

# from the sidelines

## In the beginning

**A**s a student at Penn State in the late 1970s, I occasionally would ride my bike through an area north of campus that I knew only as "the Ag fields." I never thought much about what was going on there, other than being a bit perplexed at a patch of grass that was truly blue (I recently was told it was painted that color).

Those ag fields are still there today, next to an area that is being developed into Penn State's new Arboretum. Forty-five acres within the Arboretum have been set aside for the university's new Center for Turfgrass Science, which will encompass classrooms, laboratories, offices, conference rooms, dedicated field plots, and the Mascaro-Steiniger Turfgrass Museum.

A prominent part of the museum will be the inventions of the late Thomas Mascaro and Eberhard Steiniger, who collaborated on inventing and testing more than 20 pieces of turfgrass equipment, including the first turf cultivator. I was privileged to get a look at some of these pieces on my last visit to campus, courtesy of Dr. George Hamilton, Jr., assistant professor of turfgrass science. When completed, the 40,000-square-foot museum will provide space to display the equipment as well as a climate-controlled room for viewing historical documents.

Mascaro's company specialized in special soil mixtures for golf course greens and organic fertilizer, as well as machinery and hardware for turfgrass. He began taking correspondence courses at Penn State in 1930 and met H. B. Musser, Penn State's first faculty member in turfgrass research. In the 1950s, Mascaro often accompanied Musser and other Penn State turfgrass faculty on travels throughout the country to turfgrass field days and conferences as they shared their knowledge with golf course superintendents.

Mascaro was a born inventor and would share this tinkering with Steiniger to test at the famous Pine Valley Golf Club in New Jersey, where he served as superintendent for 57 years. In a 1993 interview, Steiniger talked about the collaboration: "Tom was always hanging around our place, bringing some new equipment to try out at Pine Valley. Some of it was really good. We got the whole place aerified, and it didn't cost me a thing because I didn't buy his machine! Tom was very generous with us."

Speaking of generous, Dr. Hamilton reports that half of the funds needed for the new museum will come from private donations. Sounds to me like a great way for today's turfgrass professionals to give something back while perpetuating a wonderful legacy.

For more info or to visit the exhibit, contact Dr. Hamilton at 814-865-3007 or [g.hamilton@psu.edu](mailto:g.hamilton@psu.edu).

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