

**HARRIS** from page 34  
that elderly banker-friend.

It's no coincidence that this summer he's training an assistant.

"The college, with its 50 acres, keeps me pretty busy," says Harris. "And the business keeps on growing. So I've got a

guy I'm training. He's 6-foot-7, 250 pounds and plays for the college football team.

"He's sort of like me, though: he's got a lot of energy, and he likes to work. It took me a long time to find someone who can almost (note: "almost") keep up with me.

My goal is to get one or two helpers and pay them well and train them and let them take over some of the accounts to give me some more time to be home."

The Campbellsville Police Department will believe *that* when they see it.

—Jerry Roche

## Hand-held computers help Florida lawn care delivery

**Technicians can track everything from client histories to production with these small units.**

■ Field technicians at Aaron Pest Control weren't so keen on the idea of using hand-held computers on their pest control and lawn care routes. Some even referred to them as "babysitters."

Now, their enthusiasm for computer routing technology is growing. They're finding out it can help them save time and serve customers better too.

"We're 100 percent operational on it," says Phil Smith, general manager Aaron PC in Deland, Fla. Aaron technicians use the Norand Corp. 4000 series of automated route accounting systems. Smith expects this technology—more commonly used by package delivery firms and vending machine service companies—to become standard in pest control and lawn care service delivery also.

"We're fully automated. It's a long-term commitment, and in the long run it's going to save us money," says Smith.



"The men are now posting their own work," says Dawn Pinnataro, operations assistant. "It saves us an hour each morning, and that hour makes quite a bit of difference. It frees us up to spend more time with customers on the phone."

Previously, office staffers spent that hour key punching work orders for the technicians. Now that task is shaved to five minutes. Also, each Wednesday it used take three hours to program the schedule for the next week. "That was a wasted afternoon," Pinnataro recalls. "Now it takes 45 minutes start to finish."

**Provides more time**—Adds Smith, "we're better able to track our technicians' service time and non-service time. It's given our technicians a little more time to squeeze in another account or two in their day."

When a technician arrives for work in the morning and picks up the hand-held unit "it already has his day's work on it," says Smith. Information includes address, directions, the general nature of the treatment and, if it's a repeat customer, the account history.

As each stop is made, the technician immediately records the type of service, products used, amount of each, wind direction and speed, production time, any cash or checks received. A printer then produces a customer receipt.

The system also tracks production per hour and production per month. And because the technicians are paid on a commission basis, "it shows them how much money they're making," says Smith.

Any missed service stops are recorded, plus it provides the miles traveled and issues messages, such as "don't forget the monthly meeting." The system also generates a complete end-of-day report summarizing all activities.

**Portable communications**—"This information can even be transmitted from the technician's home, eliminating an unnecessary trip back to the office," says Cheryl Wery, communications man-



ager at Norand's headquarters in Cedar Rapids, Iowa.

"Errors from misinterpreting handwriting and the high cost of keypunching are eliminated. Missed services are promptly reported, so they can be picked up the next day," she says.

The Aaron system is based in a Texas Instruments 386 PC with software from Pest Control Systems of Leesburg, Fla.

The communications network for the Norand 4000 Series system consists of a controller and docking stations for the hand-held computer. The controller monitors the nightly transmissions between the hand-helds and the host computer. The docking station recharges the hand-held batteries and also provides a data transmission connection for each hand-held unit.

During the communication session, information gathered throughout the day is transmitted from the hand-held to the host computer. The scheduling information for the following day is down-loaded into the hand-held, so it is ready and waiting when the technician arrives.

Smith says that technicians initially balked at using the system, calling it a "babysitter." Now, they appreciate what it can do for them.

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