



Where Is He and What's He Doing Now?

By Lori Ward Bocher

He's moved into the same house three times. He previously was a third generation golf course superintendent. Since then he has worked for three different companies, and he has had three different positions with his current employer. Dean Musbach may be a one-of-a-kind guy, but, when it comes to his career, he seems to have an affinity with the number three.

Dean is currently turf sales manager for Reinders, Inc. Although this current title seems pretty straight forward, his career path to this point in his life has been anything but straight; it's been full of twists and turns, ups and downs.

"When Monroe called me to see if I'd agree to this article, I was flattered," Dean explains. "But then Monroe said, 'You know, Dean, we just have to know what the heck's going on with you. Are you in Milwaukee? Are you in Minocqua? Nobody really seems to understand what your position is. This would be a good way of letting everybody know what's going on with you.'"

But first, back to the beginning.

Family tradition...

Dean was born and raised on a golf course. And when he went to visit Grandma and Grandpa Musbach, that was also on a golf course. His grandfather, Frank, was superintendent at Bluemound Golf and Country Club in Wauwatosa at the time. And his father, Bob, was superintendent at North Shore Golf Club in Menasha.

"We literally lived on the golf course until I was 4 years old," Dean recalls. "We lived in a big old farmhouse right next to the shop. It was pretty typical in those days for the shop to be in an old barn and for the superintendent to live in the farmhouse. My grandpa did the same thing. He helped build Ozaukee Country Club and lived in the farmhouse near the barn. And when he went to Bluemound Country Club, he did the same thing."

Dean's grandfather, Frank, was a golf course superintendent for 55 years - 20 at Ozaukee and 35 at Bluemound. "They called him the straw boss in the early years," Dean explains. "He ran a team of horses. The team made a dollar a day and he made 50 cents. The worst part was, his father-in-law owned the horses!"

Dean has a plethora of memories about growing up on golf courses. "I could keep you on the phone for hours talking about memories of running around Bluemound with my cousins, hassling the night waterman," he says. But one of his earliest childhood memories comes from



Four generations of Musbachs - Bob, Frank and (a very young) Dean with Dean's new daughter Meghan.

MOMENTUM™

The Next Generation of Broadleaf Weed Control

A Premium Selective Herbicide Exclusively from
LESCO



- New, improved chemistry formulation combines TIPA 2,4-D, triclopyr and clopyralid acid for highly effective control with virtually no odor
- Fast acting - dandelions and clover curl within hours of application
- Better and broader spectrum weed control than most other popular broadleaf herbicides

Ask your sales representative about this great product exclusively from LESCO, or call 800-321-5325

LESCO®

LESCO is a registered trademark and Momentum is a trademark of LESCO Technologies, LLC

North Shore where his father worked. "After a big rain storm, there was an area next to the shop that was low and full of water and mud. I recall my older brother Jeff coaxed me in there. It was muck. Every time I tried to lift my foot out, my boot would stick in the mud. Jeff got out and was laughing at me while I'm standing there crying. My dad's assistant, Ralph Heckel, came in and saved me, picked me up and pulled me out, and carried me over to the house."

When Dean was 4 years old, his family moved out of the course-owned farmhouse into a house that still was near the course. "It was close enough that my dad would bring home a Cushman and go back to work that way, which I thought was pretty cool - driving down the highway or in the ditch with a Cushman," he says. "I have a lot of memories - sitting in back of the old F10's while guys were mowing fairways, or running around in a bunker after a big rain storm."

Summer jobs...

Dean's father transferred to North Hills Country Club in Menomonee Falls when Dean was 8 years old. Not surprisingly, Dean's first jobs were on his father's course. "I actually started working on the course when I was 12,"

Dean recalls. "North Hills has hosted the Vince Lombardi Memorial Golf Classic, and my first job was to put up and take down ropes that first year. Between 8th grade and my freshman year, I went to work for the grounds crew, primarily doing grunt work, earning my stripes by raking bunkers and trimming around trees."

He worked at the course every summer and after school when he wasn't running on the cross country team. Dean enjoyed his work on the course. "As a kid, you like earning the money," he relates. "But it was also a chance to get back together with my pals who were also working on the crew. It's a social thing."

Dean had no problems working for his father. "I think he was pretty fair with me," he says. "Sometimes when you're working for your father you're held to a higher standard. But he was pretty fair. He was fair to everyone in his crew. He was a good guy to work for. He was very clear about his expectations and his process; as long as you did your jobs the way he wanted them done, he was a great boss. But if you deviated, you had hell to pay!"

After graduating from Menomonee Falls East High School in 1981, Dean attended the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee to study business administration. But, after three years, he left without earning his degree. "I didn't know what I wanted to do, I was side tracked," he explains. So he began working full time at North Hills. His father was still the superintendent there, and Mark Kienert was the assistant. His brother Jeff worked there, too.

Dean was married in 1985, and his father began to encourage him to apply for other golf course jobs - partly so that he could work for someone else to see how other people do things. "At that point," Dean remembers, "I didn't think anyone would want to hire me. But Dad said, 'You know a lot more than you realize. Being literally born in the business, you've been involved in aspects from a practical sense. You can go and get a turf degree from the UW. However, there are a lot of things they can't teach you there. Ultimately, you need to work with good organizations to hone your skills, to learn the art of the business.' Dad prodded me along, so I put together a resume.

"My father also told me, 'Don't take just any position,'" Dean continues. "He told me to go somewhere with name recognition, where people know there's a good turf program. In his mind, this was a stepping stone in my career."


Becomes a superintendent...

Dean followed his father's advice and applied for a job at Timber Ridge Country Club in Minocqua. "Timber Ridge had a good reputation," he points out. "Back then, it was a jewel in the rough because there weren't many courses up there. It was a very well-designed, beautiful course.

"And it was a unique job situation, too," he continues.

EXPERIENCED. PROFESSIONAL.

**FAIRWAY
AERIFICATION**



LINKS & LAWN S
GOLF COURSE AND LANDSCAPE MAINTENANCE

5 years experience, Two Cushman GA-60 Aerators, available day or night, efficient and prompt, professional attitude and appearance, servicing Wisconsin and northern Illinois.

CALL JEFF PORTER - 1.262.642.1630

we encourage reference requests

"The superintendent (Tom Lindeman) was retiring in a year, and they were hiring an assistant who could work with him for a season and then become the superintendent. I went up there and had a great interview. By the time I got home from the four-hour drive there was a message that they wanted to make me an offer. It kind of went bing, bang, bang!"

So Dean moved his family - which now included two very young children - up to the north woods of Wisconsin. And, like his grandfather and father before him, he lived in a house that was on the golf course. "That was very natural for me," Dean relates. "Even though I was working a lot, I was nearby and able to pop in and out. I took my kids on the course like my dad did with me. They still cherish those memories. They still miss the days riding with dad and the nights checking the sprinklers."

Unlike his father and grandfather before him, Dean was not destined to be a golf course superintendent forever. After six seasons at Timber Ridge, he left the profession. "People asked me why I left the business," he recalls. "As much as I loved working on the golf course, one thing I didn't like - and you'll probably hear this

from many superintendents - is that it can be a very thankless position.

"You can go out there, bust your tail, put in 60 to 70 hours a week or more, and then get kicked in the butt because of the politics that go on behind the scene or because you can't control the weather," he continues. "Much of the time you're working very early in the morning when nobody is around, or you're there very late at night to set irrigation, things like that. People don't see you working, so many times superintendents are under appreciated."

Attracted to sales...

While working as a superintendent for six years, Dean came in contact with many sales representatives. "I was attracted to sales," he points out. "I thought it was very fair. You get out what you put in. If you work hard and do your job well, it's reflected in what you make."

So in December of 1993, Dean went to work as a Reinders territory sales manager in north central Wisconsin. His territory went from the Wausau/Stevens Point area north to Michigan's Upper Peninsula. "This was a good job opportunity because we could continue to live in Minocqua where we were



The Reinders Pre-Season Sale comes with 200 years of experience and more

200 years of combined turf industry experience on staff
Early Order Discounts • Delayed Payment Terms • Timely, Flexible Delivery Options

Fertilizer • Grass Seed • Fungicides • Herbicides • Insecticides • Spreaders • Supplies

Consult your Reinders turf specialist today to save.

Reinders

Solutions & Supplies for the Green Industry 1-800-785-3301 www.reinders.com

established," Dean points out.

Dean went to work for Reinders in 1993. He works for Reinders now. So you might assume he's been with Reinders the whole time. Wrong. There were a few other jobs in between. In April of 1997, Dean accepted an offer from the Scotts Company to become a technical rep. This allowed him to focus on the soft side of the business, which is his strength. "It was a good fit, a good opportunity," Dean says. "And we could stay in Minocqua, which was a beautiful thing. My geography expanded three to four times."

He was calling on many of the same golf courses, selling different products now; but that wasn't a problem for Dean. "I think you just need to treat customers the way they want to be treated," Dean says. "When I was a superintendent, I did a lot of business with certain companies, and it was because their sales rep did business the way I chose.

"Most superintendents know that there are a lot of product solutions for them," he continues. "It's the sales rep's job to listen to how they want to manage their course and then to find them the products that will help them reach their goal. It's not as much about product as it is about understanding needs, learning how a superintendent wants to manage his or her course, and then offering the product solutions to get them there."

Dean did, however, receive some good-natured ribbing from his colleagues. "When I first started to work for Reinders and sell ParX products, I got hassled because I had used a lot of Scotts products on the golf course," he recalls. "And when I was hired by the Scotts Company, everybody gave me grief again. But I thought it was pretty simple to sell different products."

Downsized...

Dean was with Scotts for less than two years when the company decided that it would no longer market directly to the end user in the professional products division, but to distributors only. Dean was out of a job, but he wasn't bitter. "My experience with Scotts was phenomenal," he says. "I learned so much about not just the product, but about the process of selling and how you become a better sales rep. They supported me very well and were fair. A lot of superintendents were really upset about the change, but Scotts didn't dump on us. We were taken care of."

Bob Reinders knew that Dean would be out of a job, so he gave him a call. "I left Reinders on very good terms. Bob understood why I left at the time," Dean explains. So this is where Dean returns to Reinders, right? Wrong again.

"Scotts went to a system where they had four major distributors in the country," Dean points out, adding that Turf Partners was one of those distributors. "They approached me, too, and it was a perfect fit. The geography of my territory was essentially the same. I

thought it made sense to stay with the product line that I used and knew best. And, once again, Dean's able to stay in Minocqua."

Unfortunately, the company grew too fast. "They had a great business model, but I think they bit off more than they could chew," Dean believes. "I went out and booked a lot of business, and they couldn't get it to the customer in a timely manner. It was crippling my business. By mid summer of 1999, Bob Reinders told me the door was still open. But I wanted to finish the season with Turf Partners first."

Back to Reinders...

"In October of 1999 I met with Bob again," Dean continues. "At that point, I was tired. I wasn't certain what was going on with Turf Products. I had four kids, ages 3 to 12. I was looking for some stability." So this is when he came back to work for Reinders. But it wasn't as a territory sales manager; it was as a turf specialist, which allowed him to focus on the soft side of the business.

"At that time, in the golf side of the business, Reinders had five sales reps," Dean explains. "My job was to support them in the fertilizer, grass seed and turf chemicals side of the business. I worked directly with golf course superintendents to help them with their turf programs." And, once again, he was able to stay in Minocqua.

"When I came back to Reinders, I made a comment to Bob and Craig Reinders that, at some point, I would like an opportunity to manage their business," Dean relates. "I was thinking this could be 10 years down the road. I was in no hurry. I was happy with what I was doing."

But the company was growing. Having one sales manager - the job Ed Devinger held for so many years - was no longer feasible. Dave Berg had replaced Ed when he retired. "Even though Dave had the title of sales manager, he did very little sales management," Dean explains. "With increased business, he was scrambling just to get orders placed, inventories monitored, the nuts and bolts of the business. He didn't have time to work on the sales process - trying to make sales reps better at what they do."

So in 2001, the job was split. Dave became the commercial business manager, and Dean stepped in as sales manager. "People thought I was replacing Dave. Not true," Dean points out. "The job was just too large for one person." So Dave continues to get the orders out, manage the inventory, and be the point man for the leasing business. And Dean concentrates on sales management.

The Reinders sales staff now includes: five full-service reps who work mostly with golf courses; a non-golf rep in southeastern Wisconsin who works with schools, municipalities, corporations, etc.; three reps for the landscape contract side of the business; and four turf specialists.

The sales process...

As the sales manager, it's Dean's job to help the staff

be the best that they can be in their jobs. "That's not just product training," he points out. "It's process. How do you manage a territory? Routing plans, planning your sales calls, prioritizing your customers, and servicing them to the level that's expected."

"The other part of my job is to evaluate our existing product lines and to meet with people who come to us with new products. I'll give them a thumbs up or thumbs down," Dean adds. "And I'm responsible for our custom application truck."

After having five jobs in a row that allowed him to stay in Minocqua, Dean finally made a move in 2001 - back to his home town of Menomonee Falls so that he could work at the Reinders headquarters in Elm Grove. He was glad for the chance to immerse himself at the home office where he could learn the business from the inside out. "It's a complex, labor-intensive business. I needed to understand that," Dean says.

But he was finding himself too immersed in the home office. "One beef I've always had, no matter what company I've worked for, is that the sales manager was not out in the field. I've always said that's a mistake," Dean relates. "How, from an office, do you really understand the needs of your customers? If you truly want to make your sales force the best that it can be, how do you do that from an office? You need to work with them."

"So when I took the sales manager position with Reinders, I really believed that I needed to be in the field 60 percent of the time," he continues. "Unfortunately, in the last year, I've spent only 2 percent of my time in the field. For me, that's unacceptable."

There were some family issues that came up, too; they really missed Minocqua. Dean decided to kill two birds with one stone. If he moved back to Minocqua, his whole family would be happier. And it would force him to be out of the office more. So in August of 2002, he moved back to Minocqua. He has an office in the home and is conducting his job with the aid of modern communications equipment. And he's out on the road more.

Same house three times...

But let's go back to the beginning of this article. We've covered the three generations of golf course superintendents in his family (By the way, his father, Bob, finished his career at Plum Lake Golf Course in Sayner in 1994 after 36 years in the business). We covered the three different companies he's worked for since being a superintendent - Reinders, Scotts and Turf Partners. And we've covered the three jobs he's had at Reinders - territory manager, turf specialist and sales manager. But how on earth has he managed to move into the same house three times?

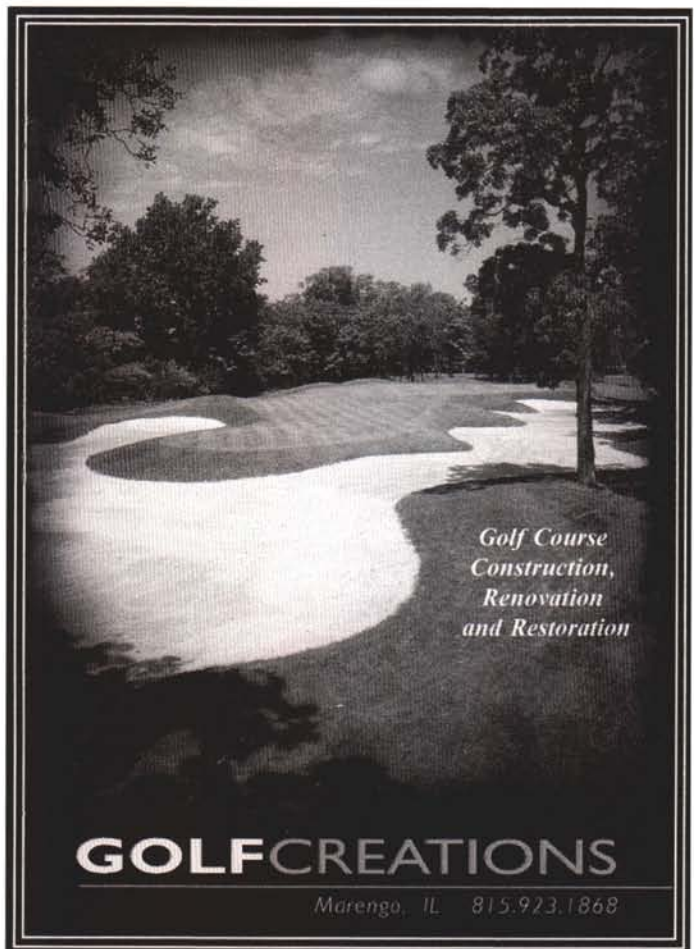
"We moved into it the first time when I took the job at Timber Ridge; it was owned by the course then," Dean explains. "When I left Timber Ridge, we had to move out. But later, when there was a change in the ownership of

the golf course, the new owners wanted to sell it. So we bought it at the same time I accepted my position with Scotts. When we moved to Menomonee Falls last year, we put the house on the market, but it never sold. So we moved in for a third time in August of this year."

Dean and his wife, Margie, have two girls and two boys: Mehgan, 17; Kristin, 14; Marty, 13; and Jordan, 10. Besides taking care of the kids, Margie has worked as a teaching assistant with special needs students and as a nurse's aide. "Our kids are at ages where they're very active," Dean says. "So most of the time, when we're not working, we're involved with our kids and their extracurricular activities. I really enjoy being a part of that."

Professional involvement...

Through the years, Dean has also been active with various professional organizations. He's been a member of the WGCSA for years; his father and grandfather both served as president of the organization. While a superintendent, he was very active with the Northern Great Lakes GCSA, serving as president for three years. He's been a member of the GCSAA and was certified in 1993. And he's currently on the board of the Wisconsin Turfgrass Association.



*Golf Course
Construction,
Renovation
and Restoration*

GOLFCREATIONS
Marengo, IL 815.923.1868

"My involvement with Monroe and *The Grass Roots* began when I moved to Minocqua and was tired of people telling me that it was so easy to be a superintendent up north where the season is shorter," Dean points out. "My feisty response was to ask Monroe if I could write a column. He loved the idea. So I wrote "Life in the Northwoods for about three years."

He admits that he's a terrible golfer because he's never had much time to play golf. "People are always shocked that I grew up on a golf course and didn't play much golf," Dean says. "I had to work."

Personal accomplishment...

He may not golf, but he has completed a marathon - an accomplishment of which he's very proud. "Back in 1998, I blew out my Achilles tendon. I was also pretty far out of shape," he admits. "As part of the rehab, they said I should walk and run. So I started, and pretty soon I'm running five miles. Some friends encouraged me to run a half marathon in Eagle River. So I trained for that, ran it, and finished the race. I felt like I was on top of the world."

"Then my friends encouraged me to run the Twin Cities Marathon with them in October of 2001," he continues. "Before this, I thought, 'Who in their right mind would run 26 miles?' But I decided to do it to

prove to myself that I could."

On the day of the race he ran 14 miles when an injury started to bother him. But he decided to go as far as he could. He did pretty well from 14 to 20 miles. "Then I hit the wall," Dean reports. "At 20 miles it felt like my legs were the size of tree trunks. My Achilles and ankles and calves were tight. For six miles, it was step by step. I thought it would get easier, but it didn't until those last 300 or 400 yards when I knew I was going to finish."

"It's really personally satisfying to reach a goal like this," Dean says. "It's like anything in life. If you work hard at a goal and achieve it, it's very gratifying."

Dean's positive attitude follows him everywhere. "You have a choice," he says. "I get up every day and make a decision; am I going to have a good day or a bad day? I choose to have a good day. I thoroughly believe in the power of a positive attitude. I'm an optimist. I'll find good in everything. And I gauge a lot of things on the big picture. Yeah, I may have a couple of customers who are upset or something might not be going right. But I look at the big picture. I think about 9-11 and what happened there and, really, how bad are my problems in comparison?"



Proudly Serving the Turf Industry in Wisconsin

Terra's full line of turf industry products includes:

- Herbicides
- Insecticides
- Fertilizer
- Grass Seed
- PGRs
- Fungicides (Including Thalonil™ 90DF and 4L)
- Colorants (Including Terramark™ SPI and Terramark Lake Colorant)

**For the products, services and advice you need,
Talk to Terra**



Terra International, Inc. • 3525 Terra Court • Sun Prairie, WI 53590
 Conrad Stynchula CGCS • (800) 456-0948 (office) • (608) 235-4999 (mobile)