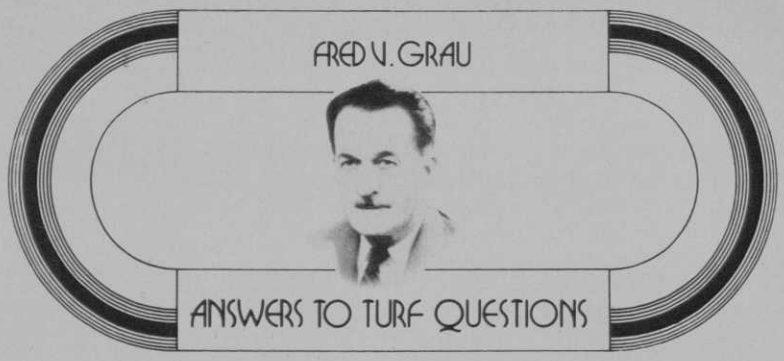

FRIENDS OF TURF HONORED

This month the uppermost thought in this writer's mind is "Hooray for Herb and Joe Graffis!" The Green Section Award, given to these two outstanding friends of turf, puts the spotlight on the lifetime of service they have shared with all of us. No one who has met them and listened to their counsel can ever forget them. Others already have written eloquently of the many fine things they have done for golf. The one thing that has spoken authoratively over the years has been GOLFDOM, which the Graffises "raised from a pup" and developed into a voice of turf. I was fortunate when they invited me to write the Q & A column and the turf roundup (1950, 51, 52). It has been a joy working with them!

Thank you, Herb and Joe, for all you've done for all of us!

Q—*Our Penncross greens do not look like Penncross—at least not the way better Penncross greens look. We have a limited budget, so we don't water our greens too much. Someone suggested that the less desirable strains become dominant as Penncross turf increases in age. Do you think that our watering practices have driven out the good strains? (Pennsylvania)*

A—First, I don't believe that the better strains have been run out by your limited irrigation program. Just the reverse is more likely to happen. The stronger strains tend to increase under an austerity program. Second, as Penncross turf grows older, assuming that management has been adequate, the more desirable strains tend to dominate. Only in winter can any separation of strains be detected. Third, if, as you suspect, you may have "Penncross" greens that were planted to other types of bents that came in the seed, you may very well be seeing strain domination. To overcome this problem, if you have a mixture, overseed your greens at three-quarters pound per thousand spring and fall for two years. Use only Putting Green quality Blue Tag Certified Penncross bent seed.

Q—*Our new greens were seeded to Penncross bent in October 1971, then heavily mulched with straw. Now when I pick up a handfull of straw the young tender grass (I have a good stand) comes up along with the straw. Can you suggest a way to remove only the straw? (Ohio)*

A—The problem is familiar. Because the grass is not yet strongly rooted, I suggest waiting until spring. When the Penncross starts to show signs of deeper rooting, go over the greens with a sharp-bladed rotary mower set just above the tips of the grass blades. Then use a power vacuum to lift the chopped-up straw by air suction. This should remove a good portion of the straw without damaging the Penncross. Do not try to remove all the straw. As the grass grows the straw will rot. As the grass is mowed most of the visible debris will be taken away. Do not try to rake the straw off. No doubt you will devise improvements on this idea as you work with the problem.

Q—*Two years ago the rains brought* Poa annua *into our greens. Is the Pennsylvania Turfgrass Council set up to do or to encourage work on* Poa *to change its characteristics to make it a more desirable grass? Geneticists are able to change markings on fruit flies and to vary the colors in sweet peas. They should*

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also have the skills to change some chromosomes so that Poa *wouldn't die out under heat stress. Joe Valentine produced a better grass under "no control" conditions. Surely the research centers at ag schools could change* Poa *seed so it is more durable. (Pennsylvania)*

A—The Pennsylvania Turfgrass Council is doing all it can to help Penn State do the kind of research work that will benefit all turfgrass users. (Thank you for your membership.) *Poa* has been an object of interest for years, not only at Penn State but at other turfgrass research centers. Investigations have gone to both extremes: 1) how to keep it and make it a better grass and 2) how to get rid of it so that improved grasses can thrive. One thing is crystal clear—it takes excellent management regardless of the route you take.

Poa annua is not a simple, single apomictic strain as is Merion Kentucky bluegrass. It is highly diverse, from short-lived annuals to long-lived perennials. I've seen highly desirable patches of *Poa* turf in old greens that persisted year after year throughout the summers. When seed from these patches was planted, something quite different developed. Yes, genetic improvement has been attempted, but it seems more logical to develop strong types of perennial turfgrasses that, under good management, can choke *Poa* to the point of extinction.

Several chemicals are being used to reduce *Poa* and to allow the better grasses to thrive. It seems to be a sensible approach.

Severe *Poa* invasions tend to point out certain inadequacies in management. I am not saying that your *Poa* problems resulted from mismanagement, but I would advise a thorough check of everything (water, phosphorus levels, N-K-S balance, lime competition by strong turf species, soil disturbance during period of *Poa* germination, to mention a few).

When you bring problems to the Turfgrass Council they will get attention. Don't hold your breath waiting for a change in *Poa*'s genetics. It takes 10 to 15 years to develop and prove a new superior grass.

Q—*We've heard about a soiless method of growing turf for sodding and we would like to know more about it. How does it work and what are the advantages? It is economical? (New York)*

A—Two such proposals have come to my attention. The first was demonstrated at V.P.I., Blacksburg, Va., where Dr. Schmidt grew turf from seed in a soiless medium in shallow trays using a sterile porous cinder-like material on which to germinate the seeds. Recently I've learned of a British process that uses an artificial peat slurry with a wetting agent and foamed plastic as a carrier for the seeds. The advantages claimed are: 1) uniformity, 2) no grading, 3) rapid establishment when laid and 4) no weeds. The grass mat can be grown in four to five weeks, ready to be laid in the use area.

No data are available about cost. The idea has not caught on overwhelmingly. Yes, it does seem to have merit. □