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COVER PHOTO:
Customer service is an important marketing tool for today's business. Chris Serrano of San Jose talks to a homeowner about a frost-damaged palm. Photo by Lee Lesh.
Arborists from all over the country continue to complain about rising insurance costs, particularly in the area of workers compensation insurance. While rates escalate, insurance carriers claim that they are losing money on workers compensation because of high legal and medical costs.

Several carriers have indicated that they will not provide workers compensation coverage to a client unless they also write more profitable lines as well, such as general liability and motor vehicle coverage. Are we falling into the same trap we were in back in 1985? Have the insurance carriers lost too much money on junk bonds and bad real estate loans? The insurance carriers report that profits for the first half of 1990 are down 24%. Are they trying to recover at your expense? Yes, in part. The insurance industry reports investment income of $15.8 billion and underwriting losses of $10.9 billion for the first six months of 1990. Chances are, given the economy, investment income will decrease and underwriting losses will increase.

This is not the time to sit back and absorb higher costs for insurance. First of all, always get competitive prices. Complacency brings higher rates. Make sure your broker is working for you, not against you.

Second, take positive steps to control your workers compensation premiums and let your insurance carrier know that you are taking those steps. One company recently told us that its workers compensation modification dropped from 1.07 to 0.81 when it showed its extensive safety program to its workers compensation carrier.

Demand to see periodic audits of claims. Question reserves held. Take positive action to return injured personnel to work. Report all incidents as may be required but self-insure on minor claims. Don’t allow major settlements to be made without your approval.

There are many situations in which employers don’t have the opportunity to confront their insurance carriers. It’s either pay up or get out. What then?

Insurance carriers are regulated by each state and each one is different. This is a perfect example of where a state arborist association can be effective. A collective inquiry by an industry to the state Insurance Commissioner has much more impact than an individual complaint.

Insurance is an ordinary cost of doing business. It is your responsibility to keep that cost in line.
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Learn how Mauget micro injection works. Well-known university scientists have confirmed the benefits of micro injection through research and field trials. Many of the nation's leading tree care firms have used Mauget micro injection for more than 20 years as part of their tree health and IPM programs.

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### Tree Injection Products

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Company</th>
<th>Address</th>
<th>Phone</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Artistic Arborist</td>
<td>Phoenix, AZ 85013</td>
<td>(602) 263-8866</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>AZ, NM, NV</td>
<td>(800) 843-8733</td>
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<td>March 11, Reno, NV</td>
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<td>Enfield's Tree Service</td>
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<td>Phoenix, NE 85222</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Southeast WY, CO</td>
<td>(602) 263-8328</td>
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<td></td>
<td>March 1, Omaha, NE</td>
<td>(800) 747-8733</td>
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<td>March 14, Bismarck, ND</td>
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<td>Austin, TX 78753</td>
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<td>Eastern &amp; South Texas</td>
<td>(512) 454-1414</td>
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<td>March 12, Austin, TX</td>
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<td>Tree Doctor Inc</td>
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<td>Hendersonville, NC 28703</td>
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<td></td>
<td>NC, SC, North Georgia</td>
<td>(704) 891-TREE</td>
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<td>March 6, Mocksville, NC</td>
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<td>Lake Oswego, OR 70353</td>
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<td>Oregon, Washington</td>
<td>(503) 635-3916</td>
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<td>Poulsen Tree Service</td>
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<td>Billings, MT 59101</td>
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<td>Arboritech Inc</td>
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<td>Belleville, IL 62221</td>
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<td>St. Louis Area</td>
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<td>Canadian ShadeTree Service Ltd.</td>
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<td>Lachine, Quebec, QC H8S</td>
<td>(514) 634-7046</td>
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<td>D.H.D. Systems Inc</td>
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<td>New Berlin, WI 53151</td>
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<td>Farm and Forest Research Ltd.</td>
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<td>Oakville, Ontario, CA L5U 5A2</td>
<td>(516) 857-1134</td>
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<td>Germ Spraying Service</td>
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<td>Jerome, ID 83338</td>
<td>(208) 733-4206</td>
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<td>Idaho</td>
<td>(800) 669-7747</td>
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<td>Guardian Tree Experts</td>
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<td>Rockville, MD 20852</td>
<td>(202) 881-8550</td>
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<td>Harrod's Tree Service</td>
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<td>Fort Worth, TX 76108</td>
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### J.J. Mauget Company Information

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Grindstones, Cats,
A Successful Businessman Shares A Bit Of His Philosophy

By Donald F. Blair

GOLD! GOLD! GOLD!

That was the headline in the Seattle Post-Intelligence on a July day in 1897. The country had been in a depression since 1893, caused in part by a lack of gold bullion to back the nation’s currency. Fifty cents would buy a lavish steak dinner.

GOLD IN THE KLONDIKE!

The rush was on. One way to the gold fields was on foot over a harrowing pass known as the Chilkoot. None of the 22,000 people who endured the arduous trek would ever forget the final 4-mile leg of the ascent as long as they lived. The grade of the final four miles was 30% and the last half-mile was 35%. The Mounties would not permit anyone to enter the Yukon wilderness without six months’ provisions and they set up a scale near the pass to weigh each gold seeker’s minimum 2000 pounds of supplies.

The average city-bred gold seeker could only carry 50 pounds on each 6-hour ascent. It would take an average of three months for each miner to get his gear over the pass.

Still, some of the loads that people were struggling to carry over the Chilkoot seemed to be the burdens of madmen. One man had a heavy grindstone, another struggled the sections of a piano over the summit, an Italian fruit merchant wrestled eight tons of citrus and tomatoes over the pass, and one even brought crates of cats!

By June of 1898, Dawson City had grown to 28,000, close to the size of Portland or Seattle. Although the gold rush had brought everybody to Dawson City, gold hacked from frozen ground or panned from icy streams wasn’t the only way that gold found its way into fortune-seekers’ pockets. A lot of important details were overlooked—essential goods and services. Hay sold for $1,000 a ton. Salt was literally worth its weight in gold. The only broom for sale in town went for $15. Kerosene went for $40 a gallon.

In all, the rush for the Klondike was a magnificent bust. The thousands of gold-seekers that first year had paid nearly $60 million in costs for a total yield in 1898 of around $10 million worth of $14-an-ounce gold.

What does all of this have to do with running a successful tree business in the 1990s? Well, think of Chilkoot Pass as the everyday obstacle of running your business. Each day you take another step up that treacherous pass, and work and hope and pray that you don’t make a wrong step or get swept away by an avalanche. Think of the Mounties with their dreaded scales as the modern-day requirements of insurance, withholding taxes, employee benefits and everything else you are required to have to establish and maintain a legitimate business enterprise.

What about the madmen on the Chilkoot Pass with the fruit, the grindstone, the piano and the cats?

The man with the grindstone charged an ounce of gold to sharpen picks that dulled daily. The fruit merchant sold lemons for $1 each and the tomatoes for $5 a pound. The man with the cats, understanding the loneliness of miners in isolation, got an ounce of gold for each of his felines. The man with the piano made a fortune when he teamed up with another madman who packed in enough whiskey to open a saloon!

Comfort zone

Basically, it seems to me that there are two categories for improving your bottom line: increase your revenue sources and reduce operating expenses.

I believe that the key to both categories is personal/professional growth. The more you know about the tree health profession and appropriate business applications, the better equipped you’ll be to make successful business decisions. Also, the more you know about something, the less of a struggle it becomes; the easier something is, the more fun it can become. And tree work is much too hard a dollar not to be as much fun as possible.

Even though a lot of tree work is done by “a few guys with bulldozers,” even more is done by “thousands with picks and shovels.” I’m one of the guys with a pick and shovel. I think like a small family businessman. I’ve structured my life to survive as a small family busi-
nessman and I write to and in support of the small family businessman.

Like my interest in trees, I'm sure I developed some of my business philosophy from my father, who during his 73-year career turned down every opportunity to grow that others would have died for. A good example was the first line-clearing contract that Pacific Gas and Electric was going to bid in the late 1920s. They offered the contract to my father, but he wasn't interested and suggested someone else who went on to hold the contract for nearly 40 years.

Comfort zone is the term that I've given to the example that my father set in making his business decisions. What is now a multi-million dollar line-clearing contract was not in my father's comfort zone to develop and manage. Instead, what he did with his career was to experiment with company size, services offered and geographic locations until he found a combination that served his needs, interest and comfort zone.

Once he found that combination, he found that he had the peace of mind, energy and desire to make the tree health profession his passionate obsession and he served the profession as an author, organizer, speaker and educator as well as a contractor.

Twenty years ago, I didn't understand why he had let so many opportunities slip through his fingers. Now that I'm beginning my third decade, not only do I understand, but as I look back I realize that all of the so-called innovation and pioneering I've done has been my own experimentation with company size, services offered and geographic locations as I search for my own personal comfort zone.

One of the most important presentations I've ever heard was at a National Arborist Association meeting in Las Vegas. The speaker delivered a paper on "Achieving Your Personal Goals." Basically, the speaker reinforced with words, facts and figures what my father, through example, had attempted to impart. The bottom line is this: Use your business to achieve your personal goals. If you are not achieving those goals, ask yourself these questions: What do I have to change about my operation in order to get back on track? If I cannot achieve my goals, should I be in business for myself in the first place or should I reassess my goals?

**Keys to success**

As I said earlier, I feel the key to success is personal/professional growth. Let's use that as the starting point for organizing our common sense way to improve our business. Let's consider what we know, how we learn and what we're doing before we run out and begin to sell more services.

Maintain a perspective of what your goals and comfort zone are. I've heard many successful businessmen over the years speak on how they started with a pickup truck and built up to hundreds of men and millions of dollars.
of dollars in sales. For some people, the value of the message gets lost by the intimidation of the success. There are those who want to stay small, and I believe that is a valid personal goal because it hits the comfort zone. Just remember, the smaller you are the more important it is to be efficient and profitable because everything you have comes from your business and your personal labors.

If you're a sole proprietorship (or individual corporation), family business, with less than six employees, you're probably wondering if there is any future for a small company kind of outfit. Well, there is, but there are several key elements.

1. Learn as much as you can about the fundamentals of arboriculture. Remember, the more you know about what you are doing, the easier it will be. Develop a modest reference library. Nobody should be expected to carry around in their heads all of the tree species, insects, diseases and rules of tree biology that an arborist may encounter through his/her career. It is, however, vital to memorize the basic trees, problems and solutions in your trading area. Your reference library will give you the answers and professional edge that you need when you encounter a difficult situation or an unfamiliar plant, insect or disease.

Books are a start, but they only scratch the surface of the true lore of tree care. About the only way you are going to be able to learn "real facts" about tree care and the tree business is to associate with the experts. Many of them hang out at the nearest meeting of the National Arborist Association, the International Society of Arboriculture, the American Society of Consulting Arborists and all the regional meetings as well.

I think the most reliable path is a dedicated combination of talent, practice and education.

2. All right, then, you've bought the books, but you want more. This is where trade associations can help.

The National Arborist Association restricts membership to owners of tree maintenance companies of all sizes engaged in residential, commercial and utility line clearance operations. The NAA provides a full range of services for training and upgrading your safety and tree care operations and is in the forefront of regulatory affairs. Phone 1-800-733-2622 for information.

The International Society of Arboriculture is open to all with an interest in trees. The ISA was formed to disseminate knowledge of tree health and function and it has an aggressive Research Trust Foundation. Truly international, the ISA has members in many foreign countries. The United States and Canada are divided into regions, each served by a Chapter. The ISA has an annual meeting in addition to annual chapter meetings. Some chapters, like the Western Chapter, are so large and so well organized that they also sponsor regional meetings to deal with specific topics at an affordable one-day event. Call 217-328-2032 for information.

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The American Society of Consulting Arborists was organized to serve those practicing the specialized skills of arborist consultation. Within the membership are some of the most distinguished and respected arborists in the country. Their experience represents a wellspring of knowledge that cannot be found in books. The current president is John T. Duke. Give him a call at 303-425-0814.

In addition, there are many state and local arborist associations that hold regular meetings and publish newsletters to keep members abreast of changes and new techniques. Although these associations provide a wealth of knowledge and opportunity, there is still another source of continuing education: colleges and various departments of agriculture. In California, we have the County Farm Advisors, the University of California system and the County Agricultural Commissioners, to name a few. Each of these agencies has been an invaluable resource. Find out what programs and services are available in your area and make use of the information that they have.

Mark Twain once said, “Clothes make the man. Naked people have little or no influence on society.” If you are truly sincere about pursuing a career in arboriculture, clothe yourself in the trappings of the professional; join one or more of the arborist groups available to you.

3. As you begin to master the fundamentals of arboriculture, find an area of specialization that suits your interest and comfort zone. Never stop learning.

4. Belong to the local business community. This is one area that I think many tree companies neglect in their development. Are you a member of any of the following: Chamber of Commerce, National Federation of Independent Business, Rotary, Lions or Kiwanis? I know it's tough to belong to a day-meeting group if you're up in a tree, but if you can leave your guys alone for a few hours so that you can belong to a community group, I guarantee you'll be the only arborist. Once the other members get to know you and your profession, whom do you think they are going to think of and recommend when tree questions come up?

5. Giving talks about tree care within your community can be very satisfying and helpful to the development of your image. Just two years out of high school, I got a job teaching a course entitled “Tree Care for Homeowners” in the Los Altos Adult Education District. A year later, I got a community college credential. I didn't sell any jobs, but I got paid to experiment with ways of teaching and it looks good on my resume.

Specific strategies

Arthur Marlow, of Carlisle, On-
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tario, owner of Complete Tree Service Company, has some excellent strategies for improving his business. Starting out with the basic services, he has begun to search his comfort zone for some "grindstones and cats." He’s diversified his operation into an arborist supply division and an educational/training division. He’s pretty well covered now. He can do the work for you, or charge you to learn how to do it yourself and sell you the tools to do the work.

One of the philosophies that seems to drive Marlow is his belief that if you take something, you should put something back. To this end, I understand that if his company contracts a removal for a residential tree, it will offer you a replacement or donate that tree in your name to the community. That’s a unique and elegant "win-win" promotion. On a personal note, Marlow has pledged a percentage of his gross to help support the Museum of Arboriculture.

Tom Golon, owner of Wonderland Tree Care in Oyster Bay, New York, practices many common sense ways to improve his business. He first developed a clear picture of his personal goals. He likes Oyster Bay and wanted to stay in his boyhood town. His office is in the largest garden center in Oyster Bay and he has an ongoing training program for his employees. He also has a sense of community. He’s a member of the Chamber of Commerce and was a regular member of Rotary until he took on the presidency of his local arborist group. A few years ago, Tom
asked me for some ideas about getting schoolchildren involved with tree awareness. I suggested that Wonderland sponsor a tree poster contest through the schools. The program was a huge success. The garden center served as the site for showing the posters and presenting awards. All of the parents, (you know, the ones who own trees) were there to take pride in their children's work. Without heavy-handed hard sell, Tom did something neat for the community and that many more people know and appreciate him just a little more.

Small things count

There are so many small things that you can do to improve your efficiency, community image and daily operation. Here are a few "grinder-stones and cats" for your community efforts and public relations.

1. Postcards ... Because of my interest in attending so many far-flung arborist meetings, I was always trying to catch up and stay even with my calls. On one dash through the office on the way to the airport. I grabbed up all my phone messages and took them with me. I sent the callers postcards from the NAA meeting in Florida, saying I was attending a conference to learn something that would help their problem. I also wrote that I would contact them to set up an appointment upon my return. The response was so positive that the practice has become standard procedure.

2. Buttons and bumperstickers ... I always keep a few "I Love Trees" buttons and bumperstickers in my car. I'd give them to special clients and their children. I'd scan the newspapers for the occasional article about someone who did something nice for a tree. I'd send them a thank you note on behalf of the M.F. Blair Tree Experts and toss in a bumpersticker. I don't know and I don't care if it brought me a job directly. I felt good about it and I'm sure that the recipient told others about the note of recognition.

3. Aerial rescue training ... Throughout the course of a year, there are too many articles in the newspaper about people getting injured and killed in trees. Too often the article cites the difficulties that the emergency services had in effecting a rescue.

Tim Johnson, owner of Artistic Arborist, in Phoenix, volunteered his services to the fire department to teach some basic aerial rescue techniques. His offer was gratefully accepted. Tim Cox, of Cox Tree Care in Greensboro, North Carolina, is a professional fireman as well as a dedicated mainstream arborist. He has worked with his department on aerial rescue procedures.

4. After the Great Quake of 1989, I realized that tree companies have many skills and pieces of equipment that could be of great value in such an emergency. Generators, chain saws, ropes, chains, digging tools are vital necessities. I saw aerial lifts being used to rescue people from ledges and overpasses. Spray equipment can serve as auxiliary fire equipment. As a matter of fact, many companies registered their spray rigs as such during World War II and received extra fuel allotments. In hurri-
Every year, just before spring, I get calls from friends wondering if they should sell out and go to work for someone else. I have one friend in California with a thriving business who considered moving to Australia. The point is, we all suffer from periods of doubt, worry and despair. If we didn’t, we wouldn’t be alive. I’ve never been to an arborist meeting in 30 years that has ever had a speaker who addressed the psychological pressure that we all endure. Am I in the right business? Should I buy that new truck? What if I fail? The fear of failure is a major concern that we all deal with and are afraid to admit, except to our closest friends.

Before you give up and sell out or go to work for someone else, you’ll have to resolve some important issues. Will I really be better off? Can I live with the disappearance in freedoms working for someone else will mean? Can I afford to start all over? Work these questions out and you’ll be able to see more clearly whether you are ready for a major change, suffering from short-term cash flow jitters or just having a bad day of cabin fever blues. Take good care of yourself. You won’t be able to do a thing if you are broken down.

**Other considerations**

There are some other things to consider. I’ve always felt that the ar-

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---
Clothe yourself in the trappings of the professional; join one or more of the arborist groups available to you.

The arborist profession has held itself back from its full potential as a recognized business endeavor because of the following, to name a few:

1. Lack of solidarity. There are scores of arborist groups. I've spoken to the Massachusetts Tree Wardens Association, the Massachusetts Arborists Association and the New England Chapter of the ISA, all within 10 miles of each other's meetings. Personal opinions about unions reserved, who hasn't heard of the Teamsters, and who doesn't associate the Teamsters with truck drivers.

2. It's not a true profession. It is for those of us who have chosen to make arboriculture a life's calling. But so long as every dedicated arborist shares space in the phone book with 29 "other guys," as long as "anyone with a pickup truck and a chain saw can be a tree surgeon" is a true statement, tree care will never be accepted by society alongside civil engineering, anthropology and brain surgery as a profession. Our company lost the best man we ever had to a plumbers union apprenticeship program because he couldn't see a future in tree work. I was young then. That was a turning point for me and I resolved to never lose another good man for such a reason or find myself in a corner with nowhere to go in my career.

3. Our rugged individualism. For years I didn't feel comfortable with anybody but a fellow "treeman." You see, I felt that we were a different breed and mere civilians just wouldn't understand. Years later, I discovered that all specialists, be they paratroopers, bridge painters or deep sea divers, feel the same way. So we're unique in what we do, but not in how we feel. If we're not unique in how we feel, then we must be pretty much the same as everybody else. I enjoy a much broader circle of friends now.

Conclusion

I've tried to establish some unusual reference points, deliberately making comparisons to the Klondike Gold Rush in order to get you to relate your tree business to a broader contextual view than that of phloem, cabling, bracing, pruning and removal. All it takes is trying to see something that everybody else has been looking at a little differently.

Donald F. Blair, president of Sierra Moreno Mercantile Company, Big Pool, Maryland, is an arborist, entrepreneur and teacher.
Looking for software

In the November issue of Tree Care Industry, I read the article on “Arborists & Computers.” Most of the software is listed for use with the IBM. We have an Apple Macintosh SE-40 and would like to know what software is available for this industry.

We are a small tree company on Cape Cod and are interested in a database program for our customers (spraying, general tree work, consulting, etc.).

Peter M. Childs
West Barnstable, Mass.

Editor’s response:

I would preface my response by saying that, in general, it isn’t advisable to limit your software selection to that which can run on existing hardware. I presume that you have other programs valuable to your business that run on your Mac and that you would rather avoid the expense and aggravation of installing a second system.

You should probably seek the advice of a consultant. Most programs for IBM-compatible systems can be converted for use on the Mac; indeed, the Mac versions may already exist.

Letters should be addressed to:
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New Developments

By Steven R. Semler

Recently, the courts sustained an employer's fraud claim against a union. Congress passed a law dealing with employee releases, the Occupational Safety and Health Administration issued a 5-year report, and the U.S. Postal Service in Boston issued a survey on the real cost of drug use. Following is a summary of each of those events.

Employer can sue union

The owner of a non-union heavy equipment company got permission to haul dirt from a construction site. While removing the dirt, he was stopped by a union business agent who told him he couldn't work on the job site unless he signed certain forms. The equipment owner signed the forms, which turned out to be an obligation to adopt the union contract and pay into union benefit funds for all work done by the company. The union trust funds later sued the equipment company for union fund contributions. The company counter-sued, claiming the union's statement that it "had to" sign the union forms to work on the job site was incorrect and fraudulent. In response, the union contended that the state law fraud action was "preempted" by the rule that suits on union contracts are subject to federal labor contract law, thereby displacing the state law fraud claim.

The court, however, sustained the employer's fraud claim. It found that it was not based on the contract, but only on the fraudulent inducement to enter a contract. Accordingly, the rule of federal preemption of labor contract disputes was not triggered, and the jury's award of $337,000 to the employer was affirmed.

Employee releases

Frequently employers will give severance pay to an employee being terminated, if the employee signs a release of all claims. In order to make sure employees don't unknowingly sign away their rights concerning age discrimination related to the termination, Congress has passed a new law.

The upshot of the law is that the release is invalid on age discrimination issues unless age discrimination is specifically mentioned in the release. The law also calls for statutory "cooling off" periods, during which the employee is encouraged to get legal advice, and stipulates that the employee be informed of data he may request concerning the age-impact of reductions in force of which his termination may be a part.

Failure to comply with statute will allow the terminated employee to pocket the severance cash, and then turn around and sue the employer for age discrimination.

OSHA's report card

The Occupational Safety and
Health Administration recently issued a report on its activities from 1985-1990. According to the survey, fewer inspections were conducted, but they result in substantially more violations. The survey also shows that penalties have increased over six-fold.

OSHA further reports an 80% increase in "willful" violations. The figures do not reflect Congress' recent authorization for OSHA to increase its penalties seven-fold.

The cost of drug use
A recent survey of the U.S. Postal Service in Boston found those employees who tested positive for marijuana use had 55% more industrial accidents, 85% more injuries and 145% more absenteeism.

Steven R. Semler is a partner in the Washington, D.C. law firm of Semler & Pritzker, which exclusively represents management with respect to labor law matters. Mr. Semler is labor law counsel to NAA and several corporations in the tree care industry.

Readers should not rely upon this article as individual advice for specific situations; that can be provided only by the reader's own counsel.

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On top of all that, TEMPO is practically odorless.

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OSHA Fines Increase

At the beginning of this month, the Occupational Safety and Health Administration implemented its new penalty structure for safety and health violations in the workplace.

Under the new structure, approved by Congress and signed by President Bush last fall, the maximum penalty for willful and repeat violations of OSHA standards increased from $10,000 to $70,000. Maximum penalties for serious, non-serious, failure to abate and failure to post violations are now $7,000 from $1,000. In addition, a minimum penalty of $5,000 will be assessed for a willful violation.

The new structure will apply to all inspections that were started on or after March 1, and increased penalties will apply to violations that occurred on or after November 5, 1990. It is also applicable to states that have their own job and safety health plans, but those plans must be “at least as effective” as federal OSHA requirements, said Acting Secretary of Labor Roderick DeArment.

The $70,000 ceiling is a “discretionary upper limit only,” the Department of Labor emphasized. OSHA “will employ wide latitude in applying the appropriate penalties, taking into account the size and history of the companies involved,” the department said in its news release.

The new penalty structure was instituted under revenue-raising provisions of the Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act of 1990. Penalties paid for OSHA violations, as well as those paid for violations of the Mine Safety and Health Act, will go directly to the U.S. Treasury.

Given the new penalty structure, the fines have the potential of making a significant contribution to reducing the national deficit. Still, there are two ways employers can approach the new system: They can either try to deny entry to OSHA compliance officials and refuse to cooperate with investigations, or they can improve their safety and health programs. The latter is preferable since employers will not have to shell out hard-earned dollars on fines, and employees will likely be more productive in a safer and healthier environment.

Workers Compensation Costs Double

Employers last year bore $60 billion in annual direct costs of workers compensation, according to an estimate by Tillinghast, a risk management and insurance consulting company. These costs are more than double the amount of five years ago, said Tillinghast, which surveyed 576 mid-size and large employers for the data.

Jerry A. Miccolis, vice president of Tillinghast, said he felt that rising medical expenses have caused much of the increase. The National Council on Compensation Insurance lists medical benefits as making up 40% of workers compensation costs.

More than eight out of 10 respondents felt that rising costs of medical benefits were the leading problem in the workers compensation system. Other concerns focused on broadened definitions of work-related injuries, attorney involvement, rises in indemnity benefit costs, employee abuse of the system and health care provider abuse of the system.

Although the workers compensation system is costly, minimizing accidents is still the number one priority for keeping costs down. Install a safety program in your workplace, or review the program you currently use. Evaluate the program’s effectiveness and improve weak areas.

Keep Accurate Records Of Drivers

Accurate records should be maintained on each employee’s past driving record and the level of training he or she has received.

Last year, the Department of Transportation fined several companies for not keeping accurate records. Following are some examples of violations and the fines they carried.

A New Jersey company was required to pay $4,050 for failing to maintain a complete qualification file for each driver and not requiring drivers to prepare a vehicle inspection report.

Another company in the same state paid $9,250 for failing to maintain a complete qualification file for each driver and not requiring drivers to prepare a record of duty status or vehicle inspection report.

A company in Connecticut paid $24,500 for using a disqualified driver, failing to maintain a complete qualification file for each driver, and not requiring drivers to prepare a record of duty status or vehicle inspection report.

Since the fines can be quite steep, the most sensible thing to do is to spend some time to make sure your records are accurate and up to date.
Pesticide Use Causes No Respiratory Risk

Lawn care workers suffer no significant respiratory risk from spraying pesticides, according to a 3-year study completed by the American Industrial Hygiene Association. The study showed, however, that workers often did not comply with chemical manufacturers' instructions regarding the use of protective clothing and dilution ratios established by the Occupational Safety and Health Administration.

Pesticides can enter the body through inhalation, ingestion and skin exposure. OSHA standards require protective equipment be provided, used and maintained where necessary. That means that respirators must be used whenever a lawn care worker might be exposed to hazards capable of causing injury or impairment of any sort.

One area of the OSHA standard that warrants closer attention is the use and maintenance of respirators. Employees must follow pesticide label requirements to ensure the safe application of potentially hazardous materials.

Since the outbreak of war in the Middle East, we have seen civilians and military personnel alike wearing respirator equipment similar to that used in the tree care profession. Air raid sirens provide a signal for those in the war zone to put on their gas masks. Workers in the green industry should think of the instructions on a pesticide label as their own siren.

Respirators, as outlined by OSHA, shall be provided by the employer when needed to protect the health of the employee. Employers are also responsible for establishing and maintaining a respiratory protective program. Basic requirements for such a program include written operating procedures, selection of respirators based on the hazards to which the worker is exposed, and proper training in the use and limitations of the respirators. Cleaning, storing, and inspecting both the respirator and the work site are also outlined in OSHA standards.

Employees must follow pesticide label requirements carefully to ensure the safe application of potentially hazardous materials. In addition, the employer is required to follow the guidelines set by OSHA and any additional requirements set by respective state agencies.
Quality Service

Success And Long-Term Growth Of A Business Depend On It

By Peter Gerstenberger
Editor

What makes a customer call you instead of one of the other tree companies in the phone book, or come back to you rather than trying another service? Why would a client recommend your service to a friend or neighbor over the 20 other tree companies in the phone book? All the possible reasons can be summed up in one word: satisfaction. And probably the best recipe for customer satisfaction is to combine quality service with a fair price. Several firms have taken this recipe as the basis for implementing successful strategies to ensure satisfaction.

The importance of follow-up

Hendricksen, The Care of Trees, in Wheeling, Illinois, provides a perfect example of the importance of repeat business. “Eighty-five percent of our work comes from 15 percent of our clients. It pays us to stay very close to them,” says company owner John Hendricksen.

The company has branch offices throughout the Chicago area and a new office in Herndon, Virginia. Staff in all of those locations follow up with phone calls after a job is completed. The company also sends out a “green sheet,” a questionnaire that asks customers to comment on each aspect of the service they receive, beginning with their initial contact and ending with the follow-up call. For Hendricksen, this practice is winning back customers who might have been unhappy with some aspect of the service provided but would otherwise not communicate their displeasure to the company.

Company guarantee

Rainbow Treecare in St. Louis Park, Minnesota, even goes so far as to guarantee customer satisfaction. Since the company obtains new clients exclusively from referrals, the company’s commitment to its customers appears on printed material distributed to customers. It states: “Our primary goal is to serve and satisfy you—our valued customer. We guarantee this satisfaction and promise to do whatever is necessary to make you happy. That is how we measure our success. We need your business.”

Sometimes serving the customer means foregoing a sale if no service is needed, or taking a loss on the job.
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Now there's a better way to stop these insect pests.

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So use Foray. And give caterpillars their just desserts.

Please circle 26 on the Reader Service Card
Providing quality service is essential for long-term business success, especially in difficult economic times.

Other strategies

Richard Huntington, of Mayne Tree Expert Company in San Mateo, California, distinguishes his company from those that offer only pruning and removal by providing a full range of quality services. He encourages training for his field personnel so that they can respond knowledgeably to clients' questions and concerns, and he firmly believes in the educational value of arborist licensing and certification.

Tree Specialists, in Holliston, Massachusetts, has a policy of maintaining responsibility for their work for three years. Under a monitoring and education program initiated by company owner Rolf Briggs, every client receives an unsolicited visit every 12 to 18 months, during the slow times. A flyer is left with an explanation for the visit as well as specific recommendations for work. If someone is home, the arborist will ask the client to walk the property. The service has been well received.

Collier Arbor Care of Portland, Oregon, has been in existence since 1937. President Terrill Collier reports that he has customers that have been loyal to the company for 40 years, as well as others that are second-generation clients. He feels he owes this to the deep commitment his firm displays for professionalism.

While it is important to be dedicated to professional ideals, it is equally as important in a service industry that you communicate your dedication to your clientele. Collier accomplishes this largely through its newsletter. The focus of the newsletter is advice rather than the sale of services—in this way, the information in it becomes a valuable service.

Collier charges a modest fee for a diagnosis and prescription instead of giving free estimates. This helps the potential client understand and appreciate the service that Collier provides even with its initial consultation.

Conclusion

Providing quality service is essential for long-term business success, especially in difficult economic times. Good service is a cyclical phenomenon: It creates customer satisfaction, which in turn increases repeat business and business from referrals. This means one doesn’t have to work as hard selling and can instead concentrate on providing better service.
Tax Time Nearing

The key to making your tax return preparation easier and surviving an Internal Revenue audit is to keep documentation that will support your deductions.

While your accountant may prepare your return, you have to make sure that your records are in top shape. Here are some important records you should have to make your tax preparation a little easier.

Receipts and disbursements
You should have a ledger showing all your business bills paid by check and cash. You should also have all your cancelled checks.

After your return has been prepared, file the ledger and cancelled checks in a safe place. You must maintain all documentation for at least three years after the date your return is due. For 1990 returns, that's April 15, 1994, or later if you obtain an extension.

Vehicle expenses
You should have a record of your mileage. You can claim 26 cents per mile for all business mileage, or deduct expenses for oil, gas, tires, repairs, insurance, depreciation, interest on loans, license-tag fees, garage rent, parking fees and tolls. Use both approaches to calculate your expenses, and deduct the larger amount.

Bad debts
You will also need records of efforts to collect your debts, including duplicate billings, past due notices, collection agency correspondence, collection letters and small claims court filings.

When you file your return, attach a statement of debts, when they became due, who the debtors are, your efforts to collect the debts and why you feel they are uncollectible.

Rent
The rent for your place of business is fully deductible. You can also deduct the depreciation amount of permanent improvements.

Travel
All business-related travel and 80% of meal and entertainment expenses are tax deductible, if you have the documentation. Such expenses include air, rail and bus fares; car expense; cab fares; meals and lodging; cleaning and laundry; telephone; tips; other similar expenses.

If a trip is part business and part pleasure, keep records of the business portion of your trip. If a spouse or family member accompanies you on your trip, you can deduct only your expenses.

Meals and entertainment
Meal and entertainment expenses can be deducted only if you discuss business with your client before, during or after the meal or entertainment. Again, keep careful records of all these discussions.

Generally, the IRS will not question travel and entertainment expenses so long as they do not exceed 5% of your gross income.
A sound marketing plan must be based upon clearly defined objectives. Once you lay that groundwork, there are many tools you can use to achieve your objectives. The best way to illustrate this is with a real-life example.

Tom Golon is the owner of Wonderland Tree Care, a small but progressive firm in Oyster Bay, New York. He has a base of 1300 clients, with 90% of his gross sales to residential clients. Rather than growing drastically in terms of client numbers, his marketing objective is to nurture those he already has.

Oyster Bay is a small community on the north shore of Long Island Sound. Its residents are mostly white-collar professionals. Wonderland's blue-collar and commercial clients represent a steady and important source of income, especially at a time when an economic slump finds the white-collar contingent spending conservatively.

**A fixture in the community**

Golon's marketing approach is to establish his company as a fixture in the community because he personally seeks to be involved in the community. He is involved with the Chamber of Commerce and the Rotary. His brother, also in the business, is active with the Lions Club. Thus he finds personal as well as professional rewards in much of what he does.

Last year, Wonderland co-sponsored an essay contest for primary school children on Arbor Day. This year, there will be a poster contest. Children received Wonderland balloons and yo-yo's. Some took home tree seedlings. The children had a good time with this experience and their parents associated the name Wonderland with concern for the community and its trees.

For a retail business, the three most important things are, "Location, location and location." The same could be said for a service business. While many tree companies tend to be located in out-of-the-way areas, Wonderland is quite literally a fixture in the community because its office is located in a building that houses a retail nursery and a garden center. Golon's storefront provides potential clients with factual information and do-it-yourself tips. The store drew 1200 to its grand opening. The event also received a full-page newspaper write-up. More recently, a free lecture on pruning drew 150.

Golon plans to increase his direct mailing. Several years ago, he enlisted the services of Duane Pancoast of the Pancoast Concern, Ltd. to assist with certain aspects of marketing and public relations. The result of their collaboration was a color brochure introducing a new Wonderland service called Arbor Health. The brochure accomplished its objective of generating interest in a new service and won an award from the National Arborist Association for its overall design and effectiveness.

**Next project: newsletter**

Wonderland's next project will be a newsletter. Pancoast, who understands the business because he works with quite a few arborists, will work on this project also. Pancoast helped Golon realize that he would have to become more sensitive to his clients' wants if his marketing is to be successful. Golon is the first to admit that at one time, his ego stood in the way. "I was trying so hard to show I was a professional in my newsletter that I lost sight of the purpose for writing it," he relates.

Pancoast echoed this observation. "Arborists get overly technical and enjoy using pictures of their big trucks and heavy equipment. The average client could care less about these things," he says.

Pancoast's basic recipe for a suc-
successful newsletter is one that is published twice a year, usually spring and fall, that is professionally laid out and typeset on high-quality paper. He advises arborists to carry “point-and-shoot” cameras and take plenty of pictures. The newsletter should provide a mix of information about seasonal services and articles purely for entertainment.

One of the toughest aspects of a marketing campaign is determining what its budget should be. Advertising and public relations consultants will sometimes use the guideline of 4 to 5% of a company’s sales for its ad budget. Pancoast cautions that this approach may be overly simplistic since your direct mail advertising has to compete with all the other advertising your client receives.

Most of the cost of producing printed matter is borne up front in the production of the art work. You can save money on printing by using a one-color or two-color print process, or some combination of the two. Newsletters can be designed in such a way that full-color mastheads can be printed ahead of time in large quantities for several issues to take advantage of quantity price breaks. You may even want to have the masthead printed by a high-end printer and have the remainder of the piece done at a budget printer.

All things considered, Golon finds that his most powerful marketing tool is customer service. “We have worked hard to develop a reputation for customer service that is second to none in our community,” he says. “Of course, it costs more to provide this level of service. That’s why we are among the more expensive companies in this area. But it is also why we have such a loyal clientele.”

Wonderland fits with the image of a small town, with a reputation for being civic-minded, professional and honest. Its high prices tend to discourage the price-shopping potential client so prevalent in Oyster Bay. Despite this, Wonderland’s sales have increased over 50% a year for the last four years with no addition to its sales force.
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Becoming a member of the National Arborist Association just may be the best way to get the most out of your money. The NAA provides everything you need to succeed in business today. Whether you're big or small the NAA can make a difference. The NAA offers Management Services, Safety Programs, Arborist Training Programs, and represents its members in Washington while also simplifying Government Regulations. The NAA can increase the Productivity, Efficiency and Profitability of your firm.

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Please circle 24 on the Reader Service Card
What's Coming In TCI

Tree Care Industry (TCI) magazine recently published its editorial calendar for 1991. Each month, TCI will analyze a single subject with several stories focusing on different aspects of that subject. TCI will solicit an increasing number of articles from outside writers to keep its editorial content fresh.

Do you have a story for TCI? The Editor will be happy to review your idea or manuscript and discuss it with you. We pay an honorarium for articles we accept. Here is the 1991 editorial calendar, including issues that have already been published so you can see where we’ve been as well as where we’re going.

JANUARY
Theme - Tree Health Care Practices
Cultural practices
Integrated pest management

A Word About TCI
TCI is mailed to more than 16,000 arborists every month. It is published by the National Arborist Association, whose members are the recognized leaders in the practice of commercial arboriculture. TCI also draws upon the ISA, ASCA, and other professional arborist organizations in the mainstream of arboriculture.

Would you like to be in the mainstream? Getting TCI every month and staying informed is a big step in the right direction. If you do not receive a personal subscription to TCI, use the subscription form in this magazine to get started. Do it today!

FEBRUARY
Theme - Tree Care and Utilities
Line clearance practices
Lump sum prices v. unit cost
Tree growth regulators

MARCH
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Marketing and sales techniques
Providing quality services
Public relations

APRIL
Theme - Managing Debris Disposal
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Disposal options
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MAY
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Theme - Occupational Safety
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Back injury prevention
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Theme - Trees for Tough Environments
People pressures and trees
Plant selection
Hazard tree assessment

SEPTEMBER
Theme - Equipment Issue
What's new?
Preventive maintenance
Chain saw care

OCTOBER
Theme - The Business Side of The Tree Care Business
Financial statements
Cost analysis
Making a profit

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Theme - Systemic Treatments
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1-800-622-2562

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TREE CARE INDUSTRY - MARCH 1991 29
Dinner-dance raises $4000 for scholarships

Longwood Gardens, Kennett Square, Pennsylvania, was the setting for a recent gala dinner-dance that raised nearly $4000 for scholarships for students pursuing careers in arboriculture.

The event was sponsored by the Certified Arborists of Pennsylvania and Delaware in conjunction with the Penn-Del Chapter of the International Society of Arboriculture. This was the second social held at Longwood Gardens and celebrated the fifth anniversary of the scholarship fund.

Hyland Johns, chairman of the International Society of Arboriculture Research Trust, was guest speaker and was honored for his dedication to arboriculture.

Davey Foundation Awards Grant To OSU/ATI Student

Christine Woodward of Magnolia, Ohio, has been awarded the Davey Foundation Arboricultural Grant for The Ohio State University Agricultural Technical Institute (OSU/ATI), Wooster, where she is majoring in Landscape Construction and Contracting. She is a 1976 graduate of Canton Resposity Louisville High School.

The Davey Tree Expert Company grant program was established in 1989 as a direct response to support premier schools offering landscape programs with a specialty in arboriculture. Davey is an international company employing more than 4500 people and providing residential and commercial lawn, tree care and utility arborist services.

OSU/ATI, The Ohio State University's 2-year statewide technical college, offers an associate's in Applied Science. Twenty-two programs are available in engineering technologies, horticultural industries, agricultural businesses and animal industries.

Students complete 40% of their credits in writing, speaking, math, science, social science and business. OSU/ATI's technical courses emphasize theory and hands-on education and every student is required to participate in an industry internship. More than 95% of graduates find employment within 120 days of graduation.
Hodges Manufacturing Co., Inc., introduces its Model 89 stump router, designed to remove hard-to-reach stumps, any size, any kind, 12 inches below ground. It features a 23-hp engine, 15-inch cutter head, self-propelled front-end cutter head advantage, automatic brakes, low maintenance and patented push-down operation. Hodges also manufactures log splitters in vertical and horizontal models. For further information, contact Hodges Manufacturing Co., Inc., P.O. Box 897, Mountain Home, Ark. 72653. Phone: 1-800-525-6312, out of state; 501-492-6116, in Arkansas.

Falkenberg, Inc., of Clackamas, Oregon, introduces the Spotlyte 55 compact sprayer. The Spotlyte 55-gallon high-density double-strength virgin polyethylene tank features a built-in 20-year UV blocker, molded-in fluid level gauges and caution use labels. Fifty feet of chemical-resistant premium, flexible nylon reinforced hose and brass spraying systems gun give spray control precision. The gas engine model comes with a heavy-duty 0-150 psi Hypro roller pump and delivers up to 7 gallons per minute. For further information call Falkenberg, Inc., 1-800-424-7867.

Mobay Specialty Products Group, of Kansas City, Missouri, has purchased the federal registrations that pertain to the production and sale of trichlorifon from Kaw Valley, Inc., in Leavenworth, Kansas. Trichlorifon is the active ingredient in Dylox (TM) insecticide, which is used to control a wide spectrum of pests. Prior to the acquisition, Mobay offered an 80% soluble powder Dylox. Now Mobay is able to offer the 80% soluble powder and Dylox 6.2 granular to the turf care professional under the Mobay label. Dylox 6.2 granular will also be available in the consumer insecticide market. Mobay Corporation, Specialty Products Group offers a full line of insecticides, nematicides and fungicides for the pest control and turf and ornamental markets. For further information, contact Mobay at 816-242-2000.
INDUSTRY ALMANAC

March 3-5
ISA—Southern Chapter
Raleigh, N.C.
Contact: Ernie Mitchell,
803-234-4033

March 6-7
ISA—Michigan Chapter
Kellogg Center

March 14-15
Tree Care Workshop
North Dakota Urban & Community Forestry Association
Radisson Inn
Bismarck, N.D.
Call: 701-222-6561

March 19
N.H. Arborist Association
Annual Meeting
Urban Forestry Center
Portsmouth, N.H.
Contact: William Collins,
603-485-4761

March 26-27
Tree Wardens', Arborists' and Utilities Conference
Northampton Hilton Inn
Northampton, Mass.
Contact: Louis Casasanto,
508-365-2842
Hilton Inn. 413-586-1211

May 4-7
Menninger Sun Belt Tree Conference
Cooperative Extension Office
West Palm Beach, Fla.
Contact: Carol Smith, 813-446-3356

May 18-21
ISA—Western Chapter
Red Lion Inn
Modesto, Calif.
Contact: Charli Lithias.
805-929-5113

Meeting Announcement
The St. Louis Arborist Association, dedicated to tree preservation, meets on the first Monday of the month at 7:30 p.m. For more information, call Timothy Gamma at 314-867-2363.
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Holan designed the 819 Tree Trimmer for the professional arborist. The Holan 819 features 270° of upper boom and 125° of lower boom articulation, a 55’ working height, velvety smooth, full-pressure controls, a full ¾” free-flow return line for minimum heat build-up and maximum tool life, and the same rigid rectangular booms found on all Holans. The Holan 819 is the most productive and dependable tree trimming machine available.

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Arborist/crew leader position open for responsible individual with an interest in urban tree care. Some experience necessary but will train. We are an established company in Chicago’s northwest suburbs that offers an excellent salary and benefit package commensurate with qualifications and experience. Please contact Rodney, McGinty Bros., Inc., 3524 Long Grove Road, Long Grove, Ill. 60047. 708-438-5161.

Arbor Care, Inc., is looking for (3 to 5 years) experienced, self-motivated climber/foreman to work for fast growing quality-oriented firm in Houston, Texas. Please send resume to P.O. Box 90550, Houston, Texas 77290-0550; or call 713-893-7253. Salary negotiable.

Sales/climber. Denver, Colorado, area full-service tree company needs person with a min. of 5 years field experience to perform a combination of sales and production duties. Ideal candidate will have degree in horticulture and be experienced in all phases of arboriculture. Good pay and benefits. Contact Ralph Bronk at Mountain High Tree Service 303-232-0666.

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Aerator or stumper. 1990 Grow Gun, new $3,000, now $1900. 1990 Rayco 16ZVR Demo condition, with trailer, $5500. O.B. Call 309-792-8733.

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- New chain saws—Save by bid request only—send your list for 1 saw or 100. Price by return mail. Husqvarna, Poulan, Olympyk. Also new and used Rayco stump grinder. Tree Barber Supply, 3924 Lake Catherine, Jackson, Miss. 39212. Phone: 601-373-6423.
- Bucket truck—1982 Ford F-700 with Teco Saturn 50 aerial device, Southco body and tool boxes. Fresh paint and rubber. A clean, no rust southern truck. $25,000. 617-934-6484.
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Dreaming Of A Lift
But Left Knocking At The Door

By Thomas Clancy

This past December, as I was finishing my last semester at the University of Massachusetts, I was experiencing the pre-holiday blues. With Christmas gifts to purchase and short-term employment opportunities appearing rather bleak, my financial situation did not look promising.

My uncle, who owns a tree care company in Connecticut, stopped by the house one afternoon on his way home from leasing an aerial lift for a utility contract he had just received. My spirits were soon lifted as he told me he could employ me for a few weeks.

I was ecstatic as I would finally get a chance to practice the arboricultural skills I had just spent a year and a half learning. "You'll work out great," my uncle said. "You can do permissions." That meant I would be obtaining permission from residents to perform routine line clearance trimming on their trees. His statement passed right over my head as all I was thinking about was finally being able to use an aerial lift instead of having to climb trees.

My dreams of aerial prowess were dashed on the first day of work when I was handed the keys to an IPM rig that would be my chariot for the next two weeks. and I dressed for warmth, not appearance. Thinking also that I would be wearing a hard hat each day, I proceeded to get a rather "short" haircut.

Armed with my clipboard, permission slips, army field jacket, dark sunglasses and crew cut, I soon realized I was thinking about was finally being able to use an aerial lift instead of having to climb trees.

My dreams of aerial prowess were dashed on the first day of work when I was handed the keys to an IPM rig that would be my chariot for the next two weeks.

This city would not win a Tree City, U.S.A. award. Row after row of Norway maples planted directly under the power lines made "Acer bullwinkle" the official city tree. The residents of this city had their own ideas of tree care as well. They were especially skilled in the fine art of topping.

"I don't know if I can give you permission to trim that tree. My husband loves it. He tops it every year to keep its shape uniform," Mrs. Treelover told me about her husband's prized white birch.

"Oh," I said, staring at the strands of clothesline-type rope being used as a makeshift cable support for the tree's two main leaders. I assured Mrs. Treelover that we would not be removing much of the tree's canopy and to inform her husband that we would do all we could to keep its beauty intact.

This was my first experience in the professional world of tree care. I never realized that so many people despised beautiful trees because they have to rake the leaves every year. Nevertheless, I found that many people have a high regard for the value of trees and having the opportunity to talk to them was a rewarding experience.

Yet, I still wonder how it would have been had they handed me the keys to the aerial lift on the first day instead.

Thomas Clancy is TCI's director of advertising. He holds a bachelor's in business administration from Babson College, and a degree in arboriculture from the University of Massachusetts.

Do you have a story for From the Field? TCI will pay $50 for published articles. Submissions become the property of TCI and are subject to editing for grammar, style and length. Entries must be submitted by field workers and must bear the name of the worker and his employer or they will not be considered for publication. Articles and photos must be received by the first day of the month for the following month's issue.
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Thank you, Mr. Klinger. We couldn't have said it any better.

*includes all parts, repair costs.

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