



THE TURF ADVISORY SERVICE

Part Two: 50 Years of Service to Golf

BY JAMES T. SNOW

The conclusion of Part One of this three-part series (*Green Section Record*, May/June 2003, pp. 4-9) saw the establishment of the Western Region office by Charlie Wilson and the subsequent opening of offices in five additional regions between the years 1953 and 1957. In the February 1953 issue of *USGA Journal and Turf Management*, the organization of the Regional Turf Service was described: "Each Region will consist of about 200 USGA clubs which subscribe for the Regional Service. They will be divided into about eight groups of 25 clubs each."

The article goes on to describe the following benefits of subscribing to the Regional Turf Service:

1. At least three direct consultations with the Regional Director each year, on the following schedule:

- a. One half-day visit to the club by the Regional Director, followed by a written report from him.
 - b. Two group conferences in which the Regional Director will meet with the golf course superintendents and green committee chairmen of the 25 clubs in each group.
2. Assistance by correspondence and telephone.
 3. A periodic TurfLetter from the Regional Director to the subscribing clubs in his region, at least six times a year.
 4. A subscription to the *USGA Journal and Turf Management*, published seven times a year.
 5. A voice in the direction of broad-gauge turf research whose results would benefit golf courses.

The fees associated with the service were broken down as follows:

1953 Regional Turf Service Fees

	Less Than 18 Holes	18-27 Holes	More Than 27 Holes
Service fee, including travel	\$ 58	\$ 78	\$ 98
Appropriation to turf research	15	20	25
Subscription to <i>USGA Journal and Turf Management</i>	2	2	2
Total Fee	\$ 75	\$100	\$125

Not surprisingly, the benefit that involved two group meetings per year with 25 superintendents and 25 green committee chairmen did not last long due to the difficulty of scheduling dates when all or most could attend. Instead, the agronomists in most regions made a great effort to visit a majority of their



The basic principles of good turf management haven't changed during the 50 years since the Turf Advisory Service began, but the tools available today to help us maintain high-quality turf have changed considerably.

The Green Section staff in May 1971, left to right: William G. Buchanan, Duane Orullian, William H. Bengueyfield, F. Lee Record, James B. Moncrief, Alexander M. Radko, and Holman Griffin.



Green Section fall staff meeting, 1990, left to right, first row: Jim Snow, Jim Moore, James Connolly, Chuck Gast, Mike Kenna. Second row: John Foy, Tim Moraghan, Dave Oatis, Larry Gilhuly, Jim Latham. Third row: Jim Skorulski, Stan Zontek, Paul Vermeulen, Bob Vavrek, George Manuel, Bob Brame, Pat O'Brien.

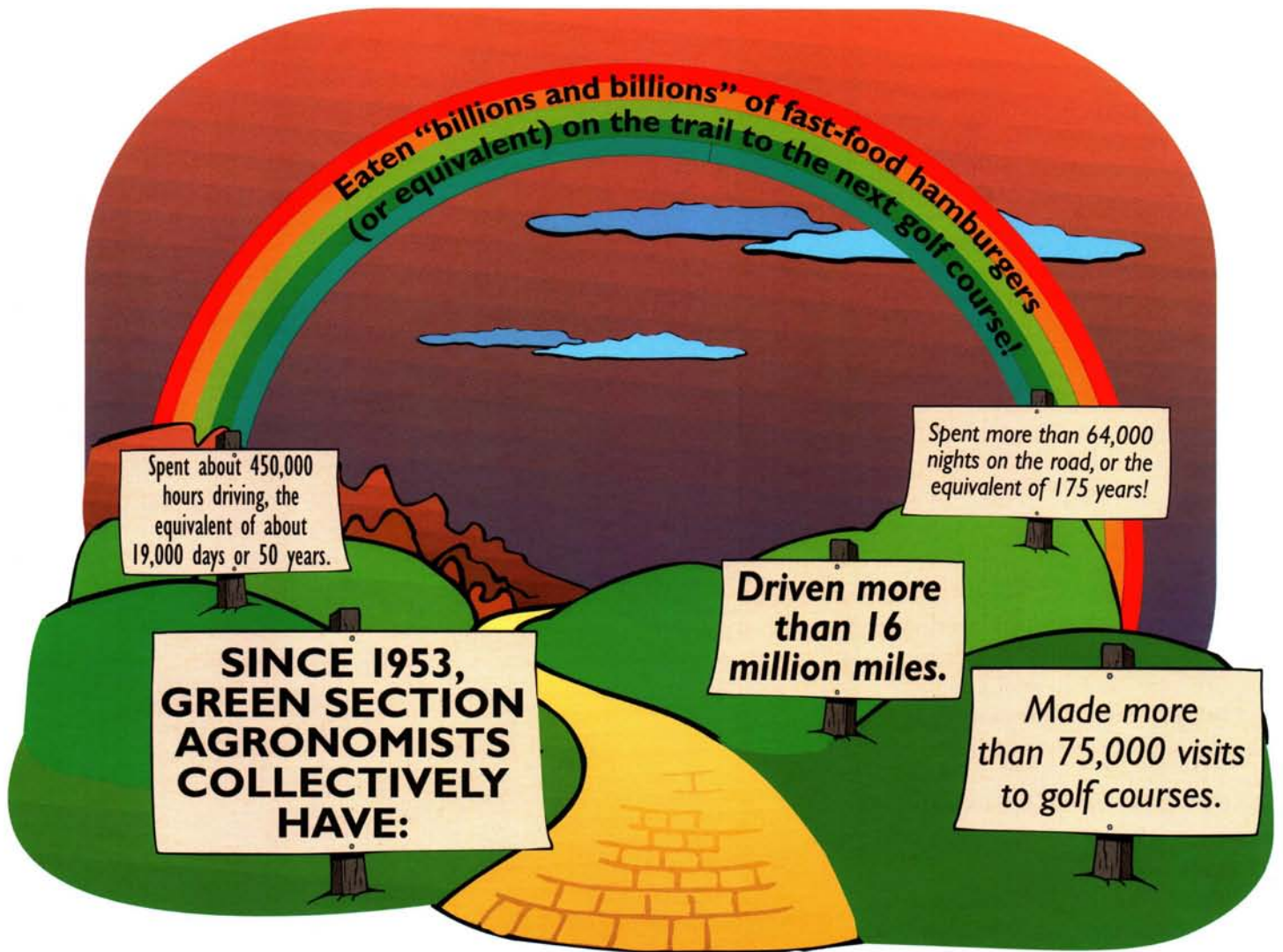
clubs twice per year. The second visit was brief, such that they could visit two to four clubs per day, depending on the area. In some regions this policy lasted until the early 1980s, at which time courses could choose to obtain an additional visit for an extra fee.

Although fees for the service have climbed steadily over the years, the program has never broken even. From the very first year, the USGA has subsidized the service to keep fees within a reasonable range for a majority of golf courses. Today, the fees charged cover

less than 50% of the cost of maintaining a staff to conduct the service.

THE FUN PART AND THE TOUGH PART

Life as a USGA agronomist has its ups and downs, as does any job, and it



**SINCE 1953,
GREEN SECTION
AGRONOMISTS
COLLECTIVELY
HAVE:**

Spent about 450,000 hours driving, the equivalent of about 19,000 days or 50 years.

Spent more than 64,000 nights on the road, or the equivalent of 175 years!

Driven more than 16 million miles.

Made more than 75,000 visits to golf courses.

definitely is not for everybody! The highs are indeed *high*: the fun of visiting golf course superintendents and course officials at 100+ courses annually, learning what works and what doesn't, and the joy of offering advice to golf courses and seeing it work, much to the delight of everyone at the course; the excitement of traveling near and afar, learning about cultures, seeing fantastic sights, making friends, and picking up yet more perspectives on golf turf management; the feeling of confidence and pride that what you've worked so hard to learn is practically unique and is of great use to others for their jobs, their game, and the benefit of the game of golf; and knowing that you're part of a team of hard-working, talented, dedicated professionals who support and

inspire each other and who love what they're doing.

Then there's the *tough* part: writing lengthy reports at the end of an exhausting day, knowing that tomorrow often brings the same routine — two visits, two reports; getting behind in report writing and spending your family time at the office on Saturday and Sunday; being on the road and missing your daughter's lacrosse game, your son's birthday, or your anniversary; spending many nights on the road (range: 45-160 nights; average ~80 per year) and having dinner by yourself (if you have time for dinner at all!); spending more of your life getting to where you need to be (driving or flying) than you do doing what you're there for; visiting the same club year after year

and seeing that they haven't done a single thing you've recommended, the course looks as awful as ever, and the golfers are complaining as loudly as ever. Those who overcome these hurdles tend to love the job and stay for a long tenure. In the long run, the highs far surpass the lows!

One of the ways that some families cope with Green Section travel is to have the spouse serve as a part-time or full-time secretary/administrative assistant — a part of The Team. They and all of our support staff are hard-working, dedicated professionals who contribute a lot to the success of the TAS program. Currently, spouses serve (or have served) as key office staff in several regions: John and Shelly Foy (Florida), Stan and Marti Zontek (Mid-Atlantic), Bob and

Top right: This picture records the very first Green Section automobile for Charlie Wilson, who had just started the Green Section Western Regional office (about 1951). Charlie is taking possession of a new Mercury from Ed Lowery, a USGA Executive Committee Member who owned a Lincoln-Mercury dealership in San Francisco.

Bottom right: Ed Lowery was the little fellow who caddied for Frances Ouimet when he won the 1913 Open at The Country Club as an amateur and made golf history. The silhouette of this picture has become the Golf House logo. Ed Lowery was also responsible for bringing USGA Champions Ken Venturi (1964 Open) and Harvey Ward (1955 and 1956 Amateurs) to the game of golf. He was always a staunch supporter of the Green Section and did much to establish the Regional Turf Service in the west in the early days.



Rhoda Brame (North Central), Bud and Karen White (Mid-Continent), Jim and Kay Moore (Mid-Continent and Construction Education), Larry and Peggy Gilhuly (Northwest), and Mike and Susan Kenna (Research). Historically, other dynamic duos have included Al and Ann Radko, Jim and Lois Latham, Brian and Maureen Maloy, Monty and Joy Moncrief, Robby and Mary Robinson, Karl and Sali Olson, and Charlie and Marion Wilson.

As with any organization, success stems from the knowledge, character, and work ethic of the people who work there, and the Green Section is very fortunate to have employed so many agronomists and staff with these distinctive qualities.

Next Issue: Part Three will conclude this series with perspectives on the Turf Advisory Service as it relates to Green Section publications, agronomists' outreach efforts, the role of our Green Section Committee volunteers, and the importance of turfgrass research as a basis for TAS recommendations.

From 1976 to 1990, JIM SNOW logged many miles as a Green Section agronomist. In January 1990 he succeeded Bill Beneguyfield as National Director of the USGA Green Section.

