

A real 'Easy Rider'

MILWAUKEE — Bill Smithyman, landscape operations supervisor for the City of Milwaukee (Wisc.), is the original "Easy Rider." He spends more time touring the streets than Peter Fonda and Dennis Hopper did in the 1969 motion picture.

Milwaukee, you see, has more than 119 miles of highway medians, most about 20 yards wide, 95 percent of which are irrigated. That's more than 450 acres, and it's Smithyman's responsibility to keep all those shrubs, trees and grass plants green.

He assigns one person to every two miles of boulevard. That person is in charge of weeding, edging, cultivating, picking up debris and manually turning irrigation on and off. Thirteen mowing crews of two

to three persons each supplement the one-person maintenance crews.

"Milwaukee's had this system for eons," the veteran landscaper explains.

In 1988, Smithyman's 160 summer employees planted 424 trees, 6,375 shrubs and evergreens, more than 180,000 annuals and almost 6,000 perennials and bulbs.

"If you look at a landscape and you just have turf that is well maintained, it looks great," Smithyman philosophizes. "But trees are a major-profile plant material. They are also the easiest and least costly to add. Then, too, shrubs are another element in your profile."

Smithyman has found that pinching a penny here and there pays off with the city administration when a



Milwaukee's Bill Smithyman at a flowerful boulevard.

special project is requested.

"We have been very fortunate," he notes. "That's not to say there aren't programs that couldn't use more money. But we operate on a first-class basis and it's paid off when it comes to bottom-of-the-line budget. I believe it's a result of our professionalism."

Plenty of chances to save money exist within the confines of the government

structure. For instance, a shredder was borrowed from Milwaukee County last year to shred leaves for composting. "We've got some pretty good stuff," Smithyman notes, saving the city money it would've spent on both debris disposal and buying mulch.

Fifteen miles of drainage slopes are mowed by the department's Hustler 602 mowers. Time and labor are



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charged back to the Sewer Department. More and more, Smithyman's crews help with snow removal in the winter. The boulevards are watered three times a week with water from Lake Superior; water bills are based on acreage.

Most importantly, training and incentives are a big part of keeping valuable employees.

"Bob Skiera, our city forester since the early 1970s, has a philosophy of bringing in the best people at all levels," Smithyman relates. "That gets back to professionalism."

Smithyman's smile reeks of pride. And justifiably so, judging by the work his department does.

"We want to enhance the quality of life in the city of Milwaukee. We feel that we're meeting that goal; it's a good place to live.

—Jerry Roche □

Forging a country club image

NORTH OLMSTED, Ohio — Bill Prest's current mission in life is a worthy one: to create a country club image while charging a public golf course price.

Prest is the superintendent of Springvale Country Club in this Cleveland suburb. He wants to give the club a distinctly professional look, regardless of the number of Sunday golfers who walk his fairways.

Part of the image upgrade has been accomplished by gradually adding sand traps. "There aren't many public courses with extensive sand," explains Prest. He is placing the traps in such a way that they don't slow down play. "There's nothing worse than a four-hour round of golf that turns into six hours," says Prest. "We've placed these fairway traps



Prest: "more players through each day"

so that 90 percent of the play doesn't hit them. They're more cosmetic. At the same time, traps will be in play for lower handicapped golfers."

Prest installed nine traps this past summer, which will bring the course total to

40. The course had 18 when he became superintendent 23 years ago.

Prest has done more than just add sand to the course. He began an overall renovation program five years ago which included an aggressive schedule: "300 new trees, 15 traps and four or five new tees," says Prest. "We've also started renovating the irrigation system and have done some mound building." Dirt for the mounds came from a company working on a housing project next door to the club. The developer gladly supplied Springvale with 100,000 yards of topsoil rather than pay for hauling it away.

Prest, a graduate of the University of Massachusetts, says all renovations are in line with presenting a *continued on page 18*



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