

MAN OF THE YEAR

continued from page 17

at Chicago, Barney Barron at San Francisco, Don Marshall at Anaheim, Steve Wightman at Denver, Tony Burnett at Washington, and David Frey at Cleveland, realized they needed an association—not so much for their own benefit, but for the benefit of parks, schools, minor leagues and colleges. Kurtz saw the chance to build something that could make a difference to others in sports and offered to help them organize. In 1984, in a hotel room in Denver, the Sports Turf Managers Association became an independent entity with Kurtz as executive director. For five years, he built STMA from 60 members to more than 900. He then became education director when a full-time association manager was hired.

In 1984, Kurtz organized the first Sports Turf Institute at Cal Poly. More than 300 groundskeepers from Southern California and those who had built STMA attended. The event is now ten years old and has been duplicated in Chicago, New England, Florida, Colorado, and Baltimore. These sites became the first regional chapters of STMA.

Between 1984 and 1990 as STMA was growing by "leaps and bounds", Kurtz continued to teach turfgrass management full time at Cal Poly and also advised and consulted for the L.A. Raiders, the Rose Bowl, the Fiesta Bowl, the Freedom Bowl and Wrigley Field. He supervised the reconstruction of Anaheim Stadium from motocross to baseball when Don Marshall received his heart transplant. He was also involved with the 1984 Olympics which were held in Los Angeles. Beginning in 1985 and several times since he has attended and participated in judging exhibits at the World Sports and Leisure Exposition in both Windsor and Peterborough, England. There he cemented relationships with the Institute of Groundsmanship and established lasting friendships with John Warner, Eddie Seaward (Wimbledon tennis), Brian Robinson, John Souter (Scotland) and many others to make the cause of sports turf a world issue. Through all of this, his personal life saw much sadness and tragedy with the deaths of his father and mother, aunts and uncles and the lingering illness and eventual death of his wife, Trish in 1991.

Kent Kurtz is still much involved in sports turf management and has a new and invigorating purpose in life. He married an old acquaintance in 1993, Dr.

Marilynn Filbeck, who is an associate professor in home economics at Cal State University Northridge. He continues to train students to become golf course superintendents and turf managers (over 400 since 1969) and receives great pride and satisfaction in seeing these former students go out into the world to shape the future of the industry. According to former students, he is not an easy teacher but is able to recognize the potential in individuals and motivate them to become successful leaders who give back to the profession more than they received. This year Kent will take a sabbatical to complete a book on sports turf management, return to England for the Expo, and continue to serve on the San Bernardino County Parks Commission. His latest work involves recycling rubber tires by incorporating crumb rubber into the root zone of athletic fields. A test installation in a softball field in Lancaster, CA, has already shown progress with accelerated turf establishment and root depth. The potential for this idea approaches the need for better and safer sports turf. The trade name of the rubber product, Rebound, ironically reflects upon Kurtz's career.



Kurtz attended Dr. William Daniel's retirement party with (left to right) Michael Schiller, who is currently with Schaumburg Park District, and kilted John Souter from Scotland.

We are proud that Kent can add the *SportsTurf Magazine's* Man of the Year award to his long list of recognitions and accomplishments, including STMA life Member and the Lawn Ranger Award (now the Harry Gill Award). His current project may be his most important, writing a greatly needed book on sports turf for the individual in the field. Like the small group of groundskeepers who founded STMA, share your thoughts, ideas and expertise with Kent to make the book a valuable tool for others in an effort to make athletic fields safe for everyone. □

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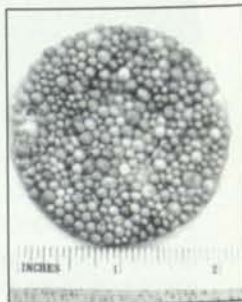
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ADVERTISER INDEX

Air-O-Lator	22	McCord Auto Supply.....	28
Ameriquip	25	Millcreek, Mfg.....	21
Cygnat Turf.....	27	Modern Aerification.....	22
Diamond Demon	25	M. Putterman & Co., Inc.....	12
Dr. Shigo Lectures	3	Partac Peat Corp.....	26
Finelawn Research, Inc.....	2	Parmiter	12
Jaydee Equip. Co	25	Stabilizer, Inc.....	27
Kasco Marine	25	Ty-Crop Turf Equipment.....	19
Kifco, Inc	22	Vegas Rock, Inc.....	22



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