Mark Barthelmie, the powerhouse behind Risboro' Turf, is quite unlike the accepted notion of a typical executive. For a start, you would be hard pushed to find him dressed in the archetypal uniform of the rising yuppie - the Yves St Laurent suit and the nifty silk tie. I'll grant you he's got a smart suit - I've seen him wearing it - but he's much more at ease dressed casually, more in character as the boss who at the drop of a hat will scamper off to stage a convincing machinery demo in the middle of a fairway, ever at ease and easy to be with as 'one of the boys'.

For weeks I'd been chasing an interview, my plans thwarted by his being in America 'on business' and relieved to be at last meeting the man who had proved so hard to nail down. I arrived at the company headquarters, a nifty, button-bright, purpose-built location in rural Buckinghamshire complete with its own green acres of testing ground, to be greeted by Mark's co-director Richard Taylor with the classic put-down, "Mark's out at the moment, hopes he won't be long - have a cup of tea!" Had Mark forgotten I was coming, I wondered, but within minutes he bustled into his office, a grin beaming from ear to ear, fresh from staging a demo. The smile told it all, and though I was too polite to ask the outcome I could tell it had been a resounding success. Yes, Mark Barthelmie is the sort who gets high on the scent of 'a deal' and never happier than when face to face with his prospect, convincing him that he's got the answer to a particular problem.

The walls of Mark's office tell a tale of their own, emblazoned with plaques and plinths in recognition of Risboro' Turf as trailblazers. There are 'Dealer of the Year' and 'Distributor of the Year' awards by the number, manufacturing and trade association accolades galore - all declaring the company as one that gets off its butt and performs! The casual observer could not fail but to be impressed.

Unconventional is the word that springs most readily to mind, for I learned that Mark had combined his 'business' jaunt to the GCSAA show at Anaheim with anything but a conventional pleasure trip - to Las Vegas with Lynn, his fiancee of some three years standing, followed by their taking a short hop in a stretch limousine to one of the dozens of 'wedding chapels'...

### THE ANSWER TO YOUR SUMMER AERATION PROBLEMS

**The RTS 'Sarel Type' Roller**

A pedestrian model is also available

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The Nikken fitted with its unique hover hood gives total flexibility and freedom of movement, giving a very neat finish to your bunker slopes and banks.

The operator can either mow from inside the bunker mowing uphill or mow from the top reaching down into the bunker, both achieved with total ease.

Flying sand is no problem with Nikken due to all sensitive components being protected and out of harm's way on operator's back, which only weights 12lbs.

Edges can be quickly and neatly trimmed by removing the hood, attaching a small 4-tooth blade and finally rotating the handle through 90 degrees.

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**Revving Up**
Betrothed left as fully paid up
later our bachelor hero and his
tal, there to pay out a few dollars
members of the 'just married' club,
boro' Turf had been formed about
for a celebratory glass of soothing
six years ago by him as a direct
result of his involvement in his
ery development and modification,
other agencies on board, building
 up a sound business which today
plies - and services with great
fficacy - a complete range of
ine turfcare products.
That is the secret of success for
ish efficiency with which they sell and service, for
Mark believes that service is the
key to their acceptance in the mar-
ket place. The business is split
between golf courses (they call on
ey greenkeeper in the three
counties and count on something
like 98% as customers) and local
authorities, together with an
creasing growth in the domestic
arket, having won the Honda
agency from a fierce competition.
The company has recently
r moved into manufacturing, rising
to the bait of numerous requests to
upply something similar to the old
attison/Sarel roller for greens
eration, but a machine-mounted
version that could be hauled
h the business - fine turf, work-
shop, stores, on the road, machin-
ey development and modification,
sales and general administration
and the setting up their first com-
puter system - a perfect training
ground that left little to chance...

Bolstered by his new found
administrative skills and with the
 growing realisation that the agri-
cultural business was running on
borrowed time, with farming going
through a transitional period, Mark
saw the need, as he put it, to "look
after his own interests". At the time
Risboro' Agricultural had been
modifying Ryan turfcutters for
Marshall Concessionaires, and by
applying the principles of service,
back-up and having spares on the
shelf, together with making the tur-
cutters work efficiently on hill and
dale rather than on flat land, Mark
used his contacts to gain the new
firm's first agency: Risboro' Turf
becoming synonymous with Ryan
in Bucks, Berks and Oxon. The rest
is history, for the company wrote
own success story and other
agencies followed. Winning the
Jacobsen agency was another mile-
stone end it is with some pride that
Mark looks back now to those days
in the early 1980s when he became
one of only two original Jacobsen
dealers (now area distributors) to
maintain an unbroken connection
to the present day.

On the road covering BB&O sin-
gle-handed, Mark soon became
aware that there were bigger fish
to catch, a customer demand wait-
ing to be met for tractors, hollow-
tiners, tee mowers and the like.

Soon Iseki and Beaver were added
and gradually the company took
other agencies on board, building
up a sound business which today
plies - and services with great
fficacy - a complete range of
ine turfcare products.

Mark trained in agri-
ened in innovation
ial, a company selling farming
aceutical skills and with the
- in a direct firing line from manu-

Ron's, all 1340 powered.
ne machinery specialists for an infor-
mal exchange of views". He continued,
"I've always thought it right to
put something back into the heart of
our business - the greenkeeper -
which readily explains why I'm a
Gold Key supporter. It is an indica-
tion of our absolute commitment to
them. Finally, as a further commit-
tment to improving professionalism,
we have plans to open a training
room in the winter for greenkeep-
ners to spend four or five hours with
us and perhaps join us for lunch,
give them a chance to gain hands-
ont experience with state-of-the-art
machinery - maybe on how to set
up the latest cylinder mower or
groomer - and meet local reps and
machinery specialists for an infor-
mail exchange of views".

I've never met a businessman that
at some time didn't have a rub
thump or an irritation that
ecessary. I've always input from staff and
clients alike and we make a point
of asking our customers what they
like (or don't like) about our busi-
ness. The BS5750 has proved a
great sharpener, getting effect sys-
tems into place for us to cope with
constructive criticism - in truth, we
get very few complaints and I'm
planning to keep it that way!"

In these 'Gold Key' interviews the
stock question that often throws a
subject is 'what makes you tick?'
It's surprising how many business
 tycoons ramble on at length about
their industry, never at a loss for
words, yet at the thought of talking
about themselves they become
tongue-tied. Not so our Mr B, who
eyes positively lit up as without
hesitation he replied, "I love my
motorbikes, they keep me sane!' I
said he was unconventional, and to
prove the point he went into a
reverie about the joys of owning
and riding not just any old
machine, but his beloved 1991
Harley-Davidson Sturgess, a giant
of a machine which is his way of
blowing away the cobwebs of
everyday life. Not content to be a
'biker' alone, he's influenced other
in the company to follow suit or
did they convince him? - and the
place is awash with gawling and
delicious two-wheeled mon-
sters. I drooled over three stunning
Harley's in Mark's garage, his own
Lynn's (finished in a strident shock-
ping pink), and co-director
Richard's, all 1340 powered.

Together they like nothing better
than to ride to mainland Europe for
the annual Harley 'trash', their
destination this year being Milan.
Mark's "spoke wheel" connection
goes back to the old days of EIGGA
- with an involvement in section
affairs through local secretary
Schmitt. Enamoured by the sight of
a huge Jacobsen trophy on Seve's
mantle, Mark learned that it was
competed for by greenkeepersegionally and nationally, the
overall winner going to the USA. As
a Jacobsen dealer Mark sought
involvement; and in splitting the
event away from being a routine
section meeting they've sponsored
a BB&O tournament ever since,
even though the national event is
no more. "To sum it up", Mark told
me, "I've always thought it right to
put something back into the heart of
our business - the greenkeeper -
which readily explains why I'm a
Gold Key supporter. It is an indica-
tion of our absolute commitment to
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