

**T**hey have been called “unsung heroes” and “quiet leaders.” They have led the United States Golf Association to many accomplishments.

Between them, William H. “Bill” Bengueyfield and James T. “Jim” Snow have acted as national director of the USGA Green Section for nearly 30 years. Bengueyfield was director from 1967 to 1978 and again from 1982 to 1990. Snow succeeded Bengueyfield and has held the post since.

“I’ve worked for both men, and they are two of the unsung heroes in the golf business,” says Patrick O’Brien, director of the Green Section’s Southeast region. “Both men have led the charge for the development of new grasses that use less water and fertilizer.”

The “retired” Bengueyfield, 78, lives in Caldwell, Idaho, in the winter but spends the warm months in Frankfort, Mich., where he and his family own and operate a nine-hole golf course. Snow, who worked under Bengueyfield when he joined USGA in 1976, remembers his mentor as always having an opinion.

“But you agreed with him 99 percent of time,” Snow says. “He was effective in convincing people to do the right things.”

Stan Zontek, director of the Green Section’s Mid-Atlantic Region who has worked at USGA for nearly 30 years, remembers Bengueyfield as a leader with a strong personality. “He was the one who could go in a room and pound the table and say, ‘I need this,’” Zontek says.

Bengueyfield spent nearly 38 years at USGA in two stints. He left in 1978 to become superintendent at Industry Hills GC in La Puente, Calif. Bengueyfield wanted to find out if he could practice as a superintendent what he preached as a USGA agronomic consultant.

“I said to myself, ‘Big Bill, let’s see if you can do the things you’ve been talking about all these years,’” Bengueyfield recalls of the challenge he made to himself upon taking the job at Industry Hills. “I found out that what we were recommending to people *really* did work.”

When USGA national director Alexander Radko became ill in 1982, Bengueyfield was asked to return to the post.

“Radko started a big effort to get the USGA Executive Committee to invest more in turfgrass research,” Bengueyfield says. “I came along at an opportune time because the Executive Committee wanted to go forward with [more research]. I stepped in and helped organize the Green Section Turfgrass Research Committee.”

Snow credits Bengueyfield for getting the turf research program in gear. “Without his forceful leadership, I don’t know if it would have happened,” Snow says.

Zontek says Bengueyfield never received enough recognition for his efforts. “He didn’t get credit for getting the USGA to spend hundreds of thousands and ultimately millions of dollars on turf research,” Zontek adds.

Bengueyfield credits Snow for taking turf research to another level. “He has been able to get

## ‘Unsung heroes’ spurred turfgrass research



# Bill Bengueyfield and Jim Snow

more support for turfgrass research out of the executive committee than I ever did,” he adds.

Snow’s signature, however, is his environmental prowess, which has been important to the industry.

“He has been very influential in environmental research,” O’Brien says. “He has spearheaded the movement of buffer zones and tall grass areas on golf courses.”

Snow was instrumental in promoting Audubon International, and he oversaw implementation of Wildlife Links, a program established in 1995 to fund research, management and education projects needed to provide the industry with leading-edge information on wildlife management issues. The programs helped change the minds of some skeptics who believed golf courses were a hindrance to the environment, Snow says.

Most golfers have never heard of them, but Bengueyfield and Snow have left their mark on the game. “The bottom line is that these guys have helped golf courses have better playing conditions and better presentation,” O’Brien says.

— Larry Aylward, Editor

