

# cleanup crew

THIS AND THAT

## Weed-whacked at an early age

BY JASON STAHL



The guy told me that the thing hovered above the ground like a flying saucer. And I believed him.

But who can blame me? When I joined a parks grounds maintenance crew, I was a

college kid. So when my manager kidded that the hovering mower I was about to use glided two feet from the ground, all I could say was, "Wow."

Yeah, effortlessly my grass-stained ca-boose. I busted my arms dragging that thing all over a 70° slope that had more rocks and tree stumps on it than blades of grass. At the end of the day, when the sides of my feet were blistered from trying to keep my balance on that death hill, I found out that the job I had just completed was one of the most feared projects at the park and one almost always assigned to rookies.

Push mower duty was hell, too. Zipping from grass island to grass island in the Cushman, we'd have to load and unload the heavy mowers. Then there was the railroad trestle. Underneath it were two U-shaped grass mounds, and to mow them we had to lower the mower down and haul it back up again. There was more gravel than grass on the other side, and the poor sap who mowed that side always got a mouthful of rocks for his efforts...*(Watch for my next installment coming soon)*

Do you have any horror stories about your job? If so, contact Jason Stahl at 440/891-2623 or e-mail at [jstahl@advanstar.com](mailto:jstahl@advanstar.com)

## ALCA member survey statistics

Hourly wages in 1997 (most recent survey; 1999 data will be available spring 2000)

beginning laborer, exterior maintenance	.....\$6/ hr
experienced laborer, exterior maintenance	.....\$7.50-\$8/ hr
beginning laborer, exterior design/build	.....\$6 - \$6.50/ hr
experienced laborer, exterior design/build	.....\$8 - \$8.25/ hr

By region:

	NE	SE	MidW	NW	SW	Far W
beginning laborer	\$7	\$6	\$6	\$6	\$5.50	\$6
experienced laborer	\$9	\$8	\$8	\$8	\$6	\$8.5

Source: ALCA



## Now that's appreciation!

How do you thank clients who have helped you become one of the Southeast's largest fertilizer manufacturers? Throw them a golf outing, that's how! For the 13th year in a row, Howard Fertilizer Company did just that for 100 guests at Forest Lake Golf Club in Ocoee, FL. In addition to fun on the links, everyone was treated to a buffet lunch and steak cookout. "Strong customer service is our top priority," Howard Fertilizer sales representative Chuck Blankenship says. "Informal gatherings like these build relationships and provide a relaxed environment to learn more about our customers' needs."