



### May 1969

Graduated from The Ohio State University with bachelor's of science in horticulture

### June 1969

Hired by Thornton Landscape, Inc.

### 1971

Attends first ALCA meeting

### 1983

Elected president of the Ohio Nursery Association

### 1999

Bought Thornton Landscape, Inc.

### 2002

In line to become president of ALCA

## People of the Year 2001

These outstanding people exemplify professionalism, dedication and a willingness to share their time and energy for our industry

### Landscape contracting: Rick Doesburg / President, Thornton Landscape, Inc., Maineville, OH

BY JASON STAHL

Ever since he was 14, working at South Euclid Garden Supply in Ohio, Rick Doesburg knew he wanted to pursue a Green Industry career.

"I just enjoyed working with people, and once I gained more knowledge, I got a kick out of being able to diagnose turfgrass diseases," Doesburg says.

Now, he's getting a kick out of running his own company, Thornton Landscape, Inc., which he bought in 1999 after 25 years as one of its employees.

His single most important professional achievement? "Putting together and being part of a wonderful team at my company geared toward quality and 'beauty by design,'" he says. Doesburg says it's this team that allows him get involved with associations, another thing he's proud of.

But friend Kurt Kluznik, president of Yardmaster, Inc., Painesville, OH, who claims he would have never gotten in-

involved in ALCA without Doesburg's prodding, feels there's another reason why Doesburg is able to accomplish so much. "I'd call him the velvet hammer if he was in sales with me because he knows how to get things done without being too assertive," Kluznik says.

That kind of skill came in handy in 1999 when Doesburg almost left Thornton Landscape because, as he says, "we didn't seem to have a good focus of where we were going." But now he says his company is poised to stay on top as a cutting edge leader of design/build landscape.

Staying on top won't be easy, says Doesburg, who believes the government will be responsible for some of the biggest challenges the Green Industry will face within the next decade. "Legislation, taxes, social security, OSHA — all that has a tremendous impact on our ability to be profitable. If we don't look out for ourselves, nobody will."

That's why Doesburg believes association work is so important. "People have to break away from their business and give something back," he says.

Doesburg has certainly done his share, whether it be with ALCA, the Ohio Nursery Association, Cincinnati Homebuilders or the Green Industry Expo. "What I am is what I've learned from ALCA," he says. He has not only advanced those associations with his own work but helped others make their mark.

"He was always there to help me out when I needed it, like when I took leadership positions in ALCA," says Jud Griggs, vice president of operations at Smallwood Design Group/Smallwood Landscape, Inc., Naples, FL, and former ALCA president.

"Some people take on things because they want notoriety, but the best thing about Rick is that he prefers to stay in the background," Griggs added.

The reason Doesburg bought Thornton Landscape was because his son, Andy, was graduating from college. "We had always talked about starting a business, and that gave me an opportunity to work with him." Now, Andy works in sales, and Rick is hoping he takes over the business some day. **LJM**



## Grounds management: George Van Haasteren / Director-Grounds, Dwight-Englewood School, Englewood, NJ

BY RON HALL

**G**eorge Van Haasteren, CGM, is no comedian, although sometimes he tries. In describing his college football days, he says he played end, tackle and guard. "I sat on the end of the bench, guarded the water bucket and tackled anyone who came near," he says.

This big man with a hearty demeanor has the rare ability to pack 25 hours of activity into every 24-hour day. Much of that energy is directed at being the best grounds professional he can be — and helping others achieve a similar goal.

"Many people believe that anybody can run a grounds maintenance operation," says Van Haasteren. "They don't realize that it takes years of training and education to be successful in this profession."

Van Haasteren should know. He's been advancing the profession of grounds management for 20-plus years, starting with the Paramus (NJ) Shade Tree and

Parks Department in 1981. His career includes three years as grounds manager at Columbia University, New York City, and almost 15 years as director of grounds at the 30-acre campus of Dwight-Englewood School.

"He really turned our grounds around," says Kevin Herron, director of the physical plant at the prestigious private K-12 school of about 1,000 students.

"In addition to the landscape, he's responsible for five athletic fields on campus and a couple of fields in a county park."

Van Haasteren says childhood experiences on nearby sandlots led him, ultimately, to become the first grounds manager in the State of New Jersey to gain certification from the Professional Grounds Management Society (PGMS) and, this year, president of that organization.

"When we were kids we played baseball morning, noon and night," he says. "There was a little area between a library and some tennis courts, and we built our own baseball field and made our own ground rules. For instance, if you hit the ball over the tennis nets you had a double, and

if you hit it to the school, you had a home run."

This love of sport led Van Haasteren to excel in football, eventually making the University of Miami (FL) squad. In a sense, those experiences still drive him. In addition to his duties at Dwight-Englewood School, he and partner Ken Krausz, CGCS, own Sports Fields Management, Inc., a firm specializing in athletic field construction and maintenance. One of its clients is Paramus Catholic High School, Paramus, NJ.

"George has done great things with our fields," says Steve Degregorio, PCHS athletic director and head football coach. "Before he started here there was a 50-by-70-yard area that was bumpy with rocks, twigs and glass. It was awful. Now it's a gorgeous field."

Tom Shaner, executive director of the PGMS, says that Van Haasteren's ability to work as a team player is, perhaps, his greatest gift. "Like a good captain, George seeks out and recruits the best player, or member in this case, to meet every challenge," says Shaner. **LM**

### CAREER TIMELINE



#### 1972-1976

Attended University of Miami, Coral Gables, FL

#### 1981-1987

Boro of Paramus (NJ) Shade Tree and Parks Department

#### 1987-1995

Director of Grounds: Dwight-Englewood School, Englewood, NJ

#### 1995-1998

Grounds Manager for Columbia University, New York City

#### 1997-Present

Grounds Manager for Paramus Catholic High School

#### 1998-Present

Director of Grounds: Dwight-Englewood School, Englewood, NJ

#### 1997-2000

Chair for PGMS Certification Committee

#### 2001

President of the Professional Grounds Management Society

## CAREER TIMELINE

**1956**

Degree in Veterinary Medicine, The Ohio State University

**1957-1961**

School of Aviation Medicine, U.S. Space Program, San Antonio, TX

**1960s**

Toxicologist with private industry

**1970s**

The Ohio State University cooperative extension

**1977**

Begins consulting work with ChemLawn

**1984**

Leaves OSU to work full-time at ChemLawn

**1990-1991**

Testifies in Senate Subcommittee hearings on lawn care pesticides

**2001**

Retires from TruGreen ChemLawn

## Lawn care: Roger Yeary / Vice president of health, safety and environmental stewardship of TruGreen ChemLawn, Delaware, OH

BY RON HALL

**M**any lawn care company owners probably weren't in the business when the industry faced its most bitter battles concerning lawn care chemical use. Nor are you probably aware that one of the industry's influential figures during those times is quietly leaving the industry.

Dr. Roger Yeary retired from TruGreen ChemLawn earlier this year, but remains as a consultant with the company until the end of this year. A toxicologist, he still makes once-a-week trips to the TG-CL research facility in Delaware, OH.

"Probably what I'm going to do is spend the winter months in Arizona and the summer and fall months in Columbus," Yeary tells LM.

Yeary's career took several twists before he began his 25-plus-year association with lawn care. He earned a degree in vet-

erinary medicine at The Ohio State University, Columbus, in 1956, but several months into a practice in Willoughby, OH, he was coaxed into joining the U.S. Air Force School of Aviation Medicine in San Antonio, TX.

Yeary fulfilled his military commitment working with a small group of specialists developing environmental systems for space flight, part of the U.S. space race with the Soviets. It was during this time that he became interested in toxicology.

In 1977, then with The Ohio State University cooperative extension, he got a call from ChemLawn which was fielding concerns from homeowners fearful of the safety of lawn care products on their pets.

"I started doing some consulting for them," says Yeary. "I did that about four years and finally realized that I was working 2 full-time jobs, so I left the university and went to work for ChemLawn fulltime in 1984," he says.

During the tumultuous 1980s, when municipalities across the United States tried to write their own rules concerning

chemical lawn care, the industry looked to ChemLawn and the data generated by Yeary to show that the industry presented negligible risk to employees, customers, their families and pets, and to the environment.

"I've always considered myself to be the guardian of the health and safety of our employees," he says. "Since so many companies copied our programs, I believe that this has had a positive impact on the entire industry."

Yeary, a popular speaker at Green Industry conferences and seminars, participated in dozens of public, legislative and EPA hearings during his career, and defended the industry on national news programs like Ted Koppel and Good Morning America.

"I believe that my most important contribution to the lawn care industry has been defusing the exaggerated and inflammatory claims of the health and environmental risks of lawn care to the media, regulators, legislators and, at times, in the judicial system as an expert witness," he says. **LM**