

# 40th Anniversary and the Red Rider

by Peter Vandercook

In commemoration of their fortieth anniversary, Illinois Lawn Equipment donated a Smithco Red Rider to the Illinois Fire Safety Alliance. The vehicle will be used at their burn camp (a camp run by volunteers, most of whom are fire fighters, and designed to offer a camping experience to young burn victims and to let them inter-react with other children with problems similar to their own).

The Red Rider, which will be used to transport children, children in wheel chairs, and to perform other jobs around the camp, was donated in the names of the Orland Fire Protection District, the Orland Professional Fire Fighters Association, Local Number 2754, Illinois Lawn Equipment, Inc. and Smithco, Inc. For their part, off-duty Orland fire fighters handled the parking and the parking transportation functions at the Illinois Lawn celebration using the donated Red Rider and an additional Red Rider.

The burn camp is located at YMCA Camp Duncan on Highway 12 in Ingleside, Illinois.

The Smithco Red Rider utility vehicle was chosen as the parking lot transportation vehicle for this open house for many reasons. One of those reasons is because of the important role it has played in Illinois Lawn history. The Red Rider was originally known as the West Point T-3 Truck when it was introduced to the turf industry in 1964. When Ted Smith left West Point in 1966 to form Smithco, the T-3 Truck changed its name to Red Rider, joined Ted at Smithco and became the first product in the Smithco product line.

Illinois Lawn has been the exclusive area distributor for this vehicle since 1964, and it was the only utility vehicle we sold for some years.

The fondest memory we have about the Red Rider was the role it played in our 1970 Field Days. The Field Days were held on the Rafacz Sod Farm sod field located across from Illinois Lawn's location at 14750 LaGrange Road. This site is now known as Orland Square Mall. It started to rain two days before the two-day event. It rained, rained and rained some more. It rained for two days before the event (during set up) and then on and off during the event.

Guests registering at the Illinois Lawn building put plastic bags on their shoes, rubber bands on their ankles (to hold the bags on) and then they go into the back of a Red Rider which then built up speed in the Illinois Lawn driveway, shot across Route 45, through a water logged swale on a path of sand and straw, to the higher land in the middle of the field where the tents and equipment were set up.

It is important to add that Route 45 was a much steeper, two-lane road in those days and that we did stop traffic for the crossings.

In spite of the weather, the field days were successful. The Red Riders were an important part of that success and were certainly the talk of the day.

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"Where Meadow Goes,  
the Water Flows"

(Illinois Lawn's 40th)

Illinois Lawn Equipment celebrated 40 years of service to the turfgrass industry with an open house on September 14th and 15th.

The gala affair, held at Illinois Lawn's location in Orland Park, featured a history (or memorabilia) tent and six tents of equipment in the food tent. Featured were Blue Point Oysters on the half shell (1600 were consumed), chicken and beef or pork, salads, vegetables and desserts. Lunch and dinner were served on Wednesday and lunch on Thursday.

Approximately 650 turfgrass professionals attended and celebrated with the Illinois Lawn team and Illinois Lawn's suppliers. Also present were many retired superintendents.



From the left — Jill Loritz, Bob Johnson, Rick Johnson, Mark Johnson and Chris Johnson



Pete Vandercook prepares to chauffeur Carl Hopphan, Mark Kowaliczko (on left) and Todd Hopphan (back to camera)



From the left — Bob Johnson, Tom DiGuido, Frank Ross and Buz Didier



From the left — Luke Strojny, Ernie Corsi, Wayne Trometer and Greg Thalman



Bull Sheet Editor checks out the oysters



Bob Johnson, Al and Adolph Bertucci at the oyster bar



Al Bertucci in the chow line