

Memories and more from STMA veterans

We asked several prominent STMA members about how they first got involved with the Association and other thoughts on membership and its value.

George Trivett, CSFM

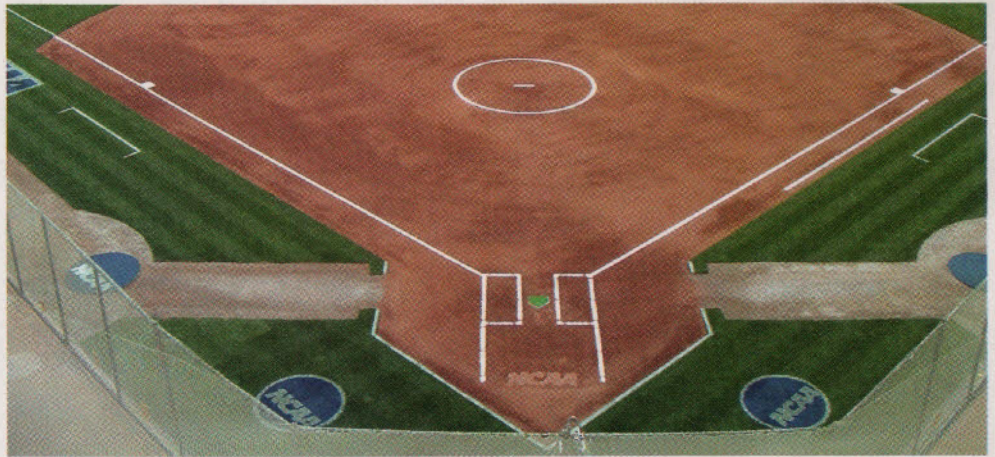
I became an STMA member in 1985 after attending a seminar in South Carolina where Bucky Trotter introduced me to the Association. From then until now the most compelling reason to be an STMA member is the great opportunities we as members have to network with others in our profession, whether on the phone or in person at our great conferences.

In all those years STMA members, no matter what level they work on, has never refused me help in any way. One of my best memories is of the late Dr. Kent Kurtz, who at my first conference in St. Louis invited to sit at his table. From that moment on I knew I was part of one of the greatest Associations anywhere. I also met Kevin Meredith at that conference and he made me feel like a brother and we continue our close relationship to this day. After being elected to the Board in 2003, I have been given opportunities that without STMA I would have never been given. I truly am grateful to our Association and to all the members for making me feel so welcome.

Mike Schiller, CSFM

I was blessed to have attended a turf conference at Purdue, where a gentleman by the name of Harry Gill was making a presentation. I stuck around asking a couple questions and we were friends. He told me the following year they would be meeting with Eric Madsen's group from Park Maintenance in Kansas City.

So I went to Kansas City the next year and saw Harry again as well as a fellow named George Toma. During the field tours I absorbed all George had to say about the



Chiefs' stadium and practice facility, as well as Royals Stadium.

I remember he took me out to center field where two of his crew were working hard to replace a piece of the AstroTurf. He asked me how long I thought it would take two guys to change out one square yard of carpet, and I came up with an answer that was no where near correct, and George had me hooked.

The following year the meeting was in Chicago and I got to meet Dick Ericson, who was president of a group known as the Sports Turf Managers, and David Frey, who was at the old Cleveland Stadium. I walked into a meeting and was told I had been elected vice president of the Sports Turf Managers. I also got to know founding member Dr. William Daniel, the great turf man from Purdue. These men mentored me and helped immeasurably in my career. I have been truly blessed to be able to know and consider them all friends.

Tom Burns

My first experience with STMA was in 1986. I was working at the old Arlington Stadium and we hosted a regional seminar. SportsTurf magazine was just starting out then and I met the first editor, Bruce Shank, as well as

the late Dr. Kent Kurtz. I can't believe 20 years have gone by so quickly.

At the conference in Tampa in 2001 I lost my golf clubs. Well I didn't lose them, Delta did. In order to save space in my luggage I packed all my shoes and auction items in my golf bag. There must have been 20 sets of clubs on that flight. As far as I know mine were the only ones that did not make it. Could have been worse, another guy got only his clubs and lost his clothes.

I only had the pair of hiking shoes that I was wearing on the flight. I was on the Board at the time and took a good amount of ribbing about my footwear all week, especially at the banquet. Nothing sets off a suit like a good pair of hiking shoes.

By the way, I borrowed a set of clubs, donned my hiking/golf shoes and my team won the tournament. Monty Montague is still bitter.

Bob Campbell, CSFM

I first became involved with STMA when the conference was held in Indianapolis. I remember a presentation given by Chuck Dixon about sand fields, which was so much over my head that I had no idea what he was talking about. (We hired Chuck a few years

later to help us design our field at the University of Tennessee when we went back to grass in 1993.)

The next national conference I attended was at Colorado Springs. It is still one of my favorites and I believe that that was the conference where our Association really took off. There was so much energy at this conference because everyone was changing to the new sand fields and there were so many questions and ideas that everyone was sharing. It is hard to believe that was more than 10 years ago, and it is amazing to see how our conference and trade show have grown since.

The most valuable thing about my membership is all the friends I have made from around the country. These are friends and relationships that I will cherish for the rest of my life. I am very honored that the members of STMA trusted me to be President of this Association. It was a special time in my life and one that I will never forget. My life is so much richer because of my association with STMA.

Dr. Steve Cockerham

I had been involved in sports field research and consulting for several years when, in 1982, I was asked by the Los Angeles Coliseum Commission to help get the Memorial Coliseum field ready for the 1984 Olympics (I still consult for them). The LA Olympic Committee then asked to work with George Toma in getting the Rose Bowl ready for Olympic soccer.

The Olympics experience and the continued work in the Coliseum seemed legitimize me as a sports turf manager. In early 1986, I was asked to fill an open position on the STMA Board by President Steve Wightman and Executive Secretary Dr. Kent Kurtz. When the appointed term expired, I was elected to the Board, eventually serving as President in 1989.

The two W.H. Daniel Awards that I received from STMA for my research really mean a lot to me. I am very honored to be considered by my sports turf manager colleagues to be among the scientists that have received the award. Dr. Daniel was my professor and men-

tor at Purdue, which gives the Award added meaning for me.

As a note to show the impact that the Association made on my career: I gave a talk at the 1992 STMA Conference in Indianapolis, after which an assistant city manager of Anaheim asked me if I would be interested in consulting with Anaheim Stadium, which I was. That stadium was the venue for California Angels baseball, Los Angeles Rams football, a college bowl game,

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- ROSS KURCAB, CSFM

motocross, tractor pulls, concerts, etc. It was a great bunch of folks to work with. At the time, I was also involved with the Los Angeles Raiders football team at the Coliseum. A couple of years later while I was working with them, both the Rams and Raiders left southern California in the same year. Consultants lose clients, however not many lose two major league clients by both of them leaving the state at once. I only accept part of the responsibility.

Ross Kurcab, CSFM

While the education I have received from my involvement in the STMA has been so very valuable to me, by far the greatest benefit has been the people I have met, and the friendships I have made. As I grow older, it seems I can count my personal friends on one hand. But my STMA fiends are way too numerous to count. Even now, as the STMA has grown and the Conference is much bigger, my favorite part is just as it was 20 years ago: Sitting down over a cold drink with my friends "talkin' turf." The only difference is that now I am one of the "old goats."

In 1995, Troy Smith (who was my assistant at the time) and I headed down to Bradenton, FL for the STMA show. We figured "Hey, it's south Florida, why pack anything but shorts?" Well, they had a freak cold snap with temps in the mid-30's all week but we were

determined to go to the beach so Troy could get some seashells for his kids. So there we were, alone on the beach, in our shorts, freezing our #\$\$* off collecting seashells.

Then we were in St. Louis at the awards banquet, having a blast as usual at a table with Colorado Chapter members. Tim Moore was announcing the Field of the Year award winners. The soccer field of the year went to the Cox Soccer Complex. Tim was an excellent MC, but when he said, "The winner is the

Cox Soccer Complex," he said it quickly, and well, use your imagination. It sounded like something different to us. I've never laughed so hard and long in my life. The whole table could not gain our composure for at least 15 minutes. We laughed so hard, our faces hurt.

In short, these conferences are like a giant family reunion to me. I really mean that. I've never felt professionally alone since I joined the STMA and starting attending the conferences every year.

Steve Wightman, CSFM

I got involved in STMA in the late 70's when I saw an ad in an NRPA publication that referred to an organization dealing in sports fields. I remember the first membership roster was a single sheet of one line info per member that included the names, addresses and phone numbers of the 50 or so members. Some of the names were in all capital letters, some were last name first, some were first names first, and it was sent with faded purple ink from an old mimeograph roller machine.

As I look back at previous National Conferences the one that comes to mind exhibiting the most comical flare was undoubtedly the one where the biker gang invaded the banquet and took over the stage from the Board of Directors. Organized by Steve Trusty (former Executive Director of STMA) and held in total secrecy from the BOD and the membership, that "interruption" nearly prompted serious security measures from hotel law enforcement officials! It was, of course, all in fun and enjoyed by all, and, indeed, one of the highlights of that Conference. ■