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Blacksburg V.I.P. Field Days

A couple years back I had the good fortune to attend my first V.I.P. field day turf demonstration in Blacksburg's beautiful Virginia countryside. Mary Lou was able to pawn off our dog on the neighbors and accompany me so we took off an extra day to enable us a leisurely trip through the surrounding West Virginia mountains. We even had time enough to seek out each of our childhood camp grounds which were only across a nearby mountain.

Through some inside information from Lee Dieter, we were advised to stay at the near by Mountain Lake Hotel, located on a "Hill Top" near Blacksburg. "They often held the banquet dinner that followed the field days and golf tournament at this hotel and it was the most popular stop over in the area," said Lee. I thought we would never get to the top of that dark, narrow winding road. After endless vertical turning we finally came to the large spacious field stone resort, Mountain Lake Hotel, all by itself on the top of the mountain. The fresh cool mountain air was exhilarating. We spent the remainder of the evening sitting outside our room on old wicker rocking chairs, enjoying the mountain atmosphere.

As the fog lifted in the early morning hours we finally were able to see the huge lake out the back door of the hotel. Deep blue and sparkling clear spring water covered several acres surrounded by mountains and clear air; and only yesterday I was enduring the end of summers heat and humidity that still plagued my golf course. It was difficult to leave and get off to an early start to the field days, but early we left with note pads, cameral, and an eager anticipation of what V.I.P. had to offer.

The plots were well spread out, featuring every kind of grass variety except bamboo. Unlike the U.S.D.A. Beltsville field day, several instructors guided small groups through all the different turf plots at different times during the day. No megaphone was necessary and questions were easy to ask of the guide. The bent and bluegrasses were under extensive tests of fertility levels, heights of cut, herbicide and fungicide treatments, and

combinations of the above. In other areas glass sided cold frames showed studies in root development and chemical effects on roots. Another area was tree shaded and offered good testing grounds for shade tolerance of various grass species. Near by was an equipment display of equipment they use on their plots and a much larger display of commercial turf equipment was also on hand, with representatives of several major Virginia turf equipment dealers.

That afternoon we witnessed a unique demonstration of fertilizer application through the use of a helicopter. The helicopter carried what resembled a funneled "lilly"



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like hopper suspended under the runners on long ropes. It didn't take the pilot long to fertilize an acre of land-he was done in three minutes!

As the day neared to its end we returned to the hotel and made for the lake as quickly as possible to take advantage of the remaining afternoon sun. Row boats were available for rent. I quickly put claim to the boat with the least amount of water in it and sent Mary Lou after oars, which she eventually found were housed in the hotel and available for use when you paid for the rental. After this agonizing delay we finally got out on the lake and I spent the remaining hour of good sun skinny dipping. Across the lake Dave Fairbank, Sam Kessel, and Lee Dieter were fishing; and believe it or not we were the only two boats on the whole lake. The tourist season must end early on Mountain Lake.

Our day was capped off with a V.I.P. banquet dinner where I ran into Angelo Cammarota and Ed Dembnicki. Other Mid-Atlantic members present were Dick Hill, George Wingo, Junior Rutman, John Gross, Strict Newsom, Paul Spelman, Sheldon Betterly, and Parker Shirling.

The following day the turf plot tours continued with a afternoon conference held from 1:00 to 5:30 which featured VA. tech staff members. The combination of seeing the plots followed by oral and graphic presentations enabled all of us to comprehend the years of studies that have been conducted on the V.I.P. turf plots. Printed handouts accompanied several presentations followed up by a complete folder of all proceedings of the conference presentations.

A pre-field day golf tournament was held at Blacksburg Country Club a day prior to the Field days and will be repeated again this year for all participants of the Field Day.

Watch your mail for additional information on this years upcoming V.I.P. field days scheduled for Sept. 17, 18, 19; let's see if we can improve on our Mid-Atlantic attendance.

Reservations should be made if you plan on staying at the Mountain Lake Hotel. Telephone number is 703-626-7121. Other accommodations for lodging are available and located within Blacksburg Virginia. Contact John Shoulders or Dr. A.J. Powell at V.I.P. for further information if you don't get information in the mail.

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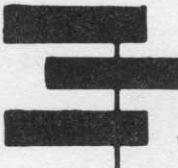
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