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HARRY GILL

Harry Gill, founder of the Sports Turf Managers Association and head groundskeeper for the Milwaukee Brewers, died at his home on October 25. The highly respected, 69-year-old Gill planned to retire on November 1 and serve as a consultant for the Brewers. In January, he was honored as Man Of The Year by Golf & sports-TURF.

Gabe Paul Jr., the Brewers' vice president of operations, hired Gill in 1975 to improve conditions at Milwaukee County Stadium. The stadium's playing field had been considered one of the worst in baseball. During the 1974 winter meetings, baseball players gave the stadium the "Booby Prize." Under Gill's care, it became recognized as one of baseball's better fields. Due to its excellent condition, the field was used for filming the motion picture "Major League" in 1989. Gill also managed the field for the Green Bay Packers.

In transforming Milwaukee County Stadium, the former golf course superintendent contacted other stadium groundskeepers and university turf specialists to discover the tricks of maintaining stadium playing surfaces, not just for baseball and football, but for concerts and other special events.

Among his closest advisors were Dick Ericson with the Minnesota Twins, Joe Mooney with the Boston Red Sox, Barney Barron at San Francisco's Candlestick Park, Pat Santarone with the Baltimore Orioles, Don Marshall at Anaheim Stadium, Dale Sandin at Miami's Orange Bowl, George Toma with the Kansas City Royals, and Roger Bossard at Chicago's Comiskey Park. Gill spent hours on the phone with fellow groundskeepers, learning old techniques and developing new ones.

"There were no standards to follow back then, just vague guidelines," recalls Ericson. "If your team won on the road and lost at home, the coaches and players put a lot of heat on you. Groundskeepers used tricks to give their teams the advantage. Harry thought everyone should know what those tricks were, to make the game fair for the groundskeeper as well as his team."

Gill was instrumental in convincing Dr. William Daniel at Purdue University to offer sports turf management sessions during the Midwest Turf Conference. He also succeeded in persuading leading groundskeepers to speak at the conference. Attendance at the sessions demonstrated a

groundskeepers at stadiums, colleges, high schools, and parks.

The demand for information was not satisfied by one conference a year. Gill and his peers were constantly answering questions from groundskeepers over the phone. One Christmas, he polled his friends regarding the creation of an association for sports turf managers. They responded unanimously in favor of such a group, and the Sports Turf Managers Association was formed in 1981.



Gill spent the last few years building a new spring training center for the Brewers in Chandler, AZ, and preparing for a proposed new stadium for the club in Milwaukee.

Throughout his career he generously gave of his time and guidance to students seeking to become sports turf managers. In recognition of Gill's contributions to education, the STMA established a scholarship fund in his name. Those wishing to make gifts in his memory have been asked to make them to the Harry Gill Turf Scholarship.

Gill is survived by his wife, Mary, and six children.

"Harry was loyal to his friends and organization," said Bud Selig, chief executive officer of the Brewers, during the eulogy at the funeral attended by more than 200 people.

"Dad got the ball rolling for everyone in the sports turf industry," stated longtime friend Mike Schiller. "It's now up to us to keep his dream alive."