



GREEN SECTION ACTIVITIES: Great Lakes Region

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I'm not sure if this is a report on the activities of the Great Lakes Region Office of the USGA Green Section or if it is more properly and realistically a tribute to our region's agronomist Jim Latham and his office manager (and better half!) Lois Latham.

In reality, it is both. The factual information presented here speaks loudly and clearly of the dedication of the Lathams to golf, to the USGA and to golf course turfgrass problems.

Golf course superintendents had an extremely busy year in 1988, obviously due primarily to the drought conditions. So did Jim Latham. His region covers 9 states, so spring begins early and autumn runs late. He is responsible for the states of Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Michigan, Minnesota, Montana, North Dakota, South Dakota and Wisconsin. He also does some work in Canada. It is a 800 mile by 2,000 territory and getting from place to place in this sprawling area is a major accomplishment in and of itself. Jim's car, delivered new in April, had nearly 40,000 miles on it by the time the TAS visits he had scheduled were over! And on occasion, he is forced to use the airlines. You can begin to get a feel for the amount of travel the man does when you add these figures up.

Just like golf course managers, Jim's work week is not limited to forty hours in five days. As spring passes and we move into early summer, our operations are intense for all seven days a week. So is Latham's. Trying to track him down in the summer is best left to Lois. She at least knows his schedule and where he is headed next.

Also included in the region's assignment and mission is attention to golf courses hosting USGA championships. There were several of those in the Great Lakes Region this year past, and Jim handled those responsibilities as well.

In a look at the Green Section as a whole, 1988 will go into the history books as one with some very significant accomplishments. Several important goals were accomplished in 1988. Among them are:

1. The Turfgrass Information File is on-line. This is a ready-reference source of research publications at the Michigan State University library, available via computer modem connection for 18 hours a day. There are over 13,000 entries available now and the number is growing daily. This committeeman made a pilgrimage to the library at MSU this past August and can tell you firsthand that it is an impressive additional tool for turf managers around the country. I met Peter Cookingham, project manager of the Michigan State Libraries and the really key person in this ambitious project which was started in 1984. The TGIF is a bibliographic computer database designed and developed by Peter. It is the first, and I think only, database for turf.

If you want to do a basic subject search, keywords are available to the user. The computer then finds records in which the term entered appears, either as part of the title or as an assigned subject. You can also locate specifics, like authors, journals or proceedings. Many *GRASS ROOTS* articles are included in the file, by the way.

2. A reissue of the Green Section Specifications for golf green construction were printed near the end of the year. The first one was printed in 1960. Since then, more and more improvements in procedures and knowledge of components have evolved. But as Jim Latham and Bill Bengeyfield have pointed out and made very clear, the principles of the specifications have **not** changed. This is an extremely valuable update for golf course superintendents.

3. The Green Section began work in 1988 on a movie/video which illustrates the recommended methods of putting green construction. Nearly everyone either owns or has easy access to VCRs these days, and use of this high tech method of communication is a sign of the times.

4. Jim Latham wasn't the only Green

Section staff person worked to exhaustion. Other agronomists had similar numbers of subscribers and visits. Staff enlargement continues to be a priority so that they can provide better service to TAS subscribers.

5. The research program, as Bill Bengeyfield told us at the Pine Hills meeting this spring, remains a major effort and is beginning to bear fruit. *Poa annua* development work has reached the field testing stage. A new bermuda variety is in the seed production phase and new buffalograss and Zoysia types are not far from release. Stress physiology research is already helping superintendents to cope with summer problems, and maintenance investigations are continuing to aid fairway turf improvement.

The USGA Green Section in general, and Jim Latham more specifically, have contributed greatly to the betterment of golf through their dedication to helping provide better golf courses. Hats off to all staff members for a great effort in 1988.

HELP WANTED

Can you help? It's hard to have an association without meetings and it's hard to have monthly meetings without meeting sites. Right?

We still have monthly meeting dates that are still open for next year. If you haven't hosted a WGCSA meeting in the past five years you are PAST DUE! Please help your association out. We always shoot for the third Monday of each month, but a Tuesday will work just as well. (Maybe some clubs would prefer this). We've also started to book meeting sites for 1990.

If you can help, please contact Mark Kienert at (715) 423-2204 for details.
