



## She Keeps the Office Running

By Lori Ward Bocher

It may be Jim Latham who visits your golf course once or twice a year as director of the Great Lakes Region, USGA Green Section. But it's his wife, Lois, who scheduled that visit beforehand and who sends out the reports afterward. It's Lois' pleasant voice you'll hear when you call the office in Madison.

"I keep the whole office running," Lois says of her full-time job with USGA. "I'm here at least 40 hours a week and usually more than that."

She runs the office, schedules Jim's visits and keeps the financial records. When Jim is on the road, he sends back taped reports of his visits to golf courses in the nine states that comprise the Great Lakes Region; Lois transcribes those tapes, prints reports and sends them back to the golf courses.

What she doesn't do is answer the technical questions about turf management that she sometimes gets on the phone. "I tell them I'm not an agronomist. I just run the office," she says. "Then I refer them to the USGA manual."

Lois recalls one question she's been asked frequently. "Some people ask me how I can work with my husband. It's easy. He's never here." Jim is gone 100 percent of the time during the growing season. Even during the off season he's gone 50 percent of the time to meetings and other industry events.

Sometimes Lois accompanies her husband to meetings, especially the GCSAA national meeting and the Wisconsin Golf Turf Symposium. "I don't think I've missed one of the symposia," Lois says, "I don't sit in on all of the sessions, but I'm there."

For the first few years of the symposium's 25-year history, when Jim was working for the Milorganite Division of the Milwaukee Metropolitan Sewerage District, Lois volunteered her services. "They didn't have the staff to do the work, so some wives helped with on-site registration for the first few years," she recalls.



Lois Latham

Now she and Jim are both working for USGA, and they're both still involved with the Wisconsin Golf Turf Symposium. "Because Jim is on the committee, he has certain duties that overlap into my duties in the office," Lois points out.

Lois enjoys her association with golf course superintendents. "They're certainly hard working and dedicated," she says. "And friendly. They're always willing to help each other. They're great to do business with and great to know over the years."

Of course, she listens to a lot of "shop talk" while at the symposium and other meetings. But she doesn't mind. "I've become accustomed to that. If they didn't talk shop, I'd be surprised."

Because Lois and Jim have both worked for the USGA in various states, Lois enjoys renewing old acquaintances from around the country at the GCSAA national meeting each year. "It's like a homecoming," she says. "I always look forward to the annual meeting."

Natives of Texas, Lois and Jim met while students—she at North Texas State and he at Texas A&M. Lois left school to marry Jim in June of 1951. At

the time Jim had one semester to finish. He stayed at Texas A&M for graduate work and Lois worked for the Former Students Association there.

The Lathams left their home state of Texas when Jim took a job in turf research at the Coastal Plain Experiment Station in southern Georgia. Lois worked for the Soil Conservation Service at the same station.

After two years they moved to New Jersey where Jim attended graduate school at Rutgers University and worked part time for the USGA. Lois was secretary to the plant manager at Carter Products.

In the spring of 1957 they moved to Maryland when Jim went full time with the USGA as agronomist for the Southeast region. Lois worked part time for the USGA.

The USGA Southeast office was moved from Maryland to Athens, Georgia in 1958, and Lois continued working as Jim's office manager. The Latham's first child, Kathy, was born in Georgia.

In 1960 the Lathams moved to Wisconsin where Jim joined the Milorganite Division of the Milwaukee Metropolitan Sewerage District (MMSD) where he worked for 25 years. Their second child, Lynne, was born in Milwaukee in 1962.

While raising the children, Lois worked part time at various jobs. And she was active with her children—serving as a room mother, working with the Brownie troop, teaching Sunday School, chaperoning the drum corps. It wasn't until her children were grown that she went back to work full time.

That was in December of 1984 when Jim retired after 25 years at the MMSD to become director of the Great Lakes Region, USGA Green Section. Lois became his office manager at that time. "It was like we both rejoined USGA," she recalls.

Having lived in the Milwaukee area for 25 years, they were not anxious to move. "We were located here, established here," Lois says of their home in Fox Point. "When the opportunity to rejoin the Green Section came up, the Great Lakes Region office was in Crystal Lake, Illinois. We said we'd rather stay here. They said, 'No problem.'"

In April of 1990 the Great Lakes Region staff expanded with the addition of agronomist Bob Vavrek to assist

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Jim with his workload. At the same time the USGA hired an office assistant, Dolores Gooding, to help Lois with the increased paper work.

When Lois isn't working, she loves to spend time with her children and grandchildren. Daughter Kathy and her two sons live in Richfield, Wis., where Kathy's husband, Bob Belfield, is golf course superintendent at Kettle Hills Golf Course. Kathy is a customer services representative for Beta Systems, a computer programming company.

Daughter Lynne and her husband, Rich Cassidy, live in Atlanta where he is employed by Delta Airlines. They have one daughter.

"My grandchildren are my greatest hobby now—while they're young and will tolerate grandma," Lois says. She also is active at her church, Fox Point Lutheran, where she does volunteer

office work.

"And I enjoy sports as a spectator, football in particular," she points out. "I'm a serious Packer Backer. There are years when I wonder about them, but we still support them in spite of their recent history of losing seasons." On the college level, the Lathams follow their alma mater, Texas A&M.

Lois gave up golfing about 10 years ago. "Not for the lack of interest, but lack of ability and lack of time," she points out.

As a golfer, did she look at golf courses differently because of her work? "Not really," she answers. "While turf terms are familiar on paper, I don't recognize much on sight. I might be a little more critical if something isn't neat. But, as to grass varieties or diseases, I don't have the capability to recognize them on sight."

Even though she's not an agrono-

mist herself, Lois likes working with her husband in the golf turf industry. "I've always enjoyed it because it certainly gives us something in common. Jim works all the time so it also gives us time together," she concludes.

*EDITOR'S NOTE: On the Monday following the Wisconsin Golf Turf Symposium—November 5th—Lori Bocher gave birth to Sarah Elizabeth Ward Bocher at the Theda Clark Hospital in Neenah. Sarah weighed only 2 pounds and was 13½ inches long; she was born two months early.*

*Lori was attending the Symposium as a reporter for both THE GRASS ROOTS and TURF.*

*Both mom and daughter are doing well now. At this writing it seems that Sarah will be home very near her original due date—December 26th.*

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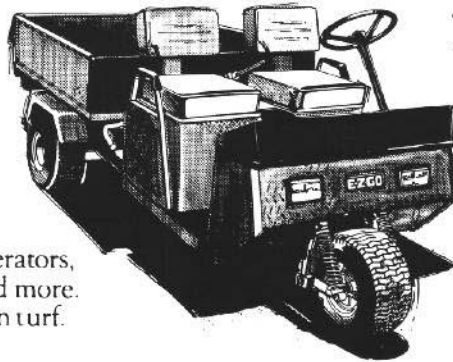
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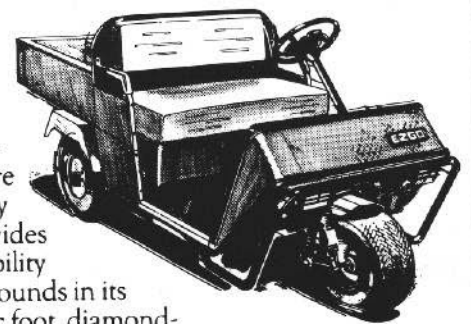
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