



DR. FRED V. GRAU

ANSWERS TO TURF QUESTIONS

HE GAVE HIS ALL

On Monday evening, March 4, a telephone call from Al Radko told me of the passing of Fred H. Williams.

He was a quiet man, small in stature, but terribly intense and efficient. Few people in turf today would be able to place him, yet his work affected golf and turf around the world. He was dearly beloved by those with whom he closely worked.

In July, 1931, when I joined the United States Golf Assn. Green Section, Fred Williams was there in the office in the temporary war buildings keeping the books, filing and doing flawless typing for Dr. John Monteith, who headed the section. Fred did a great deal of work for me while I edited copy and wrote articles for the USGA Green Section Bulletin. I had never known anyone who could type as fast and as error-free. Nor has there been anyone like him since then.

It wasn't until August, 1945, that Fred and I met again. The USGA had asked me to become director of the Green Section. For sheer secretarial proficiency, the next eight years were a delight. After a long trip I would dictate my reports to him. Scorning the stenographer's notebook, he took dictation directly on the typewriter.

I had a good staff at Beltsville—Ferguson, Radko and Wilson—and he took care of everyone. When old records or pictures were needed, Fred knew where to find them.

It was a pleasure to arrange a good salary increase for him. But did the extra money do anything for him personally? No. He saw to it that the kids in his neighborhood had balls, bats, gloves and other sports equipment. In his spare time, he coached sandlot teams and basketball. His energy seemed endless.

Fred H. Williams gave of himself to the extent that, at the end, he had given his all. On a bus ride downtown

to cash a check, his heart gave out, and he went to his reward. What an example he had set for the rest of us. Loyal and unselfish, he found joy in giving. He gave love to the ultimate degree: he gave himself to help others.

Q—What are the reasons for the high prices of turfgrass seed? The prices we have to pay are ridiculous. Can you give us some explanation?

(New Jersey)

A—There are several reasons for high seed prices and, to some extent, they are interdependent and interlocking. Problems to be overcome in seed fields in the Pacific Northwest include: 1) blind seed nematode; 2) ergot; 3) grass seed nematode; 4) silvertop (a mite), and 5) many kinds of weeds. If these are not controlled, the yields of seed drop to an unprofitable level and quality is poor. For years, open field burning has been the answer to most of these problems. Now, the growers are forced to halt burning and find other means of getting rid of the straw and controlling pests. Production costs go up. In addition to production problems, there is the world situation. With wheat prices high, it is more profitable to grow wheat than grass seed—and a lot less trouble and expense. Foreign production of turf and forage seeds dropped because of droughts, tornadoes and other natural causes. United States produced seeds were bought heavily overseas and the dollar devaluation helped. Don't look for any dramatic relief in the near future. Prices will stay high as long as grain needs compete in world markets for turf seeds.

Q—We've heard about activated charcoal being used in planting grass seed. How does it work and is it applicable to turfgrass plantings? *(Minnesota)*

A—The principal use of activated charcoal is not in turfgrass (sod) establishment, but in the planting of grass seed for seed production. The special planter plants the seed in a row with a thin narrow band of finely-pulverized activated charcoal directly over the seed. Then the entire field is sprayed with a pre-emergence herbicide for weed control. The charcoal deactivates the chemical herbicide so that the grass seed can come up without injury and with only a minor weed population, which can be easily and quickly rogued. The rest of the field is free of weeds, thus ensuring a high-quality crop.

Q—We seem to be having more and more trouble with our fairway turf. Is there any possibility that some of the turf diseases could be introduced in the seed we plant? Are soil-borne diseases important? *(Michigan)*

A—There is strong evidence that some turf diseases are introduced with seed. We've known for a long time that the soil is loaded with organisms, some harmful, some beneficial (penicillin). I'd suggest that you discuss this with your state experiment station pathologist, who is a much better authority than I.

Q—Our climate is sub-tropical with fairly high humidity and good summer rainfall. Our winters are comparatively frost free. We seek advice concerning the most suitable grass(es) for our club. One suggestion has been Tifdwarf. We welcome advice on other grasses that might be suitable. Also, do you know of any publication that might be of assistance in our project? *(Brisbane, Australia)*

A—Our state-side publications on turf would most likely be of marginal value to you. You may find that com-

continued on page 14



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GRAU from page 13

munication with Hugh Whiting of International Turf, Inc., of Indio, Calif., could be of considerable value. He used to be golf course manager at the Royal Canberra Club in Australia. Few men have the chance to know grasses in both countries. I have learned that the Tifdwarf, which showed great promise in Hawaii, has begun to lose favor. To date we have not learned the reasons. I have learned from Whiting that some of your native grasses show great promise and I would advise a thorough investigation of these resources before you attempt to import United States grasses, which could be a difficult and expensive process at best. Your request shall be kept in mind for future reference.

Q—"Is there anyone who makes good use of the trees that obstruct the building of fairways, tees and greens?" This question was quoted to me in a letter, referring to my earlier editorial deploring the wasteful, ruthless "burn and bury" technique used when trees are cleared for golf course construction. (Ohio)

A—"Yes, the Hamilton County Park District does." This from Mart Kavanaugh, head professional at Miami Whitewater Forest GC, 8801 Mt. Hope Road, Harrison, Ohio 45030. Kavanaugh goes on to say, "The park district motto is 'to enhance the quality of the environment, to preserve the natural resources of the district and provide leisure time opportunities in the out-of-doors for the present and future generations."

"I must say that the park district fully lives up to this motto. Just in golf course construction alone I think you will be happy to know that the district has never in its over 30 years of existence purposefully buried any useful tree. For years, useful timber, which must and only must be removed, has been cut for firewood and sold for various prices over the years. The current price is \$45 per dump truckload, delivered. The park district truly protects the natural resources. In the construction of golf courses, the natural terrain, land and trees are retained as naturally as possible."

We at **GOLFDOM** say "thank you," Mr. Kavanaugh, for adhering to your policy and for telling us about your conservation practices. □