



Sharing knowledge is root of STMA

Experts on the field, partners in the game

By Eric Schroder

Because a few men believed that sports turf could be improved and made safer through the sharing of knowledge and the exchange of ideas, the Sports Turf Managers Association was officially formed in 1981. The key leaders in the STMA's infancy were Harry "Pops" Gill (deceased), Milwaukee County Stadium; Dr. William Daniel (deceased), Professor Emeritus, Purdue University; Dick Ericson, Minneapolis Metrodome, and George Toma, Kansas City Chiefs and Royals.

Dr. Kent Kurtz, STMA's official historian, also deserves credit for stirring up the pot. In the late 1970's his kids were playing youth sports and he saw the unnecessary poor conditions of their fields. Kurtz called many of the top "groundskeepers" from around the country, soliciting their advice. "I found them very willing to share their techniques with others," recalls Kurtz, "if the results meant increased safety for athletes."

So soon the aforementioned "Founding Fathers," along with Roger Bossard from Chicago, Barney Barron from San Francisco,

25TH ANNIVERSARY

Don Marshall from Anaheim, Tony Burnett from Washington, Steve Wightman from Denver, and David Frey from Cleveland, realized they needed an association, not necessarily to benefit themselves as much as end-users.

After sharing the office, executive secretary and conference facilities of the National Institute of Parks & Grounds Management in Appleton, WI, for three years, the 60 STMA members decided to venture into independence.

At a 1984 meeting in Denver the STMA became an entity and led by President David Frey appointed Kurtz the Association's first Executive Director. Kurtz, Professor Emeritus of Turfgrass & Ornamental Horticulture at Cal State Poly in Pomona, recognized an opportunity to build something that could make a difference in the sports world and offered to help the group organize. He built the membership from 60 to more than 900 in 5 years, all the while working full-time at in Pomona. Today STMA boasts more than 2,500 members representing 11 countries.

In 1985, the Association incorporated as a not-for-profit corporation and began a quarterly newsletter. STMA established a national office in Upland, CA during the spring of 1987. The first national conference in 1986 was held in conjunction with that of the Golf Course Superintendents Association of America, as were the annual meetings in 1987 and 1988.

January 1989 saw the STMA's first independently sponsored annual conference and exhibition, in Vero Beach, FL. Subsequent meetings have been held in Houston, Indianapolis, San Diego, Baltimore, Bradenton, Anaheim, Colorado Springs, Orlando, Mesa, St. Louis, Tampa, Las Vegas, San Antonio, San Diego, and Phoenix.

In 1990 the association decided to recognize chapters that had been forming around the country and still are forming today. There are now 25 STMA chapters that conduct seminars, tour facilities, hold trade shows, raise scholarship money, and give back to their communities.

"Membership and participation in STMA is critical for self-improvement through education, fellowship, networking, and the goal of making fields safer and more aesthetically pleasing," says Kurtz. "A quality athletic field can result in winning attitudes and successful programs for teams and turf managers."

Through 25 years the STMA headquarters has operated out of locales as diverse as Las Vegas and Council Bluffs, IA

In autumn 2004 STMA moved into its current headquarters in Lawrence, KS. The Headquarters is housed in a historic stone building that is the oldest existing warehouse in the state of Kansas and was renovated in 1998.

Ross Kurcab, turf manager for the Denver Broncos, recalls his early days with the STMA:

"My first involvement was when Steve Wightman (then at the old Mile High Stadium in Denver) told me about a small group of turf managers getting this ball rolling. My first conference was 1986 in San Francisco. Back then, the STMA show was part of the GCSAA show. If memory serves, the entire conference was a 2-3 hour general session, and a Tour on Wheels the next day.

"The bus tour was great for me as a young turf manager. I remember how lucky I was to be able to chat with Dr. Bill Daniels, Dale Sandin from the Orange Bowl, and especially Harry Gill. I thought Steve Wightman was the greatest turf manager in the world. And I still do." ■

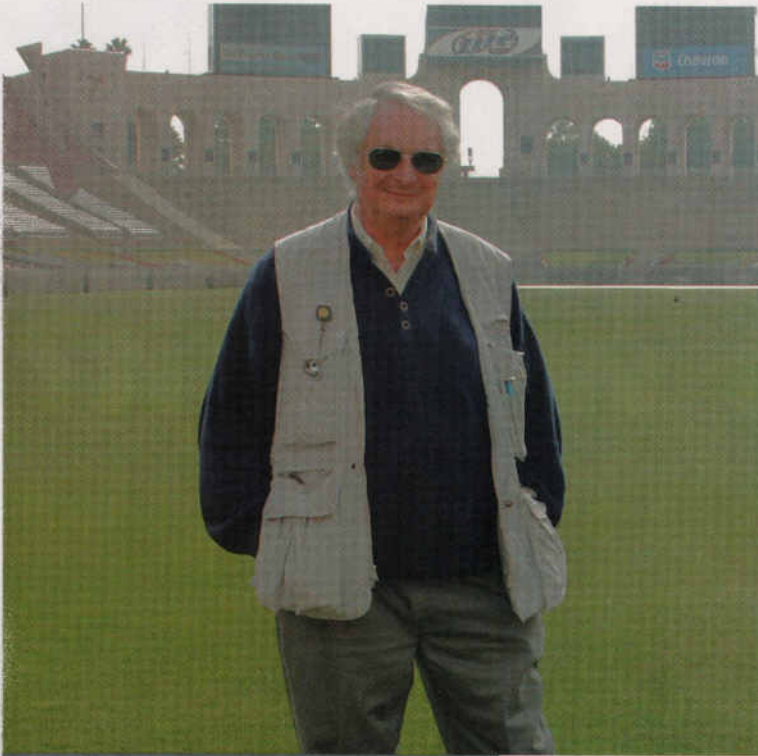
"When I started doing sports turf work for the old Knoxville Blue Jays (Double A baseball team) in the mid-1980's, my hero was Tom Burns. I had read a story about him and his fields in (I believe) Port Charlotte, FL in the first issue of SportsTurf I ever saw. I was still teaching high school at the time and that helped me make up my mind to get out of the classroom and get into sports turf full time. I read that article several times and still have it. The first time I met Tom was at the conference we had in Colorado Springs. We served on the STMA board for several years together and we have been friends ever since."

—Bob Campbell, CSFM,
immediate past president
of STMA

STMA Past Presidents

1981-1982	Dick Ericson, Minneapolis Metrodome*
1982-1983	Harry C. Gill (deceased), Milwaukee County Stadium*
1983-1985	David Frey, Cleveland Stadium*
1985-1987	Steve Wightman, Mile High Stadium*
1988	Mark Hodnick, Cal Poly Pomona*
1989	Steve Cockerham, University of California/Davis*
1990-1991	George Rokosh, College of DuPage
1992-1993	Dr. Gil Landry, University of Georgia
1994-1995	Greg Petry, Waukegan Park District
1996-1997	Mike Schiller, CSFM, Rolling Meadows Park District*
1998-1999	Stephen Guise, Marina Landscape, Inc.*
2000-2001	Rich Moffitt, Saint Louis University
2002	Murray Cook, SPORTSTurf Services
2003-2004	Bob Campbell, CSFM, University of Tennessee

*Where employed at time of term.



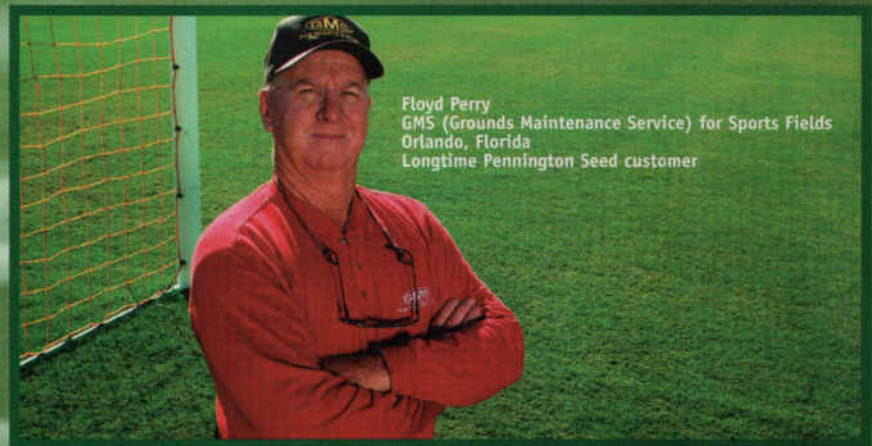
"Because of STMA, I have met and worked with some of the finest professionals in the industry at all levels. I have had the opportunity to be involved in the construction and management of sports fields at the highest level in football, baseball, and soccer, as well as conducting a cutting edge research program. The STMA experience has been a major learning experience for me that I have been able to apply to my research program and to pass on to others."

—Steve Cockerham,
superintendent, ag operations,
University of California, Riverside

STMA MISSION STATEMENT

"To be the recognized leader in strengthening the sports turf industry and enhancing members' competence and acknowledgement of their professionalism."

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