

1987-2007
CELEBRATING
★ 20 YEARS ★

STA Member Profile

STA Past Presidents Paul Turner, G.C. Duke Equipment & Andrew Gaydon, Vanden Bussche Irrigation

PAUL TURNER G.C. DUKE EQUIPMENT LTD.

1. You were president of the Sports Turf Association from 2002-2003. What was your role in the turfgrass industry at that time? Are you still involved in the industry? How?

I have been involved in the turf industry for over 20 years; the last 15 have been with G.C. Duke Equipment and I was with George Bannerman for three years prior to that. I have always been on the sales side of the industry and look forward to many more years of selling.

2. What is the biggest challenge in your job?

Selling is not the easiest game in town. We are constantly searching and traveling looking for new tools and products that will hopefully make the turfgrass professional's job easier and more productive.

3. What is the most satisfying part, what made the job worthwhile for you?

I really enjoy the group of people who are involved in the industry. They are, in general, very easy to get along with and over the years I have developed some good friendships.

4. What is the biggest misconception about your job?

People think that the life of a salesman is easy. I think they might be surprised if they ever came over to this side; there are lots of headaches and stresses which come along with quotas and budgets, lots of long days and believe me trade shows are not what they think!!

5. What is your educational/employment background?

All my education is from the across the pond in the UK. After completing school, I attended a small college in the quaint Town of Evesham where I completed my apprenticeship in the horticultural engineering field.

7. What do you enjoy doing outside of the workplace? Hobbies, favourite past times?

I love to play golf but the number of rounds played seems to keep decreasing with each year. Sports are a favourite of mine and I keep close tabs on soccer and rugby in the UK. We are also kept busy in



6. Tell us about your family.

The Turner Clan are all back in the UK. We do try to meet up every year or two in a country that is convenient for all of us. I will be getting married in the later part of 2007 to a great lady (Amy Carter) and she has two children, Samantha (13) and Steven (11). We all currently live in Burlington, Ontario.

the hockey season with resident shuttle services to and from the arena for games and practices.

Above: Past Presidents Andrew Gaydon (left) and Paul Turner at the recent STA Field Day in Dundas. As part of our 20th anniversary coverage, we are profiling STA's past presidents.

8. How has the industry changed and in what direction(s) would you like to see the industry, as a whole, move towards?

The industry has gone through some serious changes over the last 20 years. The reduction of pesticides has probably most influenced my business. The increase in weed populations meant the death of the reel mower in parks systems, so the now common rotary mower has changed the way grass is cut. With less spraying, you now require more cultural practices so more seeders, aerators, top dressers, etc. are sold. As we move into the total ban phase, what will happen now? For all of us who remember the Ottawa debacle from many years ago and Waterloo not too long ago, what are our cities going to look like in the next 5-10 years? Are people going to accept or revolt against local politicians when their town or city is reduced to a giant weed and dandelion patch? Only time will tell!

9. What do you consider to be the biggest benefit of being a member of the STA?

Being a member opens you up to a great network of people from all across the province and other parts of Canada. As this networking grows, people not only share valid information but friendships are also made along the way.

10. What would your advice be for current and future presidents of the STA?

I think we need to stay focused on what our membership wants to see and hear. I believe we should continue to grow the profile of the association with some strategic alliances. I would also like to see us

work closely with the University of Guelph to see if we can continue on with some of the great things that Dr. Bob Sheard has done and see if we can find another visionary like him who can help sustain the sports turf profession.

ANDREW GAYDON VANDEN BUSSCHE IRRIGATION

1. You were president of the Sports Turf Association from 2004-2005. What was your role in the turfgrass industry at that time? Are you still involved in the industry? How?

In 1993, Marc Vanden Bussche started the golf and turf divisions for his company, which his father had started 40 years earlier for the agricultural industry. Vanden Bussche Irrigation (VBI) is a well known name and I was proud to be invited to manage this exciting new opportunity. Having been a manager of a nursery supply company before that, I knew the potential for turf irrigation in the growing Ontario. VBI is a design, consult and supply company to all types of irrigation and watering systems. Turf grass, whether on golf courses or sports fields, is a very important part of the irrigation industry as in Canada today.

2. What is the biggest challenge in your job?

The biggest challenge in our industry is finding qualified and experienced people to advise our customer base, who are usually experienced, qualified and demanding. Most of our customers are grass experts and rely on us to give good irrigation advice. VBI tries to employ the best people and guarantee them a full-

time professional career. We have a good reputation for "looking after" and therefore retaining our staff. Training is a very large part of an employer's responsibility and this helps to occupy and improve staff. Another challenge that we have in the turf irrigation industry is that there are so many good products available to assist the user and owner to improve efficiency, reduce water use, and improve the quality of turf, however, there is so much pressure on the installer to "go cheap" and "do it like we have always done it," that these innovative products are usually overlooked.

3. What is the most satisfying part, what made the job worthwhile for you?

Working with VBI allows me to be involved with and contribute to all aspects of the commercial, municipal and agricultural industries. The turf industry (as well as specializing in irrigation) is to me very satisfying because it's ever changing and improving. Sports turf has become a necessary part of our lives either to play sports on or just to enjoy sitting on the sidelines with a picnic. Membership in the STA has allowed me to rub shoulders with people who really know – and they say "knowledge is power."

4. What is your educational/employment background?

Before Vanden Bussche and Canada, I was educated in England with an Agricultural Engineer Degree and then went to Central Africa where I was farming sugar cane and citrus fruit for three years. While there, I did a great deal of travelling around this fascinating and marvelous continent. All irrigation was flood irrigation, which is



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extravagant and wasteful but in areas of the world that lack engineered products, this is the only option. On returning to England, I was involved with the marketing of combine harvesters, a big jump from sugar cane, however for 12 years I had the opportunity to travel all over Europe and experience and witness all types of farming. In 1985, I emigrated to Canada with my family to work for Massey Ferguson. I had quite a shock when within three months of my arrival, they announced that they were closing their operations in Canada.

5. Tell us about your family.

I have two children, a son (28) and a daughter (26) both married and living within two miles of me in the beautiful City of Burlington, so I am very lucky.

6. What do you enjoy doing outside of the workplace? Hobbies, favourite past times?

We are a family who all enjoy the game of rugby and my son, son-in-law and I all

play with enthusiasm, although I struggle to walk for 3-4 days after each game (the youngsters, on the other hand, can manage all levels of sports). We also enjoy casual cycling and southern Ontario has many excellent cycle paths to enjoy. When possible and when the Canadian season allows, I enjoy gardening.

7. How has the industry changed and in what direction(s) would you like to see the industry, as a whole, move towards? What do you consider to be the biggest benefit of being a member of the STA?

Membership in the STA has allowed me to keep abreast with the turf industry and pass this information onto my peers and customers. The turf and irrigation industry has dramatically changed over the last 10-20 years through education and innovation. We are much more aware and responsible about saving our precious water and therefore reduce the waste through better irrigation. Waste can happen through over watering or through poor

sprinkler choice and setting. We still have a long way to go as many property owners are motivated by green turf rather than healthy turf. The publishing of the *Athletic Field Construction Manual* will help to guide users to a better understanding of their fields and their corresponding maintenance. ♦

CONTRIBUTIONS WELCOME

Contact Lee Huether at the STA office if you are interested in contributing to the *Sports Turf Manager*. We appreciate feature-length articles, column ideas and newsworthy items. Updates on innovative research or equipment are also welcomed (as well as photographs). This is a great way to both support your professional association and enhance your resume! Note that annual advertisers are allowed to publish one news release per year.

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