

# THE FRONT LINES

## Stories from the Front Lines

By Dave Ashman

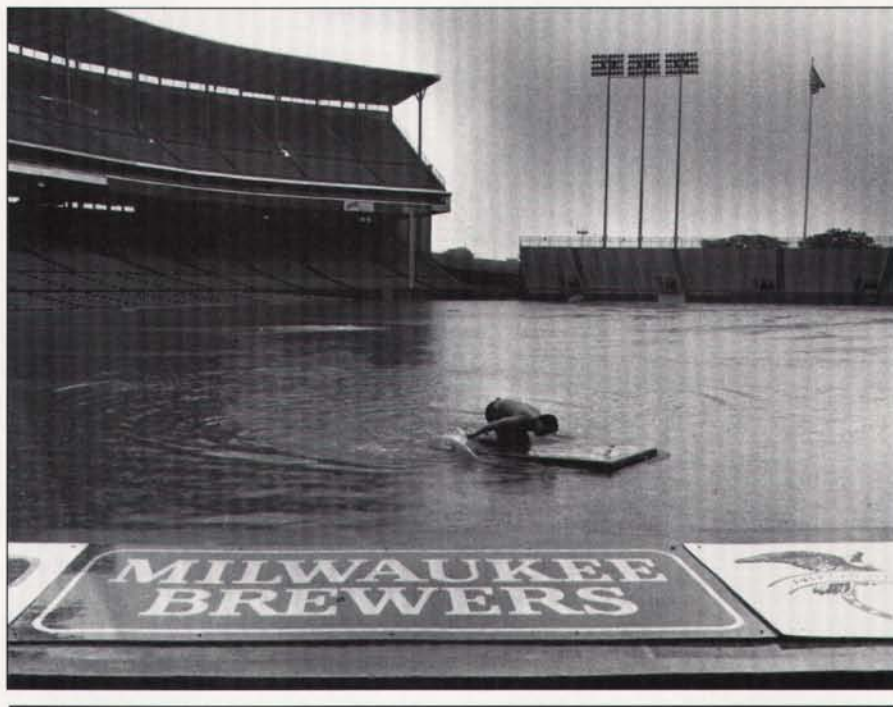
One of the many benefits of joining an organization like the STMA is interaction with the membership. Having the ability to meet other professionals who are facing similar concerns and challenges provides a great opportunity for personal development. It is always reassuring to learn you are not the first person to face a particular problem. The concept of this department is to share anecdotes from members of the sports turf community.

### From Milwaukee

Harry Gill was a founding member of the STMA, a sports turf manager par excellence and a tireless practical joker. Mike Schiller, Dave Mellor and others who knew him well remember him as a person who always got the job done and never let you forget to play a little every day. If you did forget, he had a special way of reminding you.

### “One if by Land, Two if by Sea”

In 1986 after a storm dropped seven inches of rain on Milwaukee, WI, during a ten-hour period, the grounds staff at County Stadium saw their playing surface literally under five feet of water. That was the good news. The bad news was that a Brewers' game was scheduled for this stadium in less than 48 hours. Most turf managers would have updated their resumes or called the local suicide hotline. Harry built an ark. Okay, it



A County Stadium employee “enjoys” the great flood of 1986.

wasn't an ark — it was a small boat. Well, actually, it was a pad from the outfield wall. Dave Mellor shares his picture of a stadium employee floating in front of the dugout. To this day some are not sure if this wasn't one of Harry's relentless practical jokes or truly an act of God.

How did Harry get the field ready to play in less than 48 hours? According to legend, Harry willed the water away. According to highly ranked sources within the department, the problem was created by a freak combination of events. If seven inches of water in ten hours was not enough, the grade of the stadium parking lot actually channeled the runoff water onto the playing field. A small creek adjacent to the stadium overflowed its banks and directed more water into the area. The final blow was that the storm drain line for the stadium was blocked with debris.

Once the blockage was removed,

the drain system worked to perfection and the field was cleared. After a few hours, the only standing water was in the dugouts. The bulk of the work consisted of replacing wall pads and other items that floated away. The field was ready on time, and the game was played without incident. Most people never knew about the great flood of 1986. The only proof is in a picture on Dave Mellor's wall.

I would like to thank the following people for their contributions to this department: Suz Trusty, STMA National; Mike Schiller, STMA president; Dave Mellor, County Stadium; and Steve Guise, Valley Crest Landscape.

If you have a story or anecdote you would like to share, write it down (include your name and phone number) and send it to the following: Ashman & Associates, 3164 North Greenbrier Road, Long Beach, CA 90808. □