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"You have to have the best machinery, then train your

people to get the most out of it, to do the type of precision work we like to see," Dautel says. "It all goes into the objective of giving the customers more than they expect. That's why we've been able to maintain our growth curve for more than eight years."

## W. Va. grand jury charges LCO with arranging murder

Richard B. Huff allegedly tried to build a lawn care company the wrong way—with dirty tricks, insurance fraud, arson and, finally, murder.

That's why he may spend the rest of his life in prison.

Huff, 32, former manager of Custom Lawn Care of West Virginia Inc., has been charged with arranging the May 21, 1993, murder of a former co-worker, Jerry Powell, 28.

U.S. Attorney William A. Kolibash of Wheeling, W. Va., says Huff plotted Powell's murder. He did it to keep Powell from testifying about how Huff had sabotaged competitors' businesses over a period of several years, Kolibash says. Powell had briefly worked with Huff but, apparently, had nothing to do with the dirty tricks himself.

Powell was shot-gunned to death about 4:30 a.m. May 21 on an empty road north of Weirton, W. Va., while he was driving his van to work at the Ross Park Mall.

The federal grand jury that met to consider the killing returned a 20-count indictment also claiming that Huff:

- ordered "grass killer" sprayed on the greens of Pleasant Valley Country Club, Weirton, and the Woodlawn Golf Course, New Cumberland. Both were customers of another lawn care company.

- had two of his employ-

ees pour grass killer into the spray tanks of competitors' trucks.

- ordered employees to throw bombs at the home, business and equipment trailer of a competing lawn service.

- slashed tires and scratched the paint of competitors' trucks.

- obtained more than \$40,000 in settlements from fraudulent insurance claims.

Kolibash calls the case "one of the most bizarre and unusual cases I've ever seen in 20 years in this office."

Indicted along with Huff, were Daniel J. Wentz, 20, and William D. Bish, 24.

The indictment alleges that Wentz actually pulled the trigger of the 20-gauge shotgun (two blasts), but that Huff had sought the killing, and had written the check for the ammunition the day before the murder. Bish, the indictment says, accepted a check of \$1,500 from Huff as an advance payment for the killing of Powell. It was Bish who enlisted Wentz to kill Powell, the indictment alleges.

"It's like something out of a grade B movie," says veteran reporter Lawrence Walsh, who is covering the case for the *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*.

Jury selection for the trials of Huff and Wentz is set for Nov. 8.

—Ron Hall

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