

Net jabber mostly for yucks

Screwdriver is probably dead. I haven't seen him in years and nobody mentions his name anymore. I thought of him for the first time in 20 years as I was reading postings on the Yahoo message board for ServiceMaster (NYSE-SVM). ServiceMaster is the parent company of the TruGreen companies, the world's biggest lawn and landscape operations.

I track it and the message boards of several other Green Industry companies for several reasons, not the least being that I'm a part owner of them. My stodgy investments (tiny by most standards) during the tech boom don't look so unexciting to me anymore in light of the financial horsewhippin' Yahoo and Amazon laid out on me.

What's in a name?

Ah, Screwdriver. I got to thinking about him again after trying to figure out the significance of some of the strange nicknames on the message boards, particularly the lively ServiceMaster board.

Characters calling themselves KaginKing, Encore, Bigmouse and (my favorite) Dangermousekaboom maintain a running commentary about the company and, sometimes, about nothing much at all.

Several seem to harbor a grudge against the company, or certain members of its management. They take every shot they can. They engage in arguments on the board with company defenders.

Occasionally, someone posts what appears to be solid information. Insider stuff. Whether it is or not, who knows? Mostly, I go the board for a good chuckle, which brings me back to Screwdriver.

He used to frequent a local hangout. He was a slight man, wrinkled and leathery, and I can still see his sun-creased face bathed in the haze of an unfiltered Lucky

Strike. I never knew much about him, other than that he worked at a local quarry. I also knew he was proud of his new false teeth, which were a topic of lively discussion among the regulars for a week or so.

"They only cost \$150," he told anyone who showed an interest, usually flashing an enormous self-satisfied grin. In fact, he'd eagerly pop the false teeth out of his mouth and exhibit them on the polished bar whenever he was chided by other regulars, guys with nicknames like Sly and Eagle.

Come to think of it, I never knew any of these other characters well either. Not even their real names. But, for a short while, we all had a good time, even Screwdriver.

I know it's a poor substitute for the entertainment my former pals used to provide, but I check the net message boards from time to time to see what people have to say about the doings of several Green Industry companies. I've staked a small part of my financial future on them — the companies, not the people with the funny names.

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Every once in a while someone will share what seems to be solid information.

