Joe Duich passes

ASSOCIATION NEWS, INDUSTRY NEWS

Dr. Joe leaves a lasting legacy in the turf industry.

October 31, 2013

A co-founder of the Musser International Turfgrass Foundation, Joseph Michael Duich, 85, of State College, died Friday, October 11, 2013 at the Fairways at Brookline Village, State College.

Born June 7, 1928, in Farrell, he was the son of the late Stephen and Kata Perich Duich. On August 29, 1953, he married Patricia May Morris, who survives. This year they celebrated sixty years of marriage.

Also surviving are two children, Katherine Brennan and her husband, Jim, of Pleasanton, CA and Michael Duich and his wife, Leslie, of Carlsbad, CA; five granddaughters, Christine, Shana, Sage, Lyndie and Isabel. He was preceded in death by one son, Robert Duich and two brothers, John Michael and Anthony Valentine Duich.

Dr. Duich pursued his education and spent his professional career at the Pennsylvania State University, where he was Professor of Turfgrass Science. He retired with Emeritus Rank on December 31, 1991, after more than 36 years of faculty service. He served in the U. S. Marine Corps from 1946-48 and subsequently received his B.S. and Ph.D. in Agronomy from Penn State in 1952 and 1957, respectively. Dr. Duich was honored as Distinguished Alumnus of Penn State in 2008.

His faculty career began as an Instructor in 1955 and with the retirement of his mentor, Professor Burt Musser in 1959, he assumed responsibility as Turfgrass Project Leader for teaching and research. Through his efforts the Turfgrass Project developed the Joseph Valentine Turfgrass Research Center and expanded to include soil chemist-physicist, plant physiologist, and instructor, the net result being an extremely effective research-teaching team which expanded research facilities nearly 10-fold.
While specifically trained as a plant breeder, he has also pursued a broad teaching-research agenda. He taught turf courses enrolling over 5,700 students and guided 9 Ph.D. and 11 M.S. degree students. He elevated the Two-Year Technical Program in Golf Turf management to international acclaim with over 1,000 graduates. In 1984, this program received The National Association of State Departments of Agriculture-R. J. Reynolds Industries National Award for Excellence in Agricultural Technology, the only turf and less than baccalaureate level program to be so honored.

In addition to breeding, Dr. Duich has authored or co-authored 139 technical publications on research with Penngift Crownvetch for highway and erosion control, turfgrass weed and disease control, nitrogen fertilization, soil modification, putting green speed management, species competition, renovation, electrophoresis, cultivar identification, and speed priming.

Among Dr. Duich’s major contributions are his variety turfgrass releases. Pennfine ryegrass, with over 70 million pounds of commercial production to date, was the first early maturing variety developed. Penncross, which developed with Musser, Pennneagle, Pennlinks, Penn A, Penn G and Seaside 2 bentgrasses dominate the market and are used on golf courses worldwide.

Royalties from these turfgrass varieties have generated over 3 million dollars and have been returned in their entirety to the Agronomy Department to support numerous department programs. An endowment exceeding 1 million dollars has been established from these monies to perpetuate future turf research.

Much of what Dr. Duich has accomplished through his research is not evident in technical publications. Rather, it was communicated at the many conferences and educational programs in which he has participated over the years and through field days, telephone calls, letters, and of course, through his beloved students, many of whom continued to call “Dr. Joe” for advice on the many problems they encountered in their respective operations. His research isn’t just published in the hopes that someone will benefit, it’s used by those who benefit from it every day in many ways.

Throughout his career Dr. Duich was honored with numerous awards. They include the Gamma Sigma Delta Merit and Teaching Award in 1974, the American Society of Agronomy Teaching Award in 1976, being named as a Fellow, American Society of Advancement of Science in 1976, Golf Course Superintendents Association of America Distinguished Service Award in 1976, Northrup, King, and Co. Honorary Scientist in 1976, Pennsylvania Turfgrass Council Distinguished Service Award in 1974, United States Golf Association Green Section Award in 1981, National Association of State Departments of Agriculture R. J. Reynolds Industries National Award for Excellence in Agriculture Technology in 1984, the Philadelphia GCSA Eberhardt Steiniger Award in 1993, the Don A. Ross Humanitarian Award from the Golf Course Builders and Architects Association in 1995, The Old Tom Morris Award from the Golf Course Superintendents Association of America in 2006 and the Penn State University Distinguished Alumnus Award in 2008.

Dr. Duich was a member of Grace Lutheran Church. He became a member of Gamma Sigma Delta in 1952, Phi Epsilon Phi in 1953, and the Society of Sigma Delta in 1955. He is member of both the United States Golf Association and the Golf Course Superintendents Association of America. Dr. Duich is a life member of the Penn State Alumni Association and member of the Armsby Society.

Dr. Duich was a dedicated family man who understood the importance of family, and enjoyed spending time with his extended family both in State College and while traveling throughout the country. In addition, he was an avid outdoorsman who for most of his life hunted big game in the mountains of Pennsylvania and pursued fresh and salt fishing with his sons around the United States.

A memorial service will be held at 11 a.m. on Saturday, October 19, 2013 at Grace Lutheran Church, 205 South Garner Street, State College, with the Pastor P. Stevens Lynn officiating.

In lieu of flowers, donations can be made for the Joseph M. Duich Scholarship
Checks payable to: The Musser International Turfgrass Foundation P.O. Box 124 Sharon Center, OH 44274 Please note on check: Joseph M. Duich Scholarship fund

Arrangements are under the care of Koch Funeral Home, 2401 South Atherton Street, State College. Online condolences and signing of the guest book may be entered at www.kochfuneralhome.com.