

Over 400 attend
from 3 continents

Lancaster Co. turf farm hosts international convention

By Jennifer Shenk
Lititz Record Reporter

Over 400 people from over the country, Canada, the Virgin Isles, Sweden, and as far away as Australia, assembled at the Sporting Valley turf fields in Lititz last Friday to witness some of the world's newest sod equipment in action.

Friday's demonstrations were part of the 1981 Summer Conventions and Field Days of the American Sod Producers Association (ASPA). The field day was hosted by Bob Hummer, owner of Sporting Valley Turf Farms, Manheim R7, who rents the Lititz fields from Paul Munnich, Lititz.

Large equipment manufacturers from as far as California, Nebraska, Ontario, Minnesota and Illinois came to Lititz Friday to demonstrate their mowers, sweepers, harvesters, and forklifts.

Among the demonstrators present Friday was Ryan Company of Lincoln, Nebr., which built the first sod cutter in 1948.

"We were the first and only until about 1969," Ryan representative Clarke Staples said Friday. "But almost all big farms still have Ryans today as backup."

An amazing fact, according to Hummer, is that 75 per cent of sod equipment was invented in the 10 years by one of ASPA's grower-members and is currently being marketed by them or a subsidiary company.

In addition to providing the turf and related soil areas for the equipment manufacturers to demonstrate their products, Hummer was responsible for scheduling the meals, tents, sound system, security, maps and signs.

As a member of the Pennsylvania Sod Producers Association, Hummer was selected along with two others to assist the ASPA directors in scheduling and carrying-out the summer convention which was being hosted by Pennsylvania this year.

The convention was held at the Hershey Lodge and Convention Center, Hershey, Pa. Sporting Valley was chosen for the field demonstrations because it was the closest large sod operation in the host state.

ASPA

The American Sod Producers Association was founded in 1968 and currently has over 600 grower members and a full-time staff. ASPA's membership includes seven countries and meets twice a



Bob Hummer, owner of Sporting Valley Turf Farms, Manheim R7, addresses members of the American Sod Producers Association who visited his Lititz sod fields during ASPA's 1981 Convention Field Demo Day.

year, once in mid-winter and once in mid-summer, at various locations in the U.S., Canada, and related U.S. islands.

"This has been our first stop in Pennsylvania," Hummer explained following Friday's field day, "and I feel most, if not all, of our members were impressed with what this area has to offer as a donation to our agricultural heritage, thanks to Milton Hershey, the Amish people, Landis Valley Farm Museum and many other farmers helping to keep us clean and serene."

Last summer's convention was held in Edmonton, Alberta, Canada. This year it was in Hershey, Pa., and next summer the location will be Denver, Colo.

The winter convention which is usually educationally-oriented as opposed to the summer's practical orientation, will be held in Hawaii this year. This past winter, the ASPA convention was held in Lake Tahoe, Calif.

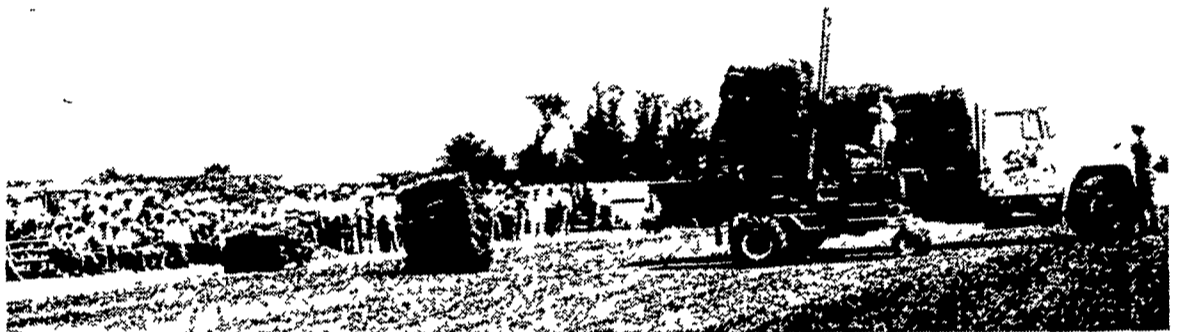
Sporting Valley

Like ASPA, Sporting Valley Turf Farms was founded in 1968. Bob Hummer began his turf business near East Petersburg after studying turfgrass management and agronomy at Penn State University.

Today, Sporting Valley has 225 acres in cultivation on three farms, employs 17 people and supplies central and eastern Pennsylvania, northern Maryland and Delaware markets with Pennsylvania certified sod for varied uses in residential, commercial, industrial, institutional and recreational areas.



Councill's Turf Farm of Goldsboro, Md., demonstrates a one-man self-stacking sod harvester during the American Sod Producers' Summer Field Days at Sporting Valley Turf Farm, Waters Edge Road, Lititz.



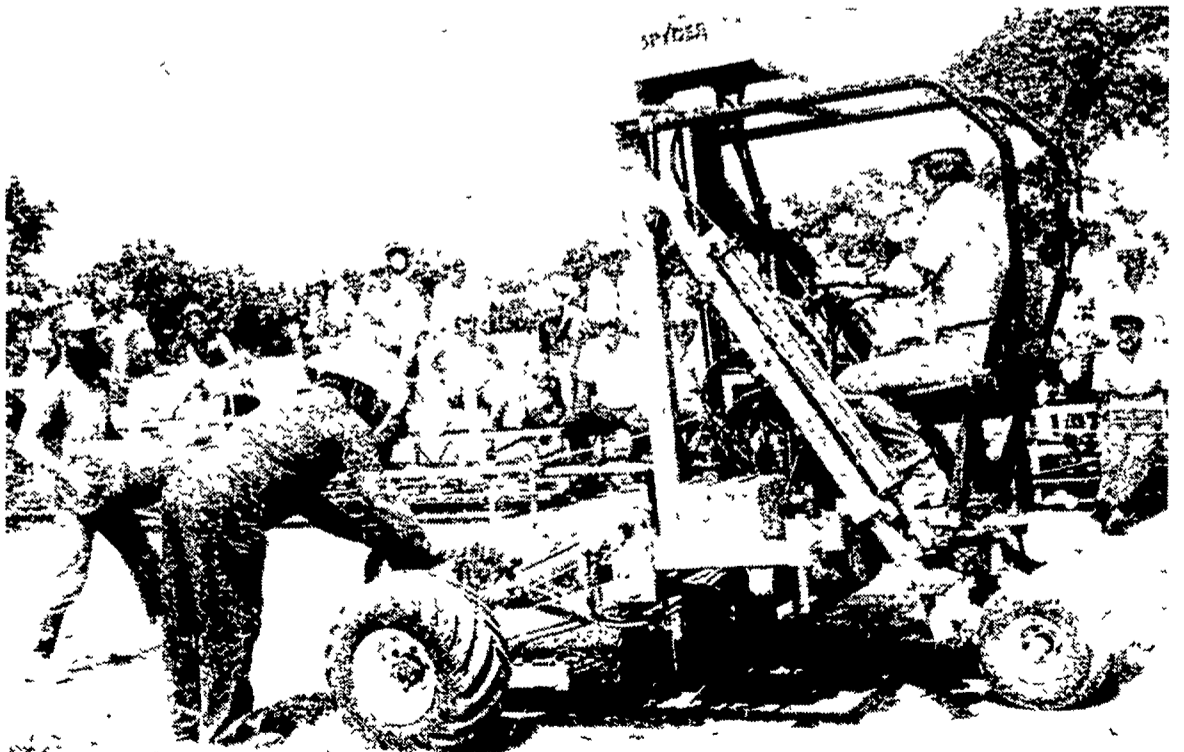
Conventioneers watch as a Princeton forklift demonstrates sod loading and unloading at the Lititz farm owned by Paul Munnich and farmed by Sporting Valley Turf Farms.



Bill Adrian and Tom Slocum of Sporting Valley Turf Farms, Manheim, man a Princeton sod harvester as Ken Willen, also of Sporting Valley, drives the Ford tractor. Princeton Manufacturing Co., one of the leading producers of sod harvesting equipment, is based in Canal Winchester, Ohio.



A Ryan sod-cutter from Lincoln, Nebraska, leaves a trail of sod-rolls ready to be picked up. Ryan built the original sod-cutter in 1948 and was the "first and only" until the late 1960's, according to Clarke Staples, Ryan representative.



Floyd Brownsberger operates a Spider forklift as Jeff Shenk (left) and Harold Shenk of Sporting Valley Turf Farms, Manheim R7, load rolls of sod during ASPA Field Days at the Lititz farm.