

Landscape Category

J. Landon Reeve, IV,

owner/president Chapel Valley Landscape Co., Woodbine, MD.

Landon Reeve and a buddy made themselves a small stack of fliers and passed them out in their Maryland neighborhood. The postcards proclaimed that the two were for hire. The asking wage: \$1 an hour—the going rate for school-boy help in 1955.

"I got a call from a local wholesale perennial grower," recalls J. Landon Reeve, IV, whose father was a mail carrier. That call was the start of a successful career in the green industry, a career that's earned him Landscape Management's Landscape 1998 Person of the Year.

From bottom up

For five years, Reeve worked summers and weekends for Bluemount Nursery, a perennial grower and wholesaler in Maryland. "That's basically how I got interested in horticulture," he recalls. In 1963 he earned a B.S. in Ornamental Horticulture from the University of Maryland.

While his interest and knowledge in horticulture grew, he was also determined to, someday, run his own show.

He had a dream

"I knew in high school that I wanted to have my own business," he says. "It was in my head. I can't pin-point why I felt that way except for maybe that part-time work at the nursery."

Reeve's first job with a local landscape company lasted about a year, before he and the company's garden center manager broke away and started their own garden center/landscape operation.

"It was just a little business, but it was a great experience," he says. The two men ran that business for four years before Reeve decided he wanted to go on his own.

"I couldn't see working seven days a week indefinitely. I wanted to have a family and I wanted to have a life," he says. "While I enjoyed it, I was at the garden center all weekend, and all week I was doing landscaping."

Founds Chapel Valley

In 1968, Reeve started Chapel Valley Landscape. He was its sole employee. While he's still the president and sole owner of the business, the landscape company now has 250 employees. It offers a full range of exterior landscape services, mostly in Maryland and northern Virginia.

"I don't know how we got this size," he says. "We really didn't have a plan to get big. Our plan was do quality work and take care of our customers and our employees. Our company just kept growing."

This insistence on providing quality work and excellent service has characterized Chapel Valley from its inception. This excellence is a reflection of the company's founder and president, colleagues tell LM.



"I've probably known him as long as I've known anybody in ALCA (Associated Landscape Contractors of America)," says Rod Bailey, Evergreen Services Corp., Bellevue, WA. "He's been a mentor to me as well as being a good friend."

"Landon is a sharing and caring person, and that certainly applies to his strong sense of professionalism in the industry."

Adds Ron Kujawa, Kujawa Enterprises, Inc., Cudahy, WI: "Landon is a gentleman in every sense of the word. There is dignity and class about him."

A past ALCA president, Reeve has shared what he's learned about the industry through his long-time participation in ALCA, the American Association of Nurserymen, and in a host of state and regional industry organizations.

Landon Reeve is still much involved in the day-to-day operation of Chapel Valley, but he's begun the transition process to the next generation, including a daughter and a son in the business. **LM**

J. Landon Reeve, IV, career highlights

- 1955:** Lands first green industry job, a summer job with a perennial grower/wholesale company
- 1963:** Graduates from University of Maryland with a B.S. in Ornamental Horticulture
- 1964:** He and a partner found a small garden center/landscape business
- 1968:** Establishes Chapel Valley Landscape Co.
- 1977-79:** President of Landscape Contractors Association MD-DC-VA
- 1980-81:** President of Maryland Nurserymen's Association
- 1984:** President of the Associated Landscape Contractors of America
- 1992-94:** ALCA Certification Board of Governors
- 1994:** American Association of Nurserymen Long-Range Planning Committee