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On the cover: Welcome to Orlando for the Silver Anniversary of the STMA and its Annual Conference and Exhibition. Image courtesy of Newport Events.

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Making history



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The Sports Turf Managers Association will celebrate its 25th anniversary this month in Orlando at their annual Conference and Exhibition. *SportsTurf* will be featuring stories on the founding of the association and the men behind it throughout the first half of 2006.

One of those men is Dr. Kent Kurtz, who retired 1 1/2 years ago as Professor Emeritus from Cal Poly in Pomona after 35 years of teaching. After a heart attack in 2004, Kurtz took advantage of a "faculty early retirement program" that enables him to continue teaching one-third to one-half of the time. "I didn't want to sever ties with my students and research projects," he says.

Now, in addition to helping with community field renovations, he teaches from January to March only (eat your hearts out, Minner and Miller).

"In 1996 STMA President Mike Schiller appointed me as the Historian," says Kurtz. "I had worked with him for many years when he was a board member and he wanted to keep me active in the association.

"Mike recently reminded me of something (the late) Harry Gill once said, 'How do you know where you're going if you don't know where you've been?'"

Gill, groundskeeper for the Milwaukee Brewers, was at the meeting that essentially began STMA in 1981 at the Muehlebach Hotel in Kansas City. Dick Ericson, groundskeeper for the Minnesota Twins and Vikings, the legendary George Toma from Kansas City, and Dr. Bill Daniels, from Purdue University, joined Gill. Toma credits Kent Kurtz with assisting greatly in the initial organization of STMA.

"In the 1967 I met Dr. Daniels as a student in one of his classes," Kurtz says. "I admired the man as my mentor.

"The first STMA meeting was at Purdue's Midwest Turf Conference in March 1981. Dr. Daniels was the first executive director and Erik Madison, Jr., of the National Institute on Park & Grounds Management was chosen Secretary," says Kurtz. "Seed money from the association enabled me to eventually begin a trade show and educational sessions here on the West Coast."

We asked Kurtz what he shares with students about his long history with STMA and the turf industry. "I tell them to treat people the way you want to be treated," he says. "And that when buying anything, whether it's seed, fertilizer, equipment, you only get what you pay for. Work hard and offer to assist your colleagues and peers when they need help to learn."

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President's Message

Change is in your hands



MIKE TRIGG
CSFM

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waukeganparks.org

Change is in your hands—literally with this new edition of *SportsTurf* magazine and with the opportunities that the STMA Conference will present to you in a few days. Change has also been the rule, rather than the exception during 2005 for the STMA.

There is a saying, "If you aren't changing, you're standing still." That means if you are standing still, you are not advancing or improving. Change is good for business, good for professionals, and it is particularly important to the sports turf management world. We can no longer solve new problems with old solutions, but must embrace change, and use all opportunities to improve our profession and ourselves.

As STMA members, we rely on *SportsTurf* magazine to bring new ideas and innovations to help us with our daily management challenges. Inside you will find more information, more research, more peer-authored articles, more applicable features and the latest in new products and technology. We listened when you told us you didn't like the tabloid size and we think the new size will be a welcome change.

The 17th Annual Conference and Exhibition is upon us, and its 58 educational sessions offer tremendous opportunity for change. You'll see new technology and learn new ideas and how to apply those innovations. No where else will you find such a rich offering of athletic field-specific education to help you do your job better. In addition to the formal education, be sure to take advantage of the informal networking opportunities.

Change has been the "status quo" as our new association headquarters staff has been implementing the 2005 STMA Strategic Plan. Highlights include: increasing publication of our on-line membership newsletter; engaging a large number of members through committee service; breaking conference and exhibition attendance records; creating a Membership Directory; developing and implementing a long-range conference site selection plan; and meeting operational and budget expectations. It has indeed been a year of change.

Looking ahead to 2006, I see more change as we position the association as a key organization in the world of sports and the sports turf manager as the person crucial to the success of every athletic facility. We plan to use member surveys, qualitative research and one-on-one interactions with members and employers to gain a 360-degree perspective for the profession.

Best wishes for a prosperous New Year and one that is full of change!

Mike Trigg

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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,

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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.