

# The Kentucky Turfgrass Council -It's Origin

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President Tom Jeffries asked that I write on this subject primarily because many of today's members don't know the history of the council, the prime forces and individuals responsible for its development or even the objectives of our organization. He also felt that we should document the origin while some of those people who can remember are still around to set the record straight.

I hope that everyone will forgive me for becoming personal in this dissertation, but I need to do that in order to start at the beginning. I will relate names and events as I remember them in some cases and in others I have some notes and minutes of meetings to rely on.

I was employed by Eastern Kentucky University in 1968 to teach courses in Nursery Management, Landscape Design and Soils. I had previously completed my graduate work at Virginia Polytechnic Institute with major emphasis in woody ornamentals and fine turf. During the fall of 1968, the Department of Agriculture at Eastern conducted an Industry Advisory meeting which involved several nursery, greenhouse and ornamental horticulture related representatives. Out of that meeting came a recommendation that Eastern could make a significant contribution to the Horticulture Industry of Kentucky by offering a course in turfgrass management. It was the opinion of this committee that there was no effort being made by any of the state universities to provide any education in the turfgrass area, and there was a definite need for such a program. Two of the individuals on that committee with direct turfgrass interest and connections were Ken Arnold who was with the Kentucky Department of Transportation as Director of Roadside Development and Ray Phillips who was a salesman for Bunton Seed Company in Louisville. Ray's direct involvement with golf courses covers a lot of years. He was at one time the Golf Course Superintendent at Louisville Country Club and is presently Golf Course Superintendent of Highland Country Club at Fort Thomas, Kentucky.

Eastern responded immediately by developing a four credit hour course which I taught in the spring of 1969. There were only eight students in that first course, but two of those who have been either totally or partially involved with the turfgrass industry since graduating from Eastern. Bobby Brown was one of those students who went on to make his mark in the Golf Course Superintendent profession in our state by serving at the Lakeside, Lexington course, Danville Country Club and Bellefonte Country Club in Ashland.

Since I had not had direct contact with fine turf for nearly five years while I was working toward my Doctorate, I was a little rusty on the latest thinking and recommendations. Ken Arnold invited me to accompany him to Purdue University in March, 1969 to attend the Midwest Turfgrass Conference. He introduced me to a number of Kentuckians who were in attendance. This proved to be an extremely beneficial experience for me because I was able to refresh myself in the turfgrass area and meet Dr. Bill Daniel.

In November, 1969 I was asked by Ray Phillips and Mr. Winfrey Bunton II to be the speaker at the Kentuckiana Turfgrass meeting that Bunton Seed Company was hosting. I was asked to speak on Eastern's commitment to the Turfgrass Industry. You might say that it was a feeling out session. I asked Dr. William Householder, my department chairman and Dr. William Sexton, our dean to accompany me. I didn't want to get myself out on a limb and then get cut off by the Administration at Eastern. Eastern's offer that evening was to work with the turfgrass industry of Kentucky and to help develop an educational program to fit the needs of the state. We were very much encouraged by the response of those who were present. I'm sure that many who were there didn't really expect to see any changes, but out of that initial meeting developed a relationship of respect and enthusiasm. This was the basis for the momentum which resulted in progress. It was relatively easy to develop the formal educational program at Eastern. I was encouraged and aided in many ways by Eastern's Administration. We instituted an Associate Degree Curriculum in Turf Management in the fall of 1970. At that time most of our students were interested only in a B.S. Degree so in 1972 we were able to offer a Specialization Option in Ornamental Horticulture with emphasis in Turf Management. The more difficult part was to develop turf plots and begin to evaluate the emerging varieties of Kentucky Bluegrass, Perennial Ryegrass, Chewings Fescue etc. that were beginning to flood the market. I had many offers of free seed and was able to utilize the students in our laboratory classes to install and do some of the maintenance on the plots.

Concurrently with the program development at Eastern, Win Bunton, Tom Sams, Ray Phillips and Louis Miller continued to encourage me and in our discussions about what was needed for the state to get moving was a council or organization of leaders to promote and secure funds for education and research.

I was told about the attempts to develop such an organization in the mid 60's and how it had fallen through primarily due to a lack of leadership and support from the University level.

We decided to try again and on May 17, 1971 twelve people met at the Holiday Inn at Frankfort to organize the Kentucky Turfgrass Council. Those in attendance at that meeting were: Phil Booker of Kentucky Roadside Development, Frank and Jim Bunce of Bernheim Forest, Win Bunton II of Bunton Seed Company, Jack Dayton of Jack Dayton & Son, Jim Kirchdorfer of Kichdorfer Irrigation, Louis Miller of Lexington Country Club, Tom Sams of Audubon Country Club, Paul Stogner of Independent Seed and Wire, Barney Tucker of Burley Belt Fertilizer, Carl Wells, Agronomist with Kentucky Department of Transportation, and myself. Louis Miller was elected chairman and we were underway. We discussed various ways and means of serving the industry but the most significant item of business was a motion by Jack Dayton that an organizational committee be formed to work out by-laws, promote, financing, etc. This committee was to report back on June 24th.

On June 24th another meeting was held. I don't have notes of that meeting, but I remember that Amos Tacket of Murray State University was in attendance and very supportive of the organization concept. Someone brought a copy of the defunct council's constitution and by-laws which were rewritten at that meeting. The revised constitution and by-laws became the framework for the Kentucky Turfgrass Council which exists today.

The next significant event was not until October 10th and 11th, 1972. The Eastern Kentucky University Turfgrass Field Day and Conference was held with a tour of turf plots and equipment demonstration the first day. The First Kentucky Turfgrass Council Annual meeting was held after a banquet in the Powell Building at 6:30 p.m. A total of 54 people participated in the banquet and meeting. A board of directors was elected from the slate that was presented by the nominating committee. The original board of directors consisted of Barney Tucker, Paul Stogner, Win Bunton II, Tom Sams, Jim Kirchorfer, Louis Miller, Jim Bunce, Buddy Stoner, Jack Dayton, Carl Wells, Dave Ralston and Paul Tate. The board which met immediately after the annual meeting elected Jim Bunce as president.

The next day, October 11th, might well be considered the first Kentucky Turfgrass Conference. We had a formal organization and we had speakers and pertinent topics.