

THE FRONT LINES

From Milwaukee

By Dave Ashman

Harry Gill was a founding member of the STMA, a sports turf manager par excellence and tireless practical joker. Those who knew him well remember him as a person who always had a twinkle in his eye and a warm smile.

Freshman Orientation

The grounds staff had just completed the final touches on the field before the Green Bay Packers game. The crew met in the usual spot on the field. Harry asked each staff member a few questions to make sure the tasks were completed. Everything was good to go. The newest member of the staff asked Harry if he needed anything else done before they left. This

was just enough of an opening for Harry.

Harry signaled the rest of the crew with a wink, and then he began to look around for any items that needed additional attention. Harry pretended to be shocked at his own forgetfulness and told the apprentice that he had forgotten to put out the "Line of Scrimmage." The apprentice naturally volunteered to complete the task.

Harry and the staff tried to describe exactly what a line of scrimmage looked like. "It was about this long and this big around, and I think I saw it by the players' entrance to the dugout," Harry said.

While the apprentice went to look by the dugout, the rest of the crew split up. Each took a turn prompting



Harry Gill shows off a new turf aerifier at Milwaukee's County Stadium. Photo courtesy: Kent W. Kurtz.

the apprentice to look in another location. The apprentice asked for help from the other people on the field. The television camera crew, the NFL officials as well as a few others didn't help at all. They just laughed.

Finally the apprentice approached Harry and told him the bad news. Harry's crew presented the apprentice with a three-foot-long section of rope and then explained what the line of scrimmage is on a football field. The apprentice learned well and became a good turf manager.

This individual eventually assisted in training other new staff members in Harry's special study classes. Course work included: the key to the batter's box; the bucket of steam; muffler grease, and a few others. These classes became traditional rites of passage for Harry's rookie turf managers. As Harry says, "It's what you learn after you know it all that really matters."

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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: Ashman & Associates, 3164 North Greenbrier Road, Long Beach, CA 90808. □

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