



## Lawn care bashers get 'just dessert'

When last we visited, you might remember, I had just read an article in the hometown newspaper that raised the hackles on the back of my neck. In the bylined article, the professional lawn care industry took some unkind and undeserving hits from a self-styled "environmental activist."

Like a good industry steward, I responded via mail. The stamp was slapped on the letter with some vehemence.

Barely a week later, I received a call from the editorial department at the newspaper. A kindly voice asked my permission to print my letter, *en toto*, in the paper's "Forum" department, and I agreed.

Shortly thereafter, a "Letter to the Editor" signed by an old acquaintance, Gary Chamberlain, a regional agronomist for ChemLawn, appeared in the paper.

"I propose that we dismiss the demagogues of doom who hide under the banner of environmentalism and pay attention to the people who are doing something positive for our environment," Chamberlain wrote. "Too often, we let fear-feeding misinformation get by without challenge."

Two days later, when the paper used my piece, it was—surprisingly—virtually exactly as I had written it. The headline exclaimed, in large type, "Lawns won't bite." I submit to you its conclusion:

"To put everything in perspective—and this is what the landscape and lawn care industries have believed all along—the risks associated with lawn pesticides are so minor as to be negligible if used according to label directions.

"It may be the (newspaper's) mission to uphold free speech principles for misplaced doomsayers. But it should also be its mission to see that the public is truthfully informed in a complete and impartial manner."

I have yet to receive a phone call from the author of the original article. I don't suspect that I will. For he knew when he was writing the article, and knows today, that he was twisting the truth, playing on the public's emotions, and—most despicably—not telling the whole story.

There is a moral here. The mass media are indeed searching for real truths. They are neither our friends nor our enemies. They listen. But they need someone to listen to; and that's where we come in—if we are brave enough and intelligent enough to tell our side of the story.

So the next time the lawn care bashers show their faces in your community, be brave and be intelligent. Don't let them get away with their half-truths and emotional appeals. If you don't defend yourself, no one else will.

A handwritten signature in cursive that reads "Jerry Roche".

Jerry Roche, executive editor

## EDITORIAL STAFF

**Jerry Roche**, Executive Editor  
**Will Perry**, Managing Editor  
**Terry McIver**, Associate Editor  
*Office: 7500 Old Oak Blvd.  
Cleveland, OH 44130  
(216) 243-8100  
FAX (216) 826-2832*

## MARKETING STAFF

**Jon Miducki**, Associate Publisher  
**Ann Langhenry**, Midwest Sales Manager  
**Paul Garris**, North Central Sales Manager  
**Bob Earley**, Group Vice President  
*Office: 7500 Old Oak Blvd.  
Cleveland, OH 44130  
(216) 243-8100  
FAX (216) 826-2832*

**Dick Gore**, E. Coast Representative  
*Office: 3475 Lenox Rd. N.E.  
Suite 665  
Atlanta, GA 30326  
(404) 233-1817  
FAX (404) 261-7022*

**Robert Mierow**, W. Coast Representative  
*Office: 1515 NW 51st Street  
Seattle, WA 98107  
(206) 783-0549  
FAX (206) 784-5545*

**Tom Greney**, Senior Vice-President  
*Office: 233 North Michigan Avenue 24th Floor  
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(312) 938-2328  
FAX (312) 938-4850*

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*Office: 120 West Second St.  
Duluth, MN 55802  
(218) 723-9200  
FAX (218) 723-9223*

**David Komitau**, Graphics Coordinator  
**Ted Matthews**, Promotion Director  
*Office: 7500 Old Oak Blvd.  
Cleveland, OH 44130  
(216) 243-8100*



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