

THE FRONT OFFICE

OPINION PAGE

STMA Fire Rages At St. Elmo's



There were 15 of us, jammed around a long table between other long tables, on a crisp December night at St. Elmo's Steak House in Indianapolis. Each of us squared-off against a steak that was not "man-sized," but men-sized. In most cases, the steak won.

We came to Indianapolis for the Sports Turf Managers Association's Annual Conference. We came with common goals—to learn, to share ideas, to help build the organization. We came to give and gain.

Seated at the table that night was a cross-section of the association's driving forces. STMA stalwarts like Mike Schiller and Richard Caton talked turkey (but ordered beef). "New guard" leaders like Bill Whirly and Scott Gaunky shared war stories. Outgoing commercial board member and potential game show host Larry Perotti held court at one end of the table, across from a contemplative Dr. Henry Indyk, while President-Elect Greg Petry, at the other end, quietly surveyed the scene with a look of pride.

You probably don't know most of these people. Neither did I when I first sat down with them. And it didn't matter because there was an atmosphere in the group that night, one thick with camaraderie and an anything-is-possible attitude. I'm told that when STMA founder Harry Gill was alive, such nights were common.

STMA hasn't simply been through the wringer since it first began—it's been hung out to dry and pressed with a red hot iron. It has faced growing pains that would have extinguished most fledgling organizations, setbacks that easily could have caused even its most tenacious supporters to surrender. Yet STMA survived.

There are still developmental mountains to scale, despite the strong footholds established in 1992. Building an association is a long, thankless job, a labor of love that requires an undying fire in the bellies of its leaders and members.

From what I saw at St. Elmo's on that crisp December night, and throughout the 1992 conference, that fire is alive and well.

And contagious.

Matthew Trulio

EVENTS

CALENDAR

FEBRUARY

1-4 Program, "Working with the Media and the Public," University of Guelph, Guelph, Ontario, Canada. Contact: University of Guelph Office of Continuing Education (519) 767-5000.

1-26 34th Annual Turf Managers Short Course, University of Guelph, Guelph, Ontario, Canada. Contact: University of Guelph Office of Continuing Education (519) 767-5000.

3-4 Ohio State University Athletic Field/Sportsturf Short Course, Holiday Inn on the Lane, Columbus, OH. Contact: Barbara Bloetscher (614) 292-7457 for course content or the Department of Conferences and Institutes (614) 292-4230 for registration.

3-4 Southern Illinois Grounds Maintenance School, Gateway Convention Center, Collinsville, IL. Contact: Ron Cornwell (618) 692-9434.

3-5 American Sod Producers Association 1993 Midwinter Conference and Exposition, The Fairmont Hotel, New Orleans, LA. Contact: ASPA (708) 705-9898.

4 Northeastern Pennsylvania Turfgrass and Grounds Maintenance School, Mt. Laurel Resort, White Haven, PA. Contact: Department of Agronomy (814) 865-2543, or Pennsylvania Turfgrass Council (814) 863-3475.

17 Sixth Annual Inland Northwest Turf and Landscape Trade Show, Spokane Interstate Fairgrounds, Spokane, WA. Contact: Julie Boyce (509) 534-4161.

17-19 International Conference on Resort and Golf Opportunities, Sheraton Maria Isabel, Mexico City, Mexico. Contact: Executive Conference and Seminars (415) 453-1184.

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