athletes, was called "Images of Grief."

"Grief" is a word Fred would give little credence. So when remembering Fred Grau, remember instead the images of life.

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