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RANSOMES

The grass machine.



David Frank points out the area where a new office addition will be located.

STRAIGHT SHOOTER

David J. Frank Landscape Contracting isn't among the top 50 landscape companies in the country—yet. But, with 60 percent annual growth, it might show up on the list soon.

by Jerry Roche, editor

In 1959, when David J. Frank was 10 years old, he started a lawn and garden service. Seven of the original clients are with him today.

In 1970, when David J. Frank was a junior in college, he was making more than \$20,000 a year in the landscaping business.

January 1, 1986, David J. Frank became president of the Milwaukee Chapter of the Wisconsin Landscape Contractors Association.

Today, his company—David J. Frank Landscape Contracting of Germantown, Wis.—has 19 crews and is growing at a 60 percent per

annum clip.

You should have figured out by now that David J. Frank is not your prototypical entrepreneur.

Slim, bespectacled and dapper, Frank is also a self-proclaimed straight-shooter...from the hip.

"When I started, I was exactly the kind of thorn-in-the-side business that I now sit around and complain about," Frank states frankly. "But in November of 1976, I went to my first ALCA (Associated Landscape Contractors of America) Landscape Maintenance Division conference in Lincolnshire, Ill. That meeting blew

me away. It really opened my eyes.

"Today, I can trace most of my business progress through things I learned from ALCA."

His company has evolved with the industry.

"One of the most exciting changes is that professionalism is improving," Frank notes. "Years ago, I used to get discouraged because the consumer had so little esteem of the intricacies of landscape contracting. That has changed, and the contractors and professional organizations have changed it. What the industry's doing, clients like."

Roots of success

The roots of Frank's success are deep.

"I was brought up in a middle-class family with a real work ethic," he says. And by the time he was in high school, the people around David J. Frank knew that work ethic would serve him well.

Upon his election as senior class president, Frank decided to operate the resources at his disposal like a business. The outcome was predictable.



Stream Bubbler Nozzle



570 Series Check Valve



Pressure Compensating Spray Nozzle (PCN™)

Pressure Compensating Device (PCD™)



Micro Spray Adapter

Four more reasons to use the Toro 570 spray series.

Introducing four more great reasons to choose Toro. These new additions to the 570 spray head series offer you added flexibility while solving some of your toughest spray head problems.

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Having difficulty with high pressure causing spray heads to fog and reduce spray? Toro's unique new Pressure Compensating Nozzle (PCN™) will eliminate it. It is designed to correct pressure changes caused by differences in terrain elevation or high friction loss in long lateral lines.

Pressure compensation is also available for spray nozzles with our new Pressure Compensation Device (PCD™). The PCD can be purchased separately and installs easily into any of five 570 nozzles.

Stream Bubbler Nozzles.

Toro's new adjustable Stream Bubbler Nozzles let your customers take advantage of all the 570 pop-up features. Like in-ground installation for safety. And retraction when it's not in use for a better-looking landscape.

The Stream Bubbler Nozzle offers a choice of watering patterns. An adjustable radius provides the right amount of coverage for any shape or size of flower bed arrangement. It



fits all 570 sprinkler bodies, shrub adapters and risers.

570 Series Check Valve.

Toro's new 570 Check Valve minimizes low head drainage. Ideal for use at the bottom of a slope, it checks up to seven feet of elevation to prevent puddling after the system is turned off. It also helps prevent debris from being drawn into the sprinkler in low-lying areas.

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Micro Spray Adapter.

Our Micro Spray Adapter lets you install a micro-spray nozzle into the sprinkler head for providing a finer mist over a much smaller area. Which makes it ideal for flowers and other delicate plants. With it, pop-ups can perform much more efficiently at lower pressures than large, higher pressure nozzles which have been throttled back. The Micro Spray Adapter fits all 570 sprinkler bodies, risers and extenders.

So for your next installation, remember these great 570 problem solvers. They're four more reasons to choose the Toro 570 spray head series.

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LANDSCAPE PROFILE *continued*

"Our net income was \$25,000," he remembers, a big smile crossing his face now. "All those Dominican nuns couldn't believe it when we handed them the money at the end of the year."

"I've always kind of had a take-charge attitude. Four or five years ago, I realized I couldn't work for somebody. I'm afraid I wouldn't be a very good employee."

But he's not always been a good employer either.

"Because of my high standards," he admits, "I used to be an SOB at times. For years, my standards were way up here. Entry level people have standards, too, but there was just such a chasm. I had unrealistic expectations."

Turnover rates low

He has survived that challenge just as he survived some lean early years back in 1972. This last year, turnover at the important crew leader level was zero; a few years ago, it might have been 50 to 60 percent.

"I'm involving more people in decision-making now," Frank says. "I don't shove things down their throat any more. If people make decisions by themselves, they're motivated to carry the plan out."

The company has two vice-presidents: Mike Frank, David's brother, for the landscape construction division and Robert Heldt for the management department.

Frank himself likes to divide the business another way, though: into what he considers its three most important components—hiring, training, and managing personnel.

"First of all, you need the right person for the right job, and that's a big job in itself that consists of recruiting, interviewing, and selecting.

"Then there's training. If you want to teach effectively, your employees need to see, hear, write, discuss, and experience.

"Managing and motivating is the third thing: how you keep people on track and how you let them know they're a winner."

To that end, Frank recently established a new position: senior crew leader with a pay scale 50 percent higher than that of crew leader.

"One of the classic mistakes is taking the best crew leader and making him a supervisor. Some

don't do well at all," Frank explains. "The senior crew leader position is for people who want a career path in horticulture. We have one, Ken Plumb, who's been in the industry 16 years. He's a poet on a grading tractor."

Frank says that the position is not granted, but earned, based on three factors:

- costing consistently under budget;
- complaints and callbacks low or zero; and
- mastery of 70 percent of the skills in the job description.

"You should see the productivity of somebody like that," he claims.

Expansion

As you might expect, Frank sees a bountiful future for his company. As

'One of the classic mistakes is taking the best crew leader and making him a supervisor. Some don't do well at all.'

—Frank

a matter of fact, he is expanding his physical facilities this winter with the addition of one building (new total will be three) and 5,400 sq. ft. (new total will be 18,000 sq. ft.).

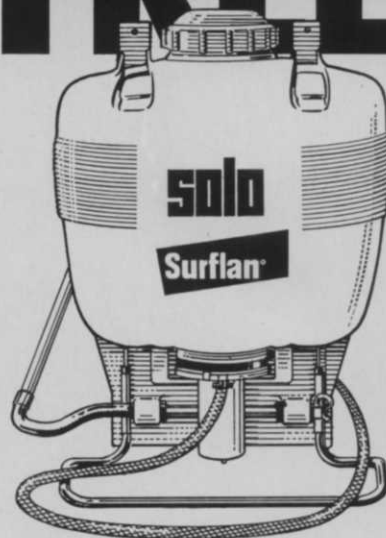
"The new facility will include a training center that seats 125 employees," Frank says. "We've spent the last couple of years getting our people resources in place. Now it's time to expand our facilities."

But he doesn't want to give away long-term plans. In one breath he says that there will be no branch expansion. "Despite the growth, my managers and I are clearly not doing as good a job as we could...so why consider branches?...we don't want to expand in errors and mistakes!"

Then, later in the conversation, he contradicts himself: "In the next 10 to 20 years, we're going to see some exciting things happen like the emergence of more regional landscape management firms...I want to make sure my company is part of that."

It will be, if past success is any indication. **WT&T**

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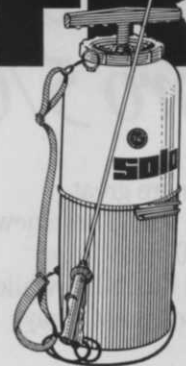


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LANDSCAPE PROFILE

A GOLD MEDALIST

Award-winning Chapel Valley Landscape Company of Woodbine, Md., continues to gather the accolades. Owner Landon Reeve thinks that's great but not as great as a satisfied client.

Ken Kuhajda, managing editor



Landon Reeve could probably wallpaper his entire office with awards earned by his Chapel Valley Landscape Company.

Those walls do support plaques and certificates earned since the company's birth in 1968. Chapel Valley is that good.

Those in the industry realize Chapel Valley is one of the finest landscaping companies in the Eastern United States.

Awards are more than wallpaper, says company owner Reeve, but he doesn't enter competition for himself. He does it for the clients.

"I don't count them," he says, genuine modesty surfacing. "When we feel we have quality jobs, we enter them, not only for the recognition of the employees and our company—more for the recognition of the client."

Some of those clients? Mobil Oil headquarters, Johns Hopkins Hospital, Baltimore Hyatt, Martin Marietta headquarters, and a wheelbarrow-full of others.

Baltimore, Washington D.C., or northern Virginia, you'll find Chapel Valley Landscape crews improving the landscape.

37 acres

If you're heading west of Baltimore and you're hungry, it's a good idea to stop on Baltimore's western fringe. If you continue out I-70 West, you



Three of Chapel Valley Landscaping Company's showcase award-winners, counterclockwise from top: a condominium project in Bethesda, Md. that features a courtyard over the top of a parking garage; Duke Street Metro Office Building, a leased office building; and Martin/Marietta Corporate Headquarters in Bethesda.

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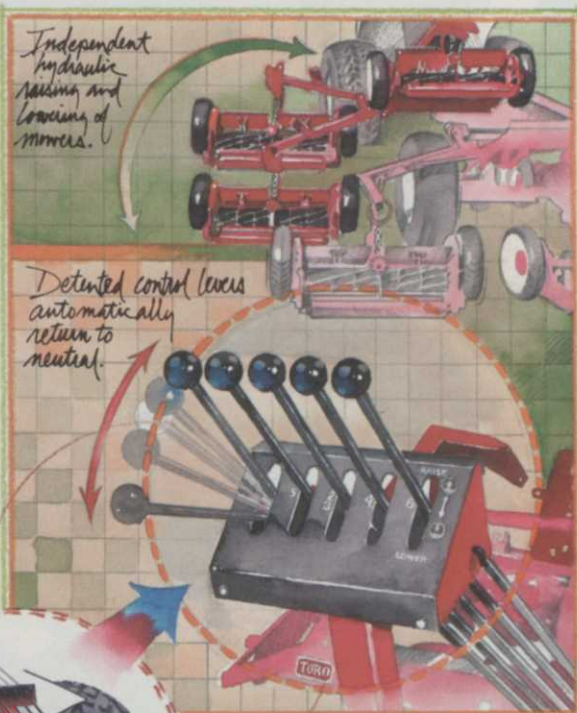
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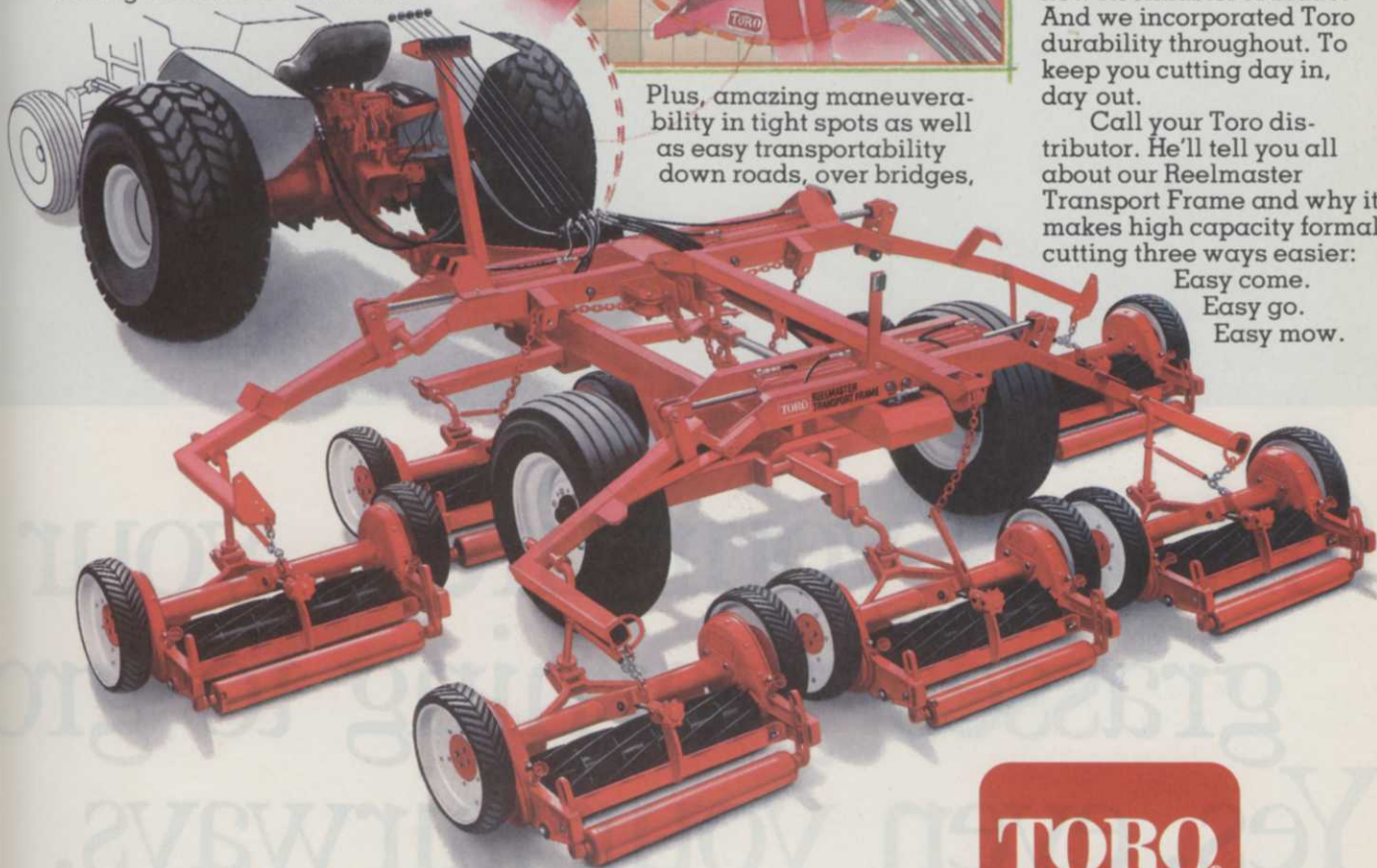
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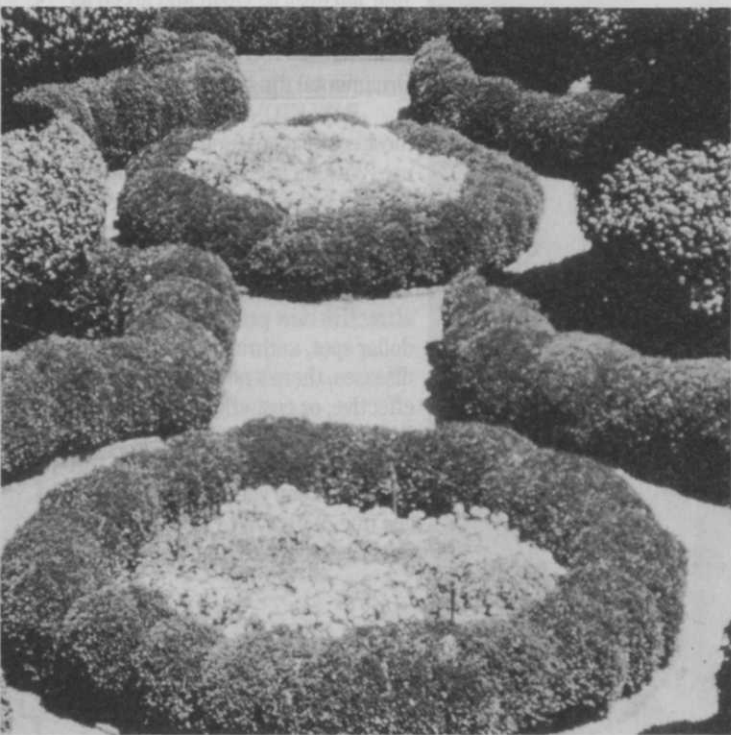
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LANDSCAPE PROFILE



Two flower beds set on white gravel make a striking setting.



Landon Reeve, the brains behind the success of Chapel Valley Landscaping.

won't find much.

Baltimore doesn't have many suburbs that way.

For 20 miles along I-70, cows and silos dominate the landscape. It's farm country, it's serene.

On a 37-acre plot of land amid this tranquility sits Chapel Valley.

Six acres are developed; the nursery takes up 10.

That gives 100 or so peak-season employees room to roam. Reeve gives them the figurative room. "In this industry, people are number one in importance. If you have the right people, you can do anything," he says. "I can buy 50 trucks tomorrow but couldn't buy 50 good employees."

Most Chapel Valley field people work four 10-hour days. Reeve pays them well. He gets results.

"Our staff is excellent," he says. Unemployment is an obscure two to three percent in the Baltimore-Washington area. Reeve admits he can't fill all his positions. But he's been lucky over the last 17 years. "In our industry, the number one problem, as always, is people," he says.

A first-class area

Although there's a manpower shortage in the Baltimore-

Washington area, there's no shortage of development.

Commercial construction, Chapel Valley's niche, runs unabated. Competition between Baltimore and Washington for that corporate dollar is at an all-time high.

Similarly, competition among landscape firms is heavy. Chapel Valley has changed to keep pace.

In the last year-and-a-half, Chapel Valley has computerized

'My goal has always been to do a quality job and let the result of that dictate the size we will be.'

—Reeve

its buying, billing, and marketing functions.

The landscape installation division, the company's strength, has been streamlined. Landscape manager Dan Tamminga supervises two regional managers, each with his own territory.

Each manager oversees specific

projects, maintaining close contact with field foremen. Reeve says the structure has worked, providing efficient construction methods. Landscape workers total 35, with five crews of six.

Another change is the success of the maintenance department, formed just five years ago.

Maintenance manager Rich Grigalus oversees eight crews and 27 employees.

The workers further their educations by attending horticulture training seminars. Five have pesticide licenses.

Chapel Valley has maintenance field offices in Bethesda, Md., and northern Virginia. The company makes an effort to hire those in the local work force.

Another asset is a growing landscape design department that now includes five landscape architects.

Just a day off

When the pieces of Chapel Valley interlock, gross revenues total almost \$5 million. Back in 1968, Landon Reeve only wanted to work less than a seven-day week. He didn't dream of heading a multi-million dollar corporation.

"We've become a little larger than