

## Harry Gill epitomized STMA members' camaraderie

*The late Harry Gill, along with George Toma, Dick Ericson, and the late Dr. William Daniel, founded the Sports Turf Managers Association in 1981. These men believed that sports turf could be improved through the sharing of knowledge and the exchange of ideas between "groundskeepers."*

Mike Schiller, former STMA president and 1993 recipient of the Harry C. Gill Memorial Award, was a good friend of Harry's. "He was a great storyteller and he loved to pull practical jokes. He loved to hear people laugh especially if it was at his intended target. I was lucky enough to share a room with Harry at the conferences for almost 10 years. Often I was the subject of his jokes, and it made everyone laugh and it brought a twinkle to Harry's eye, and that always made for a good time," Schiller says.



Mike Schiller, left, with STMA founder the late Harry Gill, at Milwaukee's County Stadium in 1982.



STMA braintrust at the 1985 meeting in San Francisco: (from left) Dale Sandin, Orange Bowl; Dr. Kent Kurtz, Cal Poly; Melissa (last name unknown), the STMA's first secretary; Tom Lujan; Steve Wightman, then with Broncos and now with the Chargers; and Mike Schiller. Lujan took over Mile High Stadium duties when Wightman went west.

"Harry loved people, he loved growing grass and he loved the idea of sports field managers sharing ideas. In 1982 his Brewers lost in the World Series but the memento Harry gave my wife and I is a treasure that reminds me of one of the nicest people I have ever known.

"We made regular trips to County Stadium, and he would take my kids for

rides on his golf cart. Although they are all adults now, they still talk about and treasure the times we got to visit "Gramps" as my kids called him. I did too, just to aggravate him a little," Schiller says.

"Friendships and lasting memories is what makes STMA so special."

Speaking on his STMA experiences, Schiller says, "Over the past 25 years, so many new and innovative ideas have come forth from this industry, whether it was an outlandish idea that worked once and others tried it, or a plant being propagated for resistance or a certain growth habit, or a new piece of machinery [invented].

"I have learned so much at the sessions and trade shows; our vendors are great educators. It has been 25 years of knowledge growth for me. The best thing to come from this association beyond education are the friendships that you make, they are priceless."

Tom Burns, director of grounds for Texas Ranger Baseball and a veteran STMA member, says, "The most valuable thing that I have come by through STMA is the people who make up the organization. I have never been exposed to a group that is as willing to help solve a problem, be it personal or professional.

"When I first started in this business everyone held onto their secrets. That is not the case any more. I know that I would not be where I am at in my career if it was not for the people who took the time to help me along the way. The people of STMA are quite good at giving back to the industry and I think that is their best quality," Burns says.

Dale Getz, CSFM, and U.S. sports fields and grounds sales manager for The Toro Company, (and formerly a turf manager at Notre Dame) says, "Without a doubt the most valuable thing from my membership has been the relationships I have formed throughout the years I have been associated with the STMA." Getz adds that he also

greatly values becoming a Certified Sports Field Manager.

"Without a doubt, the most valuable part of my STMA membership has been the networking opportunities with other members from all categories throughout the country. Many management procedures I now employ have come from ideas and methods of other STMA members. The educational opportunities afforded by an STMA membership are second to none and run a close second to networking for me," says Steve Wightman, stadium turf manager for Qualcomm Stadium in San Diego.

Another influential and legendary turf man was the late Dr. Fred Grau. A great friend of turf managers, Dr. Grau was the first turf extension agronomist (at Penn State) in the U.S. STMA Historian Dr. Kent Kurtz reports that Dr. Henry Indyk, who passed away last year, started the Dr. Fred Grau Scholarship with funds left over from the National Sports Turf Council after it was disbanded subsequent to Grau's death.

STMA annually awards a student scholarship in Dr. Grau's name. Dr. Kurtz says this scholarship fund is running out of money since it is not endowed. He encourages all STMA professional and commercial mem-

bers to contribute to this worthwhile fund to help future STMA leaders with their school expenses now. ■

All photos courtesy of Mike Schiller



The late Dr. William Daniel makes a point at the first, unofficial gathering of what is now the STMA, at the 1985 GCSAA convention in San Francisco.



Dr. Fred Grau