
A Letter from James M. Latham

Dear Readers,

While my letters to you have been few and far between, I will miss writing to another magazine title, but that's the way of the world today. Bob Williams deserves roses for coming up with a name that is passable to old folks as well as the younger set.

From what I hear and have seen, 1995 will not be a forgettable year in the lives of superintendents and their cohorts. It was hot and humid down here, but we should expect that kind of treatment. Nevertheless, a couple of our SR 1020 greens thinned out a bit even though they were hand watered for a couple of months by a very good crew. Apparently things were pretty bad elsewhere, except perhaps in the Pacific Northwest.

I was reeducated on Southern lawn grasses, to the point of having to mow Zoysia every 4 days instead of my once a week stint with common bluegrass in Milwaukee. That Z stuff just loves the hot stuff and I'm not one to relish mowing when the temp hits 90-plus by early morning. The Buffalograss I put around the perimeter is a people pleaser, since mowing frequency can be normal and a reel-type mower isn't required. There are more weed problems with it, though.

Lois has been busy visiting and tending sick kinfolks and trying to keep up with some of the bugs that the house was built around. As a result of her complaints about the lack of upkeep in the Hillsboro cemetery, she has just been elected to the Board. Sound familiar? At any rate, we are both busy

Living in the midst of a mesquite and cedar tree area brings us all kinds of visitors like roadrunners, quail, bluebirds and red tail hawks in their season, and a whole mess of wild turkeys and deer. Shooting is not allowed on these 4,000 acres, so we don't need bird houses or feeders to get close to wildlife. Oh, yes, we have a few armadillos digging for worms every now and then, and our resident bobcat stays well away from humanity.

I have been serving on the Green Section's Environmental and Research Committee this year and have been kept as busy as I want to be in making monitoring visits to Research sites from coast to coast across the Southern US. The projects are awesomely hi-tech. Turfgrass breeding has advanced beyond my belief. From my time as a pollen-pusher to actually shooting in foreign genes now is quite a jump and that is one of the simpler procedures.

This is truly a working committee, Mike Kenna assigns a great deal of homework prior to the twice a year meetings of the full committee and I am still going through a stack of reports and proposals 6 inches high in preparation for our fall meeting after Thanksgiving. We hope to begin a new round of putting green mixture tests next year. These are expected to give us the answers to many of the post-planting questions being asked by superintendents. But even though the sand based greens are not automatic successes, I'd hate to go through a year like '95 with mud greens as flat as the new high speed designs demand.

One of the highlights of my year was a trip to Taiwan and

South Korea, part of which was under the auspices of Jacklin Golf. It was a rude awakening to the problems of course construction and labor training in that part of the world. None of the courses I saw were on flat or even rolling land. All that space is reserved for farming. The golf courses were cut off of mountain sides or tops, to the tune of some 5 to 6 million yards of rock and soil.

The Taiwan courses were planted to Georgia's finest hybrids, while the Korean course had Zoysia fairways and Penncross greens. The most delightful thing about the latter was their intent on keeping the mowing height at 3/16 inch forever! Like many of our courses, however, they pushed the season too hard and lost some bentgrass early on in the season. That course, incidentally, is one of the best equipped 27 holers I have ever seen. Two fairway top-dressers. They were not sold a bill of goods on machinery needs, they just bought everything they needed. Their weed control program is slow, but effective, with several 3-woman teams of hand pickers scattered all over the place. Even the (female) caddies pick when they aren't doing anything.

Of course, there was a language barrier, but that was overcome by good translators. I have not yet figured out how the Taiwan course functions with a crew that speaks only Chinese and a mechanic that speaks only Japanese. At this club the caddies ride standing up on bag-carrier carts and the golfers walk- The Korean caddies pull 2-baggers and everyone walks. In spite of this and complete pavement around

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Directors Column

by Kevin Czerkies

By now you all should know that a dues increase was voted on and passed at the annual meeting last November. There were 33 yes votes, and 16 no votes. It's unfortunate that only 49 of the 318 voting members took the time to be at the annual meeting and vote.

The \$30 across the board increase was the first significant dues increase in quite some time., Every year the costs of running this association continue to climb.

The MAGCS Board felt that the best way to get the necessary dollars was the dues increase. We explored other means of raising additional monies, perhaps by increasing fees at our monthly meetings or charging more for "On Course" advertising. This would not be fair to the monthly meeting participants and vendors. Why should they have to absorb higher costs to support the entire association?

The Executive Committee met November 21 and formulated the 1996 MAGCS operating budget. I am happy to say that because of the dues increase we are able to provide better services and maintain a break-even budget while reducing our dependency of

dollars from *On Course* advertising. The actual income generated from *On Course* advertising is still somewhat hard to pinpoint because we don't know what percentage of the advertisers will want color ads.

I am very excited about the new look to our newsletter and I hope everyone is as proud of *On Course* as I am.

I Hope everyone enjoyed the holidays with their families, My wish from Santa this year was for 70° summer days with low humidity in 1996. I think we all deserve that after "The Summer of 1995".

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the courses, both have traffic wear problems. These mountaineers have some good ideas for steep slopes, using rail lifts on very steep areas and endless belt people movers on lesser slopes,

We often forget that the neighbors of these countries aren't exactly friendly. In Korea, there are big steel sawhorses and coils of steel cable back in the roughs of the longest, flattest fairways, Whenever there is an alert, they are put across the fairways to prevent small plane landings, There are also armed guards around the perimeters of airports and their backs are toward the airplanes - same thing in Tokyo, its not a comforting feeling.

Another of my activities is a steering committee to generate endowment funds to support the turfgrass teaching, research and extension facilities at Texas A & M University. Public funds for agriculture in general are shrivel-

ling and turfgrass work is seldom at or near the top of the list. It seems that we are reverting to the time of Piper, Oakley, Monteith, Grau et. ai. Turfgrass work will have to get its sources and golf is going to be the prime contributor, even though every other turfgrass user will benefit directly or indirectly. Golf is the only large, organized group with a truly vested interest in improvements.

Private funds got the turf business where it is today, especially in the education of leaders in the industry at research facilities, few of which existed before the days when Fred Grau and O. J. Noer conducted meetings with superintendents and green committee chairmen all over the country. They did more toward getting turfgrass separated from forage grasses than anyone I can think of or have read about- (That's another retirement project - writing a history of the USGA Green Section.)

Any way you cut it, get ready

for more fundraisers - real money - if you want to sustain the pace of advances in turfgrass maintenance and management techniques. Federal, State and other public agencies just ain't gonna come up with the scratch needed to provide first class turfgrass programs. The USGA is the big spender now, but some kind of permanent funding plan should be developed in every area that wants continued local progress in our field.

Sincerely,

Jim

P.S: While attending the 30th Symposium in Milwaukee (one of the best ever), had the pleasure of experiencing the first "good" snowfall of the year, Do I regret moving back to Texas? NAW!