



A Slice of American History

By Lori Ward Bocher

"My life's dull and boring and I'd like to keep it that way," jokes Terry Ward, advertising and sales manager for the Milorganite Division of the Milwaukee Metropolitan Sewerage District.

"Oh, no," I counter. "This is one of the more interesting interviews I've done for the Personality Profile column."

"Why?" he asks.

I can't put my finger on it at the time, so I say something about his outgoing personality and varied career. But the next day, as I organize my thoughts to begin writing this article, it hits me. Terry Ward is a slice of American history. He lived through, or was affected by, many of the major events of post World War II America.

Born in 1946, his father was a World War II veteran who came home from the war, got a good job with the Kohler Company, and worked there "for a long, long time," as Terry puts it. At that time in America's history, once you found a good job, you kept it — and it kept you.

Although he grew up as a "city kid" in Plymouth, Wis., Terry had close connections to agriculture, as did many of his peers at the time. "Literally all of my relatives, my uncles on both sides of the family, were in the ag business," he recalls, adding that he spent many childhood days working on farms.

A child of the stable and prosperous 1950's, Terry graduated from Plymouth High School in 1964 just as America was entering a period of great unrest. He chose to go to college at the University of Wisconsin-Madison.

But Terry's reasons for being in college weren't strictly academic. "Let's be candid. I was basically studying draft deferment at the time," he admits. "I was going to be in the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences, where I still feel I can hang my hat. But I was studying 2S. I was trying to beat the draft like everyone else. I had no interest in the military."



Terry Ward

While in college, he also was a member of the UW football team. "That's how bad we were," he says about the fact that he made the team. He was not a regular, but a spot player.

"And this is where the plot thickens," Terry continues. "I finally got my grade point up to the point where I could declare a major. Then I ruined my knee in football. I blew my right knee absolutely apart."

After the injury and surgery, he dropped out of school. "My leg was so far gone that getting around was difficult," he remembers. By dropping out of school, he also lost his 2S draft classification. "The people who put my leg back together said, 'They're never going to draft you with a knee like this.' I can't tell you how wrong they were."

He was drafted late in 1966, just as the war in Viet Nam was escalating. An appeal was unsuccessful. "I went through basic training first, and then advanced training. And then I volunteered for officer candidate school thinking, 'Look, if I'm going to be

involved in the war, I might as well do it in the right fashion,'" Terry points out.

He was commissioned as a 2nd Lieutenant in the infantry. Then he volunteered for jump school, or parachute training, and the ranger program. "I managed to zip through both of those and get myself assigned to special forces, the Green Berets.

"I ended up getting assigned to Viet Nam," he continues. "Not in special forces, but in an infantry unit. And later I commanded a special forces 'A' team." At this point in the interview, he sighs. There's a long pause. "This is what I don't want to talk about. There have been a couple of things that I endured that shall not be repeated. They're not thought about."

Being nine years younger than Terry and a high school student when the war ended, I've only seen Viet Nam in news reports, movies and documentaries. Terry lived it. I'm curious about his experiences, but I don't want to press him.

"Just one question," I say. "Was it anything like all the movies that have been made?"

"I have not seen one. I do not read the books. There are certain things that I would like to purge," he solemnly answers.

"Suffice it to say that I am the custodian, thanks to the people who worked with me, of a silver star and two bronze stars," he says. "I also got three purple hearts. You've got to get shot to get those, so those are mine! But the other awards, they belong to the kids. They don't necessarily belong to me."

When he was released from the Army, Terry says that he looked like a cross between Ironside and the man in the Hathaway shirt ads who wears an eye patch. "I was in a wheel chair and had limited sight in one eye. This wasn't fun," he says in a high and shaky voice.

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"I was hurt bad," he continues. "But not in comparison to those people who were maimed and disfigured for life. I recovered after some time. I'm good as new, just about."

It would be an understatement to say that the war changed his outlook on life. "So long as they aren't shooting at us, so long as they aren't too close, that makes for a pretty good day here!" he says. "I think that's why I'm always upbeat. I know the worst days are behind me. Every day is a good day. Believe me, I know what a bad day is."

He knew he wanted to go back to school after returning from the war, but he decided not to enroll at Madison again. "Given the Madison campus and what was going on there politically, I didn't think I would fit in," he says of the anti-war riots that were prevalent at the time.

Terry wasn't looking for more confrontation in his life—the kind he might have found on the Madison campus. "All of the chips that I had on my shoulder were knocked off during Viet Nam," he says. "I came back a changed person. If I had gone there looking for a fight, I was more than accommodated. I had seen enough awful things that made my whole outlook change. Instead of courting confrontation, I said that I would have no more of it."

So he enrolled at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee where he eventually earned a business degree. While in school, he also started working for the Murphy Products Division of the Schlitz Brewing Company. "At the time, Schlitz was in the process of trying to find an outlet for all the brewers grains and other by-products that they had," Terry explains.

"It's kind of like the Milorganite story," he continues. "You've got something left over. What can you do with it?" The people at Murphy Products developed "Maltlage," a trademarked product that was drier and had a longer shelf life than wet brewers grains. It was sold mostly to cattle farmers.

"That job really was a lot of fun," says Terry, adding that it used his agricultural background and his business training. He traveled around the country—wherever Schlitz had a brewery—to help create a local market for Maltlage.

With less than 10 years at this job, Terry was hit with another American

phenomenon: a corporate buy out. "The sun set on this whole operation when Stroh's bought Schlitz and said, 'We're in the beer business. We're not in the by-products business,'" Terry recalls. And so he was out of a job.

But soon he had a job with Lindsay Brothers, a wholesale distributor of agricultural implements and, later, outdoor power equipment. "When I started at Lindsay the ag economy was on the up side," Terry remembers. "Business was just incredible."

However, Terry left the company after being contacted by Engineering Products, manufacturer of the Power King tractor. "They asked me to come on board and get the business kind of cranked up and turned around," Terry recalls.

"I walked in there and everything looked just delightful and dandy," he continues. "And then suddenly the dollar and the yen started meeting head on and it became far more reasonable to import the Japanese rice-type tractor."

"The Japanese had a large selection of small tractors that found a niche with American sundown type farmers and others who needed small tractors," Terry continues. "Their tractors were diesel and had hydraulics, 4-wheel drive and power assists. We were sitting with a plain old gas tractor with manual transmission. And they were coming in several thousand dollars less than we were. We were dead. We were dead." The victim of Japanese competition, just like many American companies during the 1980's.

Again, Terry landed on his feet when he found a job as advertising manager for the Milorganite Division of the Milwaukee Metropolitan Sewerage District. Since then, he has become the sales manager, too.

"I came here right after that business with ALS, or Lou Gehrig's disease and the flap about the heavy metals in Milorganite," he says, adding that a physician linked Milorganite with three San Francisco 49ers who acquired Lou Gehrig's disease.

"His allegations proved to be completely unfounded," Terry points out. "Milorganite was woefully maligned. In some cases, we're still living with the residual today."

Terry estimates that about 40 percent of Milorganite is sold to golf courses, either straight or in blends. With the professional market, a lot of emphasis is put on helping customers find answers to their problems. "The older you get, the less you know, but the more you know good," he says. "The more you know good is who you know and where you can go to get the right answers. In the professional market, that's kind of what I do."

When I ask Terry if it's easy to sell Milorganite, he quickly responds with a resounding "No! Number 1, it's the most misunderstood product in the whole wide world," he says. "A lot of people say, 'Well, I'd use it if it weren't human fecal material.' Well, it's not."

"Sewage sludge, or bio solids as we now call it, is actually dried microscopic, unicellular animals and plants that are naturally occurring and that

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eat the food sources that are in the water," he explains. "What we do is squeeze the water out of them; continue to treat the water; take the rest that's left over, i.e. those dead bugs; heat them to 1200 degrees; and tada! You've got Milorganite!"

Another selling challenge is that some superintendents say the price is too high for the units of nitrogen it delivers. "If you look at just the nitrogen, that argument holds a lot of water," Terry admits. "But then you take a look at the iron in the product. It's chelated iron.

"I also fall back on our heritage and the fact that this product has worked," he continues. "It covers a lot of people's derrieres, quite frankly. We have been a good, dependable source of nutrients for golf turfgrass since 1926."

Terry reports that more and more municipalities are taking a long look at processing their sewage sludge and selling it as a dried fertilizer product. Some are already doing it. "But they don't have the sophisticated

process that we do," he adds. "That's not to knock their process. But they're not coming in with the type of expertise and background we have, nor the research and interchange that we have had with superintendents and with our distributors. They're coming in with this stuff that's black and granular and looks like Milorganite and is so much cheaper. But it does not perform the same."

Besides his work at Milorganite, Terry enjoys sitting on the board of directors of the Noer Turfgrass Research Foundation. With the turf industry becoming more technical, he's glad that the Noer Foundation "has done a lot to direct funds into projects and people who are definitely bettering the game of golf and turfgrass research in general.

"That's why I'm more than willing to spend the time on the board because we're doing the right thing here," Terry adds. "We've got some pretty big hitters who sit on that Noer Foundation board. It's been fun to be around those people. They are, with-

out a doubt, some of the leading people in the industry."

Outside of work, Terry has been spending a lot of time with the five children that he and his wife, Beverly, have raised. The children range in age from 29 to 20, with three of them still in college. Beverly, a respiratory therapist, is on medical leave from her job right now.

He and Beverly also spend time at their "little bitty farmette" between Elroy and Mauston, Wis. "I grow wildflowers and turkey and deer and a little bit of alfalfa," Terry points out. "But nothing that moos or bellows. I want to stay away from livestock." He does, however, enjoy hunting.

"When I was young and foolish I used to jump out of airplanes a lot, but I don't do that anymore," he says. "After 2,000 jumps I finally sold all my equipment."

Terry also was a marathon runner until a few years ago. "My best marathon time was 3:36 and small change," he says. "But my achilles tendon and I parted ways about



three-and-one-half years ago, so I don't run anymore. I gained a lot of weight and went through a lot of stress during that period."

Now his Number 1 avocation is golf. "It comes with the business," he says of the invitations he receives while calling on golf courses with Milorganite distributors. "When you're invited to play, when they have the courtesy to ask you, you should play with some degree of confidence," Terry says very seriously.

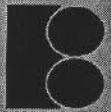
"I don't!" he laughs. "But I at least play well enough so that I don't go out and embarrass myself on a regular basis. We do have a good time."

Even though golf turf provides a good share of Terry's business, he sees beyond the grass itself. "Whether we know it or not, we're not in the grass business," he believes. "We're in the entertainment business. We provide people with some outstanding opportunities to talk about business or talk about nothing or just involve them-

selves in being outside for a little while. I think the game of golf is absolutely incredible as far as lifting cares for two-and-one-half to five hours.

"At Milorganite we're providing some awfully good people with an opportunity to grow some real nice grass so other people can get out there and forget about all the worries in their lives for a while," Terry concludes.

Given his history, Terry knows what it is to have worries and the need to forget about them for a while. 🏌️



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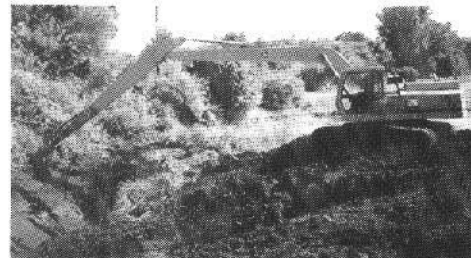
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