

# THE FRONT OFFICE

## OPINION PAGE

### BETWEEN A ROCK AND A HARD PLACE



Imagine for a moment that you're a bright student studying turfgrass science at a major state university. Your professor pulls you aside after class and says, "How would you like to go into turfgrass research? You won't get rich and I can't promise you a permanent position, but the industry needs you and I think you can make some very important contributions."

First you think of time. You could be earning a paycheck within a couple of years if you finish school with a bachelor's or associate's degree. If you stay on to get a Ph.D., you're talking about another four years.

Now think about money. As a graduate teaching assistant you might earn \$9,000 a year while you complete your studies and write at least two theses. Any research you do will depend on funding from outside sources, so you'll have to be a salesman as well as a student and teacher. If you are married, your spouse will have to work to help support the family.

All goes according to plan and you land an assistant professor position at a university for \$30,000. To earn this salary you'll have to teach in addition to research. Now your goal is to get tenure, a status which provides you and your family some amount of job security. If you hang in there for another five to ten years, you might rake in \$35,000 to \$60,000.

Your buddies from undergraduate school have been climbing the ladder at a golf course, park district, or contracting firm for more than ten years. While you were in school, they were earning more than you, buying houses and cars and taking vacations.

The thought of going into private industry is very tempting. Research funds are harder to come by. State turf research grants seem to be drying up. All the grant money is going toward biotechnology so you have to fight for every dollar you need for turf research.

The "publish or perish" rule at most universities forces you to undertake research projects that are different from your main interest. Much of the research you can get private funding for is not acceptable to professional journals. You're caught between a rock and a hard place. What do you do?

Now you know why two universities have unfilled full professorships in turf science. Now you know why many of our Ph.D.s are joining private industry. And perhaps we will all understand why state and federal funding of turfgrass research is so important.

Major issues facing us now can only be solved through research. State associations and private industry can't pick up the whole tab for research on subjects such as pesticide fate, water conservation, and development of biological controls. We still have a huge amount of testing to do on root zones for golf and sports turf, cultural practices as they relate to wear, and what makes our turf durable and safe.

It's not only a matter of money. As Dr. Jim Beard at Texas A&M points out, it's a matter of attracting gifted scientists who are interested in turf to carry on the work of those who are beginning to retire or leave our universities for private industry. These people aren't monks. They need support, encouragement, and job security.

Unless the turf industry and state and federal agencies (which benefit from taxes on our industry) start supporting turf research wholeheartedly, we may enter the 21st century with a tremendous investment in recreational facilities and little to back it up.

*Bruce Shank*

# EVENTS

## CALENDAR

### SEPTEMBER

**18-21** 43rd Northwest Turfgrass Conference and Exhibition, Sheraton Tacoma Hotel & Bicentennial Pavilion, Tacoma, WA. Contact: Blair Patrick, Northwest Turfgrass Association, P.O. Box 1367, Olympia, WA 98507, (206) 754-0825.

**19-21** Institute of Groundsmanship Sports & Leisure World Trade Exhibition, Windsor Racecourse, Windsor, England. Contact: Institute of Groundsmanship, 19-23 Church Street, The Agora, Wolverton, Milton Keynes, England MK12 5LG.

**26** New England Sports Turf Facilities Management Seminar, College of the Holy Cross, Worcester, MA. Contact: James Long, Holy Cross, College St., Worcester, MA 01610, (508) 793-3477.

### OCTOBER

**3** GCSA of New Jersey Annual Turfgrass Equipment, Supplies and Irrigation Field Day, Rutgers Stadium, Piscataway, NJ. Contact: Dr. Henry Indyk, Crop Science Dept., P.O. Box 231, Cook College, New Brunswick, NJ 08903, (201) 932-9453.

**4-5** Southern California Turfgrass Expo, Orange County Fairgrounds, Costa Mesa, CA. Contact: Southern California Turfgrass Council, 26442 Vera Cruz, Mission Viejo, CA 92691, (714) 951-8547.

**4-6** Golf Course Europe 1989, Rhein/Main Halls, Wiesbaden, West Germany. Contact: Expoconsult, Toby M. Rijks, Straatweg 33, Box 200, 3600 AE, Maarssen, Holland, phone (03465) 73777 or FAX (03465) 73811.