

SOD PRODUCER NEWS

Sod producers welcome 450 to midwinter conference

The all-around annual program of managing a business was supplemented this year by equipment exhibits at the American Sod Producers Association conference in Lake Tahoe, Nevada, Feb. 16-18.

Some 450 sod growers and spouses listened to talks on how to update their business, investigated equipment and services which were presented for the first time at midwinter conference, and planned for next year's show in Maui. The Lake Tahoe setting provided a beautiful backdrop for two full days of educational sessions and attracted many growers from southern climates.

Energy was an important theme and many speakers referred back to the address of the first speaker, Dr. Victor Gibeault, turfgrass extension specialist for the University of California-Riverside. He spoke about experiments and research with grasses which don't

need as much water and others which grow shorter and don't require as much mowing. Dr. William Meyer, research director for Turf-Seed, Inc., reiterated this theme in his talk, "New Turfgrass Varieties for Sod Production."

William Harding, legal counsel for ASPA, spoke about legal developments for the organization and how to deal with state agencies. He urged members to have input with ASPA headquarters on state issues so all members might be aware of problems and take advantage of legal assistance in coping with them.

Another consultant for ASPA, Dennis Marx of Ernst & Whinney, reviewed some areas with which his accounting firm is assisting the sod growers. One project consists of analyzing ASPA's membership to gain a profile of the sod industry and its related fields.

The last speaker, John Tate, a senior

law partner in the law firm of Tate, Bruckner & Sykes, spoke about labor laws and employee relations. He said that many small and moderate-sized businesses wouldn't get into labor problems if they understood what unions promise. There would be no labor problems if employers looked at their crew's needs and responded to them.

Along with other business and cultural talks and split sessions on warm and cool season grasses, the banquet attendees heard former quarterback Roman Gabriel, now head coach at Cal-Poly U. Gabriel said playing on artificial turf was like being hit twice, once by a tackler and once by the turf. He said if you questioned the players, not one would vote for artificial turf.

In a surprise presentation at the banquet, Dr. William Daniel, turf specialist at Purdue University, was given a plaque and awarded an honorary member for his work with ASPA and for being one of the originators of the association.

Kidwell becomes Virginia turf head

Jack L. Kidwell was elected president of the Virginia Turfgrass Council at its 21st annual turfgrass conference and trade show in Richmond, Virginia held in January.

Kidwell has been president of Kidwell Turf Farms, Inc. since 1959, and he is current president of United Bio-Fuel Industries, Inc. He has served as president of the Virginia Cultivated Turfgrass Association and the American Sod Producers Association.

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