International communications among turfgrass educators and researchers was almost non-existent prior to 1969, even within Europe. In 1965 Dr. J. B. Beard initiated enquiries to several international scientific societies regarding the addition of a turfgrass science section. The USA representatives to the International Grassland Society were very supportive, but the European and Australian contingents rejected the proposal. Similarly the horticulturists were not encouraging.

Thus at the August 1966 annual meeting of the C-5 Turfgrass Management Division of the Crop Science Society of America in Stillwater, OK, USA, Dr. J. B. Beard presented a proposal regarding the need for enhanced communications among international turfgrass scientists. Considerable discussion followed, with the C-5 members deciding to pursue organization of a non-affiliated international conference. A motion was made and passed charging Dr. Beard to lead a committee in “forming an international turfgrass organization.”

In September, 1966 Dr. J. Beard hosted Mr. B. Langvad of Sweden at his home in Okemos, MI, USA. The concept of an international turfgrass research organization and conference was discussed. Mr. Langvad was very encouraging as to the need and potential for such an organization. It was indicated that the conference should be held in Europe in order to attract the most participants.

Subsequently, Dr. Beard contacted Mr. John Escritt of England and Dr. James Watson of USA to serve with Mr. Langvad on an Organizing Committee for the First International Turfgrass Research Conference (ITRC). Dr. Beard expended over $700 USD of personal funds in the many activities needed to organize the first conference. The initial projection was that if 20 turfgrass scientists participated in an international turfgrass research conference it would be deemed a successful start. The response was impressive with 78 participants from 12 countries. There were 99 papers presented. Many of the presentations were information oriented regarding turfgrass research and education activities in the represented countries. This approach had the objective of furthering an understanding of the turfgrass industry, problems, research, and education activities in the various countries. This resulted in the European representatives organizing a regional research conference. Subsequent events have focused on an exchange of research findings, plus a set of invited keynote presentations on current topics.

At a business meeting at the first ITRC in Harrogate, England, UK, the participants discussed and voted to form “The International Turfgrass Society” (ITS) and to hold an International Turfgrass Research Conference at four-year intervals.

The progress, participation, and impact of the ITRC have been significant, as illustrated in Tables 1 through 6. Charter members of the ITS are shown in Table 7. A chronological summary of ITRC/ITS history is presented in Table 8. We should be thankful for the dedication of those who contributed to the goals ITS during the first ten ITRC events. Members have gained knowledge through this shared learning experience.

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