For most people, their 40th birthday was, or will be, a big deal because it’s a significant milestone in life. A 40th birthday for a broadleaf herbicide is a much bigger deal, though, considering the many pesticide product improvements made throughout the years. PBI/Gordon Corp. is celebrating such a milestone this year with Trimec.

“Trimec defies most product lifecycles,” says Doug Obermann, professional turf and ornamental products manager for Kansas City-based PBI/Gordon. “I attribute its longevity to a lot of hard work and a little luck. It’s a household name in the industry.”

The herbicide has treated about 97.8 million acres through the years — and counting.

Obermann, who worked with Trimec for 21 years, says there are 12 versions of Trimec products on the professional side of the market, some of which are sold through formulators with liquids and fertilizers. The ratio of active ingredients — 2,4-D, MCCP and dicamba — varies to fit the niche of weed markets in the North and South, as well as price points (high, medium and low). Trimec Plus, which came to market 22 years ago, includes a fourth ingredient, MSMA.

“We have a synergistic effect with the three active ingredients,” says Everett Mealman, PBI/Gordon’s chairman of the board.

“Trimec technology is based on two secrets — the way the active ingredients are reacted and the special inerts in the formulation,” Obermann says.

A history lesson
In the late 1960s, Skip Skaptason, who worked for Sherwin Williams Cos. of Canada (Green Cross Products), was approached by the people who invented Trimec. They told Skaptason they wanted to introduce Trimec in the United States. Additionally, Skaptason was on a local civic committee with Mealman, who was PBI/Gordon’s executive vice president at the time and mayor of a Kansas City suburb.

“Skip obtained the rights to the patent, and depended on PBI/Gordon
Doug Obermann attributes Trimec’s success to a little luck and a lot of hard work.
Continued from page 41

Eventually though, post-patent products started replacing Trimec.

“Many superintendents, including me, started using other products after the Trimec patent expired,” Queen says. “But I’ve always questioned whether those other products were better than Trimec. The control was darn near 100 percent.”

Keith Pegg, now superintendent of the Zama Golf Club in Japan, used Trimec for the first time in 1970 when he was employed by SunRiver properties in Oregon as an assistant superintendent.

“We saved so much work in weed removal,” he says. “I had never seen anything like it and was impressed. We used it every year I was at SunRiver.”

In 1974, Pegg left for a superintendent position at Fircrest Golf Club in Washington, where he remained for the next 20 years and used Trimec. Today, Pegg uses Trimec products less now because of their lack of availability in Asia.

Bob Belfield, superintendent at Kettle Hills Golf Course in Richfield, Wis., has been in the business for 42 years, 23 of those at Kettle Hills. He was 15 when he started applying herbicides. Belfield used Trimec and Trimec Bentgrass Formula for about six years at the golf course where he worked before Kettle Hills.

“I remember when it first came out — I was thrilled not to have to handle all those products that now came as one,” he says. “It worked well.”

Mark Claburn, golf course superintendent at Tierra Verde Golf Club in Arlington, Texas, first used Trimec in the early 1990s while on staff at Barton Creek. He was spot-spraying weeds. “Trimec always provided good control, and the knock down was quick,” he says.

Despite its age, Trimec isn’t done evolving. PBI/Gordon, an employee-owned company founded in 1947, is developing more variations on Trimec to fill a market need. Those new products will debut during the next two years. Incidentally, Trimec’s three active ingredients are also used in newer combination products, such as SpeedZone (carfentrazone-ethyl), PowerZone (carfentrazone-ethyl) and SpeedZone Southern (carfentrazone-ethyl), as well as Surge (sulfentrazone) and Q4 (sulfentrazone).

Not many herbicides have lasted as long as Trimec, Queen says. “Many other turf products have come and gone,” he adds. “It’s a pretty special formulation.”