



Bob Bruglio (left) and Frank Torre claim their trucks are the most attractive in all of Michigan.

The Grainer residence, right, one of Torre & Bruglio's pieces of art.



KEEPING IT CLEAN

Torre & Bruglio Landscaping of Michigan is blessed with the sweet smell of success. No wonder: it's squeaky clean.

by Jerry Roche, editor

Frank Torre and Bob Bruglio are Italian, and proud of it. They enjoy a good meal. They like fancy trucks. They are meticulous dressers. "We like to touch everything," Torre admits over lunch in a Mount Clemens, Mich. restaurant. For emphasis—to let you know he delivers the next line with some emotion—he grabs the salt and pepper shakers and squeezes. Tightly. Very tightly: "I don't think we want to lose that touch. When something gets out of reach, you can't touch it any more."

He is talking about the size of Torre & Bruglio Landscaping, a company he

and Bob Bruglio began with a Massey-Ferguson truck and leased tools back in 1976.

Today, they own 42 trucks and \$1 million worth of equipment. Today, an autographed photo of Lee Iacocca hangs on the reception room wall, testament to the job they are doing on Chrysler's 40-acre world headquarters and five divisional offices.

A class act

The key to their success? Class. Lots of it. Everything from an immaculately-landscaped headquarters to designer trucks to uniformed,

cleanly-shaven workers. They simply don't allow anything to "touch" their business that doesn't reek of professionalism.

"Everybody wears white shirts and green pants," explains Torre, the younger and more talkative of the duo. "They're on time, they shave in the morning, they have presentable haircuts. If they don't, they're home. That's very important."

When it comes to rule enforcement, Bruglio says his partner is "the hatchet-man." And you believe it.

Their fire-engine-red trucks are hand-painted (some say "Torre & Bruglio—The Dagos") and pin-striped.

Their landscapes are, likewise, picture-perfect. "When we walk away from a job, it's spotless," Torre says.

Things haven't always been as

profitable for Torre & Bruglio; but they've always been exciting.

Torre remembers 1976: "There were just the two of us. The first summer, we did everything by hand. People were saying we were nuts moving dirt with wheelbarrows. But it was a challenge: can we knock out this job today?"

The memories begin to wash over Bruglio's face. "We always tried to outdo ourselves," he reminisces. "People could pick our jobs out. A lot of people couldn't figure out how we got so big so fast. But if they had followed us around, they'd know: we worked our asses off. The first five years, it was seven days a week, sun-up to sun-down."

Some say partnerships are the worst way to organize a business. But it's worked for Torre and Bruglio.

"What has kept us together is that our goal is the same," says Torre. As if to emphasize the point, Bruglio repeats it: "We stand back-to-back on everything."

That doesn't mean agreeing on everything. In the early years, when they won a new job, they would separately plan on how to implement what the client wanted. Then they would compare plans and come up with the best alternatives. It wasn't always easy. "If we both agreed on everything, then one of us shouldn't be here," says Bruglio now, chuckling to himself at the memories.

Diversified services

Torre & Bruglio has developed into a full-service landscaping company. It has an architectural department, construction division, maintenance divi-



At Torre & Bruglio, every employee, every piece of equipment is important.

Landscape architect Vince Rampolo (left) goes over some plans with Bob Bruglio (center) and Frank Torre.





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sion and spray division.

Accounts are both commercial and residential, from very large to very small. They include Chrysler, Volkswagen of America, the National Bank of Detroit and Wendy's and McDonald's restaurants. Torre and Bruglio have worked in Michigan, Indiana, Ohio, Illinois and Pennsylvania.

"Our customers seem very satisfied with this service of maintaining their landscaping projects as well as designing them and providing them with worry-free service," Torre admits. The company handles everything, as Torre says, "right down to the last blade of grass."

Both owners make a point to visit key personnel often. They head out of the main building into the modified mobile home that houses the maintenance and spray divisions where Bob Zaccheo and Jim Lendini orchestrate the work of 50 employees. Then they cut across the back lot, trucks smartly aligned, up some steps of an elaborate wooden deck and into the architects' building to visit head architect Vince Rempolo and nurseryman Steve Tinsley. To talk to construction chief Larry Pretzer, they head back to the main building past a pond stocked with trout.

This is a quality home for Torre & Bruglio. "We stand for quality," Torre notes. "We try to teach our people the same thing. We all work together as a family."

The equipment, too, is top quality. A dozen Toro Groundsmaster 72s, Toro and HMC/Green Machine edgers, Jacobsen push mowers with steel decks.

Steady as she goes

Where growth was unbridled in the past, Torre and Bruglio are now planning for steadier growth. "We're always looking ahead," Bruglio says. "But you have to realize that bigger isn't always better," Torre adds. "Once you've lost control, you've lost everything. It becomes a total zoo."

The only goal they have set for the company is eloquently stated by Bruglio:

"We'd like people to say, 'Those guys are good, they're professional and they're honest.'"

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