

# Answers to turf questions

by Fred V. Grau



One by one the pioneers of turfgrass history pass into limbo. They can speak to us no more. Many of their "secrets" have gone with them to the grave. Some have left behind them a rich legacy of notes, pictures and writings. Others have communicated in days gone by only by voice and gesture. Many of us now living can recall the gist of vocal encounters, experiences and tales of "derring do."

The turfgrass industry still is young. Only recently has it found its voice—little more than two decades ago. Many who have joined the profession in recent years have had scant opportunity to study and evaluate turfgrass history. We workers have been so intent on our goal that we may have neglected to bring the new workers up to date by reviewing the events that have brought us to our present prominence.

Coordinated action urgently is needed if we are to preserve for posterity the richness of the past. Let us not forget that "turf is people." Each worker has left his impact on the fabric that becomes history. Is there among us one (or more) unbiased dedicated individual who can bring together the bits and pieces of fragmented developments to form a perfect whole—a word picture that will stand the test of scrutiny and time—one that can be an inspiration to all turfgrass students for all time?

Let each turfgrass worker who reads this become conscious of his privilege—his duty—to reduce writing those experiences that to him epitomize his viewpoint of this vital burgeoning industry that is turf. Who did what and when? This is a guide. Later there will be one (or more) who will emerge to build these separate treatises into the finished "Turfgrass History."

*Q.—Bermudagrass greens belong to the deep South. Bentgrass dominates the North but has invaded deeply into the South. Now we hear of bermudagrass greens in the predominantly bent area of Washington, D.C. Are we to believe this?*

*(North Carolina)*

A.—You have just become a believer. For 15 years the Pinecrest Golf Club (pay and play) in northern Virginia has offered their paying customers smooth fast greens of Ugandagrass, an ultra-fine bermuda from Cairo, Egypt. Charles Lynch, owner, rarely uses a fungicide.

Water is applied sparingly and infrequently. Fertilizer keeps the grass green, and sharp close-cutting mowers keep the golfers happy.

*Q.—We have heard that some of the older golf courses (years ago) had fescue greens. Can you confirm (or deny) this?*

*(Pennsylvania)*

A.—True! When I joined the Penn State staff in 1935 as extension agronomist, I visited several golf courses regularly in northern Pennsylvania that had good fescue greens. They putted very well (and fast). With water and fertilizers the fescue gave way to *Poa annua*, clover and, later, bent.

*Q.—Is it possible to make a putting surface out of zoysia?*

*(Maryland)*

A.—Yes, indeed. Twenty years ago the Naval Ordnance Hospital (near Washington, D.C.) requested assistance on producing low-cost, low-maintenance greens for a 9-hole, non-championship course. I recommended Meyer zoysia for the greens which would not be watered. Now, in 1968, these greens are still in service. They receive many favorable comments. When golf architect Ault was asked to relocate a green (highway construction), he carefully preserved and replaced the original zoysia sod.

*Q.—Please name some of the states where turfgrass work was pioneered.*

*(Oklahoma)*

A.—Rhode Island was first—1893. Their work has been continuous.

Connecticut can lay claim to some significant early work—1910, 1911—but it has suffered lapses and has not been continuous.

Pennsylvania and New Jersey started programs about the same time—1929. Both have been continuous except for a brief period during World War II when virtually all turfgrass work was halted.

Purdue (Midwest Regional Turf Foundation) was the first to start up after the war. Tifton, Georgia, began in 1946. Soon after that California began operations.

To continue would be to miss some and that would do them a disservice. This will be covered in the forthcoming A.S.A. Monograph. □