

HAPPY FIVE-OH, TURFCO

The first mechanical topdresser celebrates 50 years of consistent spreading. BY SETH JONES

IT MIGHT SEEM hard to imagine, but 50 years ago, topdressing was done by a laborer armed with a shovel. He'd start on one end of a property and pitch sand until the entire area received a layer.

By the end of the day, the consistency of the amount of sand being spread was, well, lacking.

Enter the mechanical topdresser. The first Mete-R-Matic — with wooden slats and a wooden hopper — was shipped by Turfco in September of 1961.

A lot has changed in 50 years for Turfco. Now the company offers riding

applicators, heavy-duty spreaders and advanced edgers.

But that doesn't mean the 1961 Mete-R-Matic is totally out of style.

"We still get calls for the old wooden machines wanting to know if we have replacement parts," laughs Scott Kinkead, executive vice president.

The warranty pool

Turfco Manufacturing, founded by John Kinkead, is a family-owned and operated company. (John Kinkead's father, Robert Stanard Kinkead, founded National Mower in 1919.) John's two sons, George, president and Scott, executive vice president, have been working with the company 26 and 20 years, respectively.

The family atmosphere transforms into a team atmosphere from the front office to the factory. That's because



The first powered topdresser in the industry was sold by Turfco. This Mete-R-Matic was bought by Christina Lakes Golf Course near Grand Forks, British Columbia, in 1962.

employees at the facility are driven to make machines that won't break down. The better the machines, the better their bank accounts.

Every year the company establishes what they call "the warranty pool." The pool is money dedicated to repairing equipment still under the company's two-year warranty.

At the end of each year, the money that isn't spent from the pool gets distributed to the staff in the factory. So the fewer machines returned for service, the bigger the warranty pool check.

"It gives them more incentive to do good work," John Kinkead says. Scott adds, "Quality is important — operators expect this equipment to last."

What it all comes down to for the company is the desire to help people do their jobs better.

"These guys are running their own businesses," Scott Kinkead says. "We're making products that are fundamental to them making money. We're involved with helping guys grow their business. That's pretty fun." **LM**

Seth Jones is editor-in-chief of Landscape Management's sister publication, Golfdom.



John Kinkead, CEO of Turfco, and Scott Kinkead, executive vice president of Turfco.

In honor of their 50th anniversary, Turfco is giving away 10 Apple iPads and a grand prize of a WideSpin 1540 EC. To enter the drawings, visit www.turfco.com/50years.