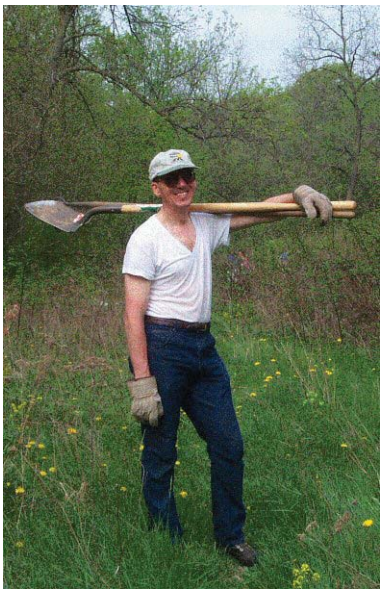
Department of Soil Science Newsletter
Spring 2009



Steve Ventura

"And now it's time to say goodbye,
To all our company.
Through the years, we'll all be friends,
Wherever we may be."
(Mouse, M., 1955)

Yes, it's time for me to pick up my shovel and move back upstairs, to resume life as a professor full time. I plan to spend more time on research. Topics such as sustainable use of marginal land for bioenergy crop production and soil science in urban agriculture are new for me, and I look forward to exploring them in great detail. I also intend to (finally!) push through a major in environmental sciences, a major years in the making and fraught with all sorts of campus politics.

On July 1, Professor Bill Bland will take over as chair of the Department. Bill will bring a wealth of experience appropriate for the position. His background is in soil physics, water use, and agricultural weather information, while his recent interests include agroecosystems (he is co-founder of the new Agroecology masters degree program). He created and teaches a new and immensely popular undergraduate course for the department - Earth's Water: Natural Science and Human Use, as well as a new graduate course - Farm as Socio-Environmental Endeavor. In addition to his research and instructional expertise, Bill brings extension and administrative experience to the position. He co-chairs the Agroecology Program and is currently the Chair of Instructional Programs for the Nelson Institute for Environmental Studies. I am confident that the department will be in good hands!

Although the last five years have included a few trials and tribulations, this position has also been a source of pride and joy for me. It has been very gratifying to see how colleagues have made a beneficial impact on Wisconsin agriculture and environment, as well as making fundamental contributions to our knowledge of soils. Accomplishments are too numerous to detail here, but suffice it to say that the department continues to evolve in ways responsive to contemporary issues in land management, agriculture, and environmental protection, bringing leading edge science and carefully crafted outreach to these issues.

You will note in this issue some of the comings and goings of people in the department. I am pleased that the department has been able to remain a "full service" department of soil science, in spite of declining budgets and faculty numbers. We remain committed to this ideal, though it will be an increasing challenge in times of reduced state support. I also hope you enjoy the profiles of some of our alumni. I view it as evidence that we're on the right track. Finally, I note that the department successfully completed a 10-year review by the College of Agricultural and Life Sciences and the UW Graduate School. Long range goals devised for this review will be the springboard for the next 10 years.

In closing, let me once again thank you for your continued support. If I haven't been able to personally thank you, please accept this public acknowledgment of the important role that each contribution makes. Your gifts make an enormous difference in the climate of the department, our ability to offer innovative instructional programs, and our ability to support deserving students. Thank you!

Inside...

AWARDS, HONORS AND NEWS

Teri C. Balser, recently promoted to Associate Professor, has been chosen for the American Society for Microbiology and National Science Foundation "Biology Scholars" residency program. Modeled after the Carnegie Teaching Scholars program, the Biology Scholars program is designed to advance biology education nationally. Teri has also been selected to head the UW's Institute for Cross-College Biology Education.

Extension soil scientist Carrie Laboski was promoted to Associate Professor. Carrie's highly regarded outreach program is oriented toward developing, evaluating, and disseminating soil fertility recommendations that provide sufficient crop nutrients to optimize economic returns while minimizing damage from "leakage" of nutrients into the environment. Her research contributions in evaluating nutrient availability in manures have provided the basis for efficacious recommendations while ensuring that these materials are not over-applied, a critical issue in a state such as Wisconsin with its large concentrations of cattle and other farm animals.

Other recently promoted faculty are **Phil Barak** and **J. Mark Powell**, both of whom are now Full Professors.

Assistant Professor **Cindy Stiles** resigned to take a position with the Natural Resources Conservation Service in Lincoln, NE.

We've had several recent retirements: **Professors Phil Helmke**, **Larry Bundy**, **Jerry Tyler**, and **John Norman** have all turned in their soil augers and joined the ranks of the retired!

Assistant Professor Nick Balster was awarded a Jung Teaching Award by the College for his commitment and passion for teaching. He has also been selected as a Wisconsin Teaching Fellow. This program is designed for outstanding early career untenured faculty and teaching academic staff who show exceptional promise as college teachers. Nominees must be interested in studying teaching and learning issues in depth, in examining career and classroom-related issues of particular concern to teachers new to the profession, and using the principles of Scholarship, Teaching and Learning to structure their work.

The Wisconsin Association of County Agricultural Agents selected **Dick Wolkowski** to receive a 2008 2nd Mile Award. Dick was recognized for his outreach efforts in presenting information related to soil quality, evaluation of alternative tillage system, and many other topics to Extension agents.

The Potato Association of America named emeritus professor **Keith Kelling** an honorary life member at their 2008 annual meeting in Buffalo, NY. Keith has been a member of PAA for over 25 years and is well known for his dedication and service to the potato and vegetable industry of Wisconsin and across the US.

John Norman, emeritus professor, was named Fellow by the American Association for the Advancement of Science in recognition of his significant contributions to advancing scientific research, teaching, and communicating science to the public.

Congratulations to **Shane E. Griffith**, a senior from Beaver Dam, WI, who was selected to receive a CALS Outstanding Senior Award this year. Shane is currently the Badger Turf and Grounds Club president. He participated in numerous internships during his time here, including one with Torrey Pines Golf Course where he helped prepare the course for the U.S. Open. Shane also led a group of UW-Madison students in a national competition for the Golf Course Superintendents Association of America. His outstanding academic performance and engagement in professional pursuits provides an outstanding model for future students.

Shane Griffith

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WELCOME TO OUR NEW FACULTY

Matthew D. Ruark joined the department in Fall 2008 as assistant professor and extension specialist. Matt's research and extension interests include nutrient management of field, vegetable, and bioenergy crops; nitrogen losses and the relationship to water and air quality, and soil organic matter dynamics. After receiving an undergraduate degree in Environmental Science and a master's in Soil Science, both at University of Minnesota, Matt earned his PhD in Agronomy at Purdue. He completed a postdoc in the Department of Plant Sciences at UC-Davis before heading back to the Midwest to join us.

Matt Ruark

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ALUMNI SERVE ON CALS BOARD OF VISITORS

Two Soil Science alums are currently serving on the CALS Board of Visitors, an outside advisory group to the Dean of the College. Tara Talbot and Michael Lee talked with Life Science Communications undergraduate Alyssa Sandore recently about their education and careers.

Originally, **Tara Talbot** (BS 1999) wanted to become an environmental consultant, leading her to obtain her undergraduate degree in soil science (biological engineering emphasis). Although life carried her in another direction, Tara says she still uses what she learned in college on a regular basis.

Tara currently holds a position in marketing and environmental communications at Glen Oak Lumber & Milling, Inc., a national hardwood millwork manufacturer. The company makes interior millwork products for large retailers and distributors.

Tara's father owns Glen Oak Lumber & Milling, and while she never intended on working at the company, after graduating from Madison she started out at an entry-level position just to help her father. But Tara soon worked her way up through many departments at Glen Oak to a position which best utilized her strengths.

Tara's time at Glen Oak is now split between marketing and environmental policies. The marketing aspect of her job entails creating and maintaining the external communications of the company consistent with the values of Glen Oak Lumber. Tara also spends time working with vendors and consultants. "I enjoy working with people and I'm passionate about the hardwood industry which makes everything else fall into place," Tara said.

Tara remains interested in environmental science and continues to stay updated on current events, particularly issues surrounding carbon. She was involved in the "Wear Red, Go Green" carbon-neutral homecoming football game and believes the recent awareness of "green" jobs makes this a great time to be in soils.

Tara continues to frequently use her communication skills. She emphasizes that a close relationship with associates is important in keeping the lines of communication open and gathering valuable information.

The best advice Tara can give to undergraduate students is to take full advantage of the business and writing classes available at UW-Madison. She pointed out that science is only a portion of the skill set you will need to succeed after graduation. "You will need business savvy. Communication skills combined with the science make an attractive skill set to employers."

Tara looks forward to continuing her involvement in CALS. She was recently appointed by Dean Jahn to the CALS Board of Visitors and will serve a four-year term.

Tara's last bit of advice for students: "Enjoy your years at UW, they are great!"

Michael Lee (BS 1987) was one of the few who knew from a young age what he wanted to do with his life and carried this passion into his career. Growing up in Madison, a block away from the Black Hawk Country Club, Michael fell in love with the game of golf.

When coming to Madison, Michael was encouraged by his advisor to explore other possible career studies before focusing on golf course management. Michael took the advice but after two years of college was certain golf course management was his calling.

After graduating from the UW-Madison in 1987 with a degree in soil science, Michael worked as an Assistant Superintendent for Blue Mound Country Club. He then became the head superintendent at Blackwolf Run in 1993 and in 1999 joined Whistling Straits, increasing his responsibilities from two golf courses to four. Both golf properties are owned and operated by Kohler Co.

Now, Michael works mostly in the administration of the golf courses and plans new projects to manage after the design is approved. These projects consist of remodeling and construction of new golf course features. The Kohler Company places a strong emphasis on design and is constantly critiquing their properties to improve the strategic component of their designs.

Michael says that he utilizes many business skills on a day to day basis such as analyzing financial information, managing expenses, and most importantly, business writing skills. He encourages students to study courses that can help hone these skills since most jobs now are in a business setting that require these skills.

"Understand in the workplace you are going to have to make a transition of skills you may or may not have learned," said Lee.

Although Michael says having business knowledge is important, he would not have changed his experience through the Department of Soil Science. He believes getting a degree in science is very important but feels more writing and business classes would have helped his career. "In the golf course management world, business skills rest on a solid foundation of science, not the other way around."

Michael said he felt every class he took as an undergraduate was beneficial to his career. "When you add them all up together it is the process of starting and finishing a degree and the process of learning how to learn that has the longest benefit," Lee said.

Michael is also a member of the CALS Board of Visitors.

RECENT GRADUATES

Barstow, Shannon R. — BS, Agricultural Sciences, 2006

Brown, Jeremy W., — BS, Agricultural Sciences, 2007

DeBels, Brad T., — BS, Agricultural Sciences, 2007

Kuether, Erika M., — BS, Natural Sciences, 2008

Lloyd, Daniel T., — BS, Agricultural Sciences, 2007

Lovick, Andrew R., — BS Agricultural Sciences, 2006

Lund, Evan J., — BS, Natural Sciences, 2007

Noll, Christopher L., — BS, Natural Sciences, 2006

Porubsky, Michael C., — BS, Agricultural Sciences, 2006

Rauwald, Rebecca L., — BS, Natural Sciences, 2006

Weisenberger, Amber M., — BS, Agricultural Sciences, 2007

Ebeling, Angela M., — PhD, 2007, Assessing available phosphorus in Wisconsin soils from additions of phosphorus fertilizer, manures, and biosolids. (Bundy)

Gao, Juan, — PhD, 2007, Sorption and transformation of sulfanomide antimicrobial agents. (Pedersen)

Lepore, Brian J., — PhD, 2007, Measuring and modeling of water and solute flow in macroporous silt loam soils. (Lowery, Norman)

Liang, Chao, — PhD, 2008, Evaluating microbial role in terrestrial carbon storage. (Balser)

Mentzer, Jessica L., — PhD, 2007, Exploring long-term microbial responses to simulated global change. (Balser)

Moritz, Lindsey K., — MS, 2008, Soil habitat and microbial communities on Mount Kinabalu, Borneo. (Balser)

Repking, Matthew J., — MS, 2008, Investigation of the phosphorus requirement of potato in Wisconsin and phosphorus leaching potential in the Central Sands. (Laboski)

Rouse, Sara E., — MS, 2007, Effects of vegetation type on the hydrologic budget and inorganic nitrogen in recently established rain gardens. (Balster)

Scharenbroch, Bryant C., — PhD, 2007, Soils and biogeochemical cycling in gaps of old growth northern hardwood-hemlock forests. (Bockheim)

Sneller, Emily G., — MS, 2007, Ability of manure and fertilizer phosphorus to change soil test levels and support corn growth. (Laboski)

Zhang, Zhuo, — PhD, 2008, Geochemical survey of Wisconsin soils. (Helmke)

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THANK YOU TO OUR SUPPORTERS

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Mr. Gilbert N. Brooks
Professor Bruce E. Brown
Mr. and Mrs. Edward H. Carbon
Mr. Rex L. Carey
Dr. and Mrs. Dick L. Cates
Ms. Joan Chesters
David & Catherine Conant
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Mr. Edwin A. Taylor
Mr. Gerald E. TImm
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Ms. Caroline C. VanSchaik
Professor Stephen J. Ventura
Dean Leo M. Walsh
Mr. David B. Weissenfluh
Mr. Steven R. Werlein
Ms. Susan E. Wiedenbeck
Mr. Ronald G. Wright
Mr. Gary M. Zwirlein

SCHOLARSHIP RECIPIENTS

Atkinson, Brian – Wisconsin Aglime Association Scholarship; O.R. and Gladys Zeasman Scholarship in Soil Sciences; Wisconsin Aglime Association Scholarship

Bastron, Patrick - Wisconsin Turfgrass Association Scholarship; Spring Valley Turf Products Scholarship

DeBels, Brad - Terry and Kathleen Kurth Wisconsin Distinguished Graduate Fellowship in Turfgrass Management; National Seed Egon Herrmann Turf Scholarship; Wisconsin Turfgrass Association Scholarship

Dolan, Brendan - Wisconsin Turfgrass Association Scholarship

Earhart, Shannon – M.L. Jackson Fund Award; Richard D. Powell Memorial Scholarship

Flores, Mario L. – William T. Dible/Terra International, Inc., Scholarship

Ganzlin, Peter – Charles L. Ream Memorial Scholarship

Griffith, Shane E. – Wisconsin Crop Production Association Ronald E. Doersch Scholarship; Ruth and Carl Miller Scholarship in Agriculture; Wisconsin Golf Course Superintendents Association/J.R. Love Scholarship; National Seed Egon Herrmann Turf Scholarship; Charles O. Newlin Scholarship in Turfgrass Management

Jimba, Samuel – Champ Tanner Agricultural Physics Award

Kinsman, Todd – H.L. and Jobelle Shands Daughters of Demeter Award; Neil and Audrey Barrows Scholarship

Kozlowski, Jay H. – Charles L. Ream Memorial Scholarship

Kreuser, William C. – Oscar Magistad Memorial Scholarship; Bayer Environmental Scholarship; David Mergatroyd Memorial Scholarship

Lloyd, Dan – Wayne R. Kussow Wisconsin Turfgrass Association Wisconsin Distinguished Graduate Fellowship in Turfgrass Management

Obear, Glen - Wisconsin Golf Course Superintendents Association/J.R. Love Scholarship

Paxton, Andrew – David Mergatroyd Memorial Scholarship

Peich, Wendy M. - Wisconsin AgLime Association Scholarship; Charles L. Ream Memorial Scholarship; Vicky Lee Hirsh Academic Merit Award

Rathsack, Brittney R. – Charles L. Ream Memorial Scholarship; Dorothy H. Strong Scholarship; Vicky Lee Hirsh Academic Merit Award

Rzadzki, Michael – Wisconsin Turfgrass Association Scholarship

Rowntree, Scott - Irving W. Gerhardt Scholarship; L.F. Graber Scholarship in Agronomy

Tapsieva, Anastassia – Richard D. Powell Memorial Scholarship

Wahl, Carl T. - Champ Tanner Agricultural Physics Award

Wallner, Amy – Burdean E. Struckmeyer Scholarship; Else Thomsen Daughters of Demeter West Madison Gardens Internship; Wisconsin Crop Production Association; Vicky Lee Hirsh Academic Merit Award

Weber, Jason D. – O.R. Zeasman Memorial Award

Weisenberger, Amber - Champ Tanner Agricultural Physics Award

Williams, Brad - Wisconsin Turfgrass Association Scholarship

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RECENTLY FEATURED

The College's ***GROW*** magazine featured soils faculty, students and alumni galore this past year! The magazine (mailed free of charge to all CALS alumni, faculty and staff, graduate and senior-level students, and leaders in the agriculture, natural resources and biosciences communities) reports on "the most intriguing aspects of CALS research, teaching and outreach in the areas of food and agriculture, health, energy, the environment and community development." Here's a brief rundown with links to the full articles online:

Working It - More CALS students gain real-world experience through internships - Senior **Chelsea Cervantes** experience proves the importance of the College's internship program. http://news.cals.wisc.edu/newsDisplay.asp?id=1795t

Legacy of the Dam - To restore a former reservoir, CALS scientists battle history in the soil - Assistant Prof. **Nick Balster** and graduate student **Ana Wells** work on restoring a native prairie at the site of a 43-year-old dam removed in 2003. http://www.grow2.uwcalscommunication.com/environment/the-legacy-of-the-dam

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ALUMNI UPDATES

Sridhar Komarneni (PhD 1973) Professor of Clay Mineralogy in the Department of Crop and Soil Sciences and the Materials Research Institute at The Pennsylvania State University was named a "Distinguished Professor," a title intended to recognize a limited number of outstanding Professors. Dr. Komarneni earned his BS from A.P. Agricultural University, MS from The Indian Agricultural Research Institute and PhD from the UW-Madison. His research focuses on crystal chemistry and ion exchange of clays, zeolites and other materials for remediation of contaminated soils and water, low temperature nanophase and nanocomposite materials, sol-gel chemistry of high-performance ceramics, hydrothermal and microwave-hydrothermal processing, and new materials preparation and characterization. He has been serving as the Editor-in-Chief of J. Porous Materials since 1994, and has published more than 450 refereed papers, received 10 patents and edited/written 13 books. He has received numerous awards such as election as Fellow to five societies including the American Ceramic Society and Soil Science Society of America and election to the European Academy of Sciences and World Academy of Ceramics.

Glenn Borchardt (BS 1964, MS 1966) submitted the following: I left UW in 1966 to get a PhD in soil mineralogy under M.E. Harward at Oregon State (Instrumental Neutron Activation Analysis for Correlating Volcanic Ash Soils). I then did a 2-year post-doc at the USGS in Denver doing more of the same for ash deposits all over the west. In 1972 I got a job as a geochemist with the State of California in San Francisco working on soils in relation to landslides and earthquakes. I started Soil Tectonics, my consulting company, in 1991. I help geologists in estimating the ages of soils overlying faults so we don't build on the ones likely to rupture the ground during earthquakes. My web page (soiltectonics.com) gives the details.

Because my job is highly specialized, I have a lot of free time. I hunt 30 days a year (mule deer, white tail, elk, caribou, moose, bear, boar, pheasant, quail, etc.) and downhill ski 30 days a year. Soil science, as most of you know, gives one an excellent opportunity to study almost everything. During much of that free time I have had the chance to read a lot of stuff in other fields that involved the really big questions. In particular, I could not believe, as cosmologists now claim, that the universe exploded out of nothing. It turns out that it is all based on some rather obsolete, highly controversial assumptions, which I analyzed in my 2004 book, "The Ten Assumptions of Science." This eventually became chapter 3 in the work I am most proud of: "The Scientific Worldview: Beyond Newton and Einstein." The details are at scientificphilosophy.com. Once the astronomers get their feet back on the soil, the Big Bang Theory of the origin of the universe will be history. (Believe it or not, the universe is infinite and had no origin.)

I wish to thank all those profs and students who helped me in this journey, in particular, Dr. Love, who introduced me to soils and got me my first job (at $1/hr) in M.L. Jackson's soil mineralogy lab where all the excitement was. It was Dr. Love who reminded me "That to err was human, but that I was more human than others." M.L. convinced us that what we were doing was the most important thing in the world. Dr. Hole taught us how important fieldwork was. At fifty he could climb fences faster than us 20-yr-olds from Wisconsin and Scotland! This was a lesson in keeping in shape (I ran 1-3 miles/day for 30 years). Dr. Truog showed up at King Hall for decades after he retired, another lesson that soils have an infinite capacity to induce curiosity far beyond what one would think necessary. I don't think that I will ever retire...

P.S. That girl, Marilyn, that I took to Oregon is still with me. We had two girls and now have five grandkids in Rhode Island. Marilyn has been the Development Director at the Institute for Food and Development Policy (www.foodfirst.org) for over 20 years and still loves it.

Andy Gallagher (MS 1994) runs a soil science consulting business (Red Hill Soils) in Corvallis, Oregon. His main business is precision soil mapping in vineyards. Andy and his family (wife Charlotte and two sons) have been in Oregon for twelve years now. (avg@redhillsoil.com)

After leaving UW-Madison with a degree in soil science (BS 1999) **Patrick Riggs** notes that he earned an MS (Plant Pathology) in 2006 at UC-Davis. He is employed with Jack Neal and Son Vineyard Management, where he serves as the company's viticulturist and pest control advisor. He and his wife of two years, Vanessa Gatewood, bought their first house in 2008 and in January 2009 welcomed their little girl, Emma Claire Riggs, into the world. Congratulations! (pjriggs@uwalumni.com)

Nancy Bohl Bormann (MS 2006) is a nutrient planning agronomist with The Maschhoffs and lives on a grain and livestock farm near LuVerne, IA, with her husband, Matt. (nancybohl@hotmail.com)

Babou Jobe (MS 1996) was in the Republic of China (Taiwan) for four and half years (2002-2007) and completed a PhD program in soil fertility and plant nutrition. He returned to The Gambia in March 2007 and rejoined the National Agricultural Research Institute (NARI). He was appointed Director General (Administrative and Technical Head) of NARI, effective 1st January, 2008. He recently published a paper in Soil Science 172:68-85, Jobe et al. 2007, 'Relationship between compost pH buffer capacity and P content on P availability in a virgin Ultisol.'

Tom Wright (BS 1976, MS 1991), Superintendent of the West Madison Agricultural Research Station received a 2008 "Partnership Award" from the UW's Office of the Dean of Students. The award recognizes recipients for their willingness to help the Office of Dean of Students fulfill its mission to cultivate, advance and interconnect the academic, professional, personal and social development of students; and champion a respectful, globally engaged and diverse campus community.

Alvin Raymond "Ray" Kubly (BS 1952), passed away in June 2008, in Watertown, WI. Ray enlisted in the Army Air Corp and served as a B-17 bombardier during World War II. He was wounded and taken prisoner when his plane was shot down over German-

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ALUMNI UPDATE

We'd love to hear from you! Please complete and return this form or send your updates via email to slspeth@wisc.edu.

Name: _____

Degree(s) and Year(s): BS (_____) MS (_____) PhD (_____)

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DEPARTMENT OF SOIL SCIENCE

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I/we wish to join other students/alumni, industry, and friends in enhancing the teaching, research and outreach programs in the Department of Soil Science by contributing as indicated below.

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Please allocate my gift to: ☐ Department of Soil Science Fund (general fund)
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Alumni, from p. 6

occupied Holland. With the help of the Dutch Underground, Ray and five others escaped from an enemy hospital, returning across Allied lines after nearly six months of being moved from farm to farm by the Underground. He retired in 1996 from Dairyland Seed Company where he was vice president of sales.

Dick Cates (PhD 1983; currently director of the UW-Madison School for Beginning Dairy and Livestock Farmers and senior lecturer in Soil Science) interviewed senior members of more than 30 families from the Arena township area to write "Voices from the Heart of the Land" (released by University of Wisconsin Press, http://www.wisc.edu/wisconsinpress/). He asked folks about growing up in rural America and their connection to a way of life that is vanishing in the twenty-first century. The result is a collection of reminiscences, observations and opinions celebrating the stewardship of the land and the values of the stewards. Author Jerry Apps describes the book as "a glimpse of what life was like in this rural community through much of the twentieth century. Through the spoken words of these rural folks we learn about love of land and community and the power of the story."

Monroe Miller (BS 1968) will receive the 2009 Colonel John Morley Distinguished Service Award from the Golf Course Superintendents Association of America. The award is given to recognize outstanding, substantive and enduring contributions to the advancement of the golf course superintendent profession. Miller has overseen the turf at the Blackhawk Country Club, Madison, WI, for 36 years and has mentored more than 100 UW-Madison students as employees and interns during that time.

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Recently featured, from p. 6

Lethal Weapon - Soils may harbor a surprising prion killer - Associate Professor **Joel Pedersen** investigates using Birnessite (an oxidized form of manganese) to degrade prions in soil. http://www.grow2.uwcalscommunication.com/health/lethal-weapon

What's in the Water? When disease-causing microbes find their way in Wisconsin's water supply, Sharon Long uses the tools of microbiology to spot them - and find their source - Associate Professor **Sharon Long** is interviewed about her multidimensional role for the university and the state. http://www.grow2.uwcalscommunication.com/health/whats-in-the-water