

Reunion Becomes Surprise Birthday Party



TOP ROW, Left to Right; G. C. Horne, Roy Baer, Ralph White, Joe Konwinski.
BOTTOM ROW; Jim Ousley, Sr., Al Witherspoon, Jimmie Blackledge, Gene Nutter.

In 1958 the FTGA membership committee had a meeting at the "Famous" Restaurant in Lake Worth. The six member committee agreed to have a reunion twenty years later to discuss changes in the industry. September 8, 1978 they were reunited and used the opportunity for a surprise birthday party for Jimmie Blackledge.

The reunion location was different since the Broz family moved their restaurant to the Bohemian Garden in Lake Worth. Also two new guests were invited. Those attending were Ralph White, Joe Konwinski, Al Witherspoon, Jim Ousley Sr., Dr. Gene Nutter, and guests Dr. G. C. Horn and Dr. Roy Bear.

The eight member group has a composite total of 249 years turf experience. Because of the vast experience, a background of each person will help new members to our association. The group is lead by Jimmie Blackledge. Jimmie started in 1930 as the Superintendent at the Indian Creek Country Club in Miami. He is past president of our association and served on the board of directors for twenty years. Jimmie is currently a turf consultant for Southern Turf Nursery. Dr. Jean Nutter started in 1948. Gene is a past professor at the University of Florida and Lake City Community College. In both instances he started the turf programs at each school. Gene now is a Vice President with Chem Lawn Inc. Gene flew in from Atlanta just for the reunion. Ralph White started his turf career in 1953. He has been a professor at the University of Florida and is now working as the Vice President of

Southern Turf Nursery, Tifton, Georgia. He also came to town just for the gathering. Al Witherspoon has been working with turf since 1954. A University of Florida graduate Al has been superintendent of numerous south Florida golf courses. Al is now in charge of the Wellington Polo Fields. Jim Ousley Sr. is the founder of Ousley Sod Company. His turf experience dates to 1946. He is the leader in the development of certified turf in Florida. Joe Konwinski started working with turf in 1945. Joe is a past president of our association and served as the Secretary-Treasurer for fourteen years. He was the Superintendent of the Lake Worth Country Club for thirteen years. Joe is currently a turf consultant and instructor of turf classes at Palm Beach Junior College. Dr. G. C. Horn is a past professor at the University of Florida and is now a statewide turf consultant. Dr. Roy Bear started his turf career in 1945. Before the current University of Florida Plantation Research Station was established the research was done by Dr. Bear in Belle Glade. He is now a turf consultant.

In 1958 there were 125 golf courses in the state. Now there is more than that total just in Palm Beach county. The growth of the turf industry has exceeded even these leaders. Now the state total of golf courses nears the 700 mark.

The party night was closed at the Polish Club in Lake Worth. While Ralph White was dancing alone the other seven members were planning for 1998.