



(Above, left:) Grover, on the right, with his management team. Grover outside Pacific Landscape Management.

Man on a mission

A family man, an industry man, an outdoorsman – Bob Grover has built his business based on his passion for nature and his strong moral values. *By Heather Tunstall*

Bob Grover knew early on that the green industry would capture his heart. Growing up on an acre of pasture – complete with a garden and a pony – in Southeast Portland, Ore., Grover was raised to appreciate nature and developed a thirst to work outdoors.

His parents divorced when he was a teenager, and when his father left, he took over as the family gardener, maintaining the garden all the way through high school. At age 11, he was a paperboy, and a few years later, he landed his first job in the green industry at a retail nursery near his house.

And since then, he's never had a job outside of the green industry.

Love walks in. Grover attended Oregon State University, originally studying business, and then switching midway through to a horticulture degree. During the summers, he worked on a landscape crew. While he was at Oregon State, he developed two very important relationships: one with the turf industry, and one with a certain special woman in his life.

"I met my wife originally at a Van Halen concert in 1982," Grover says. At the time, Theresa Kirsch was dating a high school friend of Grover's. After the couple split, Grover reacquainted himself with Kirsch at a Christmas party, and they discovered that they'd be in the same ski class that fall at Oregon State. "We spent the next winter term every Thursday going skiing together, and by the time we got done with the ski class, we were dating," Grover says.

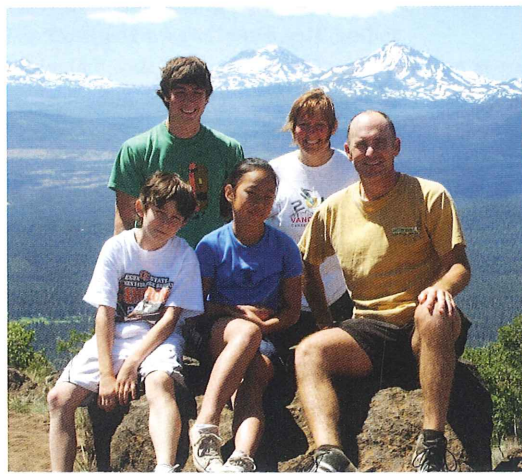
Grover and Kirsch have been married for 26 years, and they continue to share their love of the outdoors with their three children, David (22), Kelly (17), and Connor (15). The family lives in Hillsboro, Ore., and regularly camps, hikes, wakeboards, backpacks and snow skis together.

Grover's dedication to his family is evident to everyone who knows him, and his leadership shines through his interaction with them. When asked what stands out most about Grover, the people who know him best immediately point to his family values. "He's clearly the leader of our family," Kirsch says. "He's always been very decisive

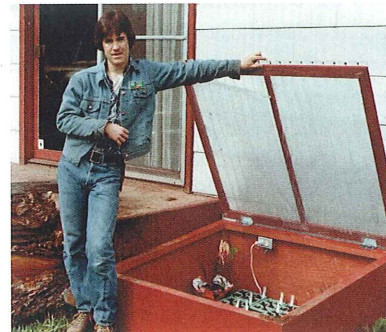
on most things, so I'm sure that has played a role in his management or leadership skills. Our youngest is very much like him – they have vision, and they both just go for it."

Jump. Grover started his career working for Richard Akerman at Oregon Landscape Maintenance, which later became Northwest Landscape Industries, as a crew leader. He advanced to an area supervisor, then a branch manager, where he ran their west side branch.

The business practices and culture at Northwest Landscape Industries made them the preeminent landscaping company in Portland, Grover says, and he had an opportunity to get involved with ALCA, which gave him experience with a national organization and honed his leadership



Left: Grover in his teen years; below: early married life; right: Grover on a hiking trip with his family.



skills further. In 1998, Northwest Landscape Industries was sold to TruGreen, and Grover had to readjust to the new business atmosphere. He worked there for two and a half years as their regional manager for the Northwest, overseeing nine branches and 500 employees.

Ultimately, though, Grover decided to leave and pursue other ventures. "At the time I left TruGreen, I wasn't really exactly sure what I was going to do. I just knew that I didn't want to work for a large national organization anymore," he says.

Knowing he wanted to remain in the landscaping industry, Grover determined that the only way he could do that was to try to do it on his own and recreate the culture that he had known at Northwest Landscape Industries.

"I was not totally on board to begin with, because I knew he had offers from other people," Kirsch says. But then Grover visited his wife at the high school where she teaches, and she was supportive of his decision. "He just told me he wanted to start his own business. He said, 'Why would I want to do something for someone else that I can do for myself and our family?'"

So, together with Ron Knesal and Elias Godinez, Grover formed Pacific Landscape Management.

Unchained. For more than a decade, Pacific Landscape Management (PLM) has been successfully beautifying commercial landscapes in the Portland area, with Grover and Godinez at the helm.

Grover's management style and leadership has been instrumental in building a business that withstood economic hardships and continues to retain both customers and employees.

"I couldn't ask for a better business partner," says Godinez, who has known Grover for 22 years. "He has a sense of forward thinking and can come up with great ideas right on the spot, which gives him the ability to control or redirect issues or moods."

For the past four years, PLM was named

Black & blue

Bob Grover is an avid outdoorsman, always looking for his next adventure. Hiking off-trail and backpacking to remote locations is commonplace for him. But last year, on February 5, his journey to a secluded waterfall on the Oregon coast nearly ended in tragedy.

Grover was hiking with a friend, when they discovered that the waterfall dropped into a steep canyon, and they'd have to traverse across the top of the canyon to get to the base of the waterfall. Grover was holding onto a branch and going around a tree, when the branch snapped, and he began to fall.

"My buddy is watching me fall, and I actually fell out of sight, and he's assuming I'm probably dead," Grover says. His friend carefully made his way down the canyon to find Grover, who is badly hurt, but conscious and responsive. His friend made his way out of the canyon to call for help. "He's a Boy Scout, so he has a backpack full of stuff that you

need to be prepared. So, thank God, because I went out with an apple and a coffee cup," Grover says.

The EMTs dispatched the Coast Guard to lift Grover out of the canyon on a rope via helicopter. Grover's injuries were substantial. He had a compound break in both bones above his ankle in his right leg, six ribs, his collar bone, and a large gash on his head. He spent 10 days in the hospital, three weeks at home recovering, and six months on crutches.

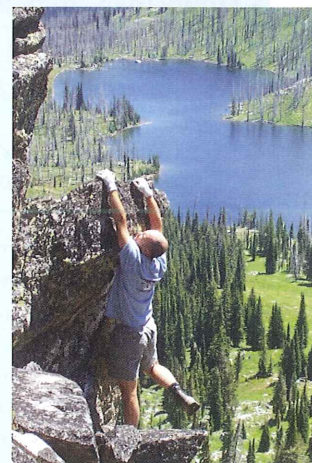
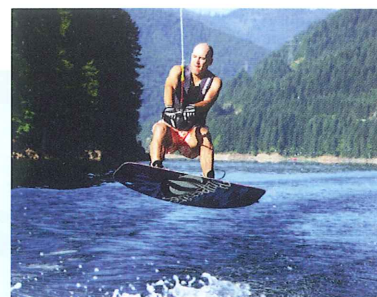
"I survived – it was a tough year, but I'm back," Grover says. "I'm not 100 percent, but maybe I never will be. I learned a lesson: A 25-year-old went hiking, and a 50-year-old checked out of the hospital."

as one of Oregon's Greenest Companies by *Oregon Business Magazine*, and the company won a Sustainable Business Award from *Lawn & Landscape*.

Grover's passion for the industry is evident in his commitment to educating, his involvement on committees, and his dedication to sustainable efforts.

And Grover is always there to lead his employees in a positive way.

"He is very innovative, and pushes others to continually improve their personal or professional skills," Godinez says.



"He has a passion to work for reasons that go beyond money or status."

"You can't really go into companies today and say, 'Hey, do you love working here?' and they say 'Oh, I just love this place,'" Akerman says. "We had that, I thought. And I think he has that now – people love working for Bob."

Grover's business philosophy is simple: do the right thing, and the money will follow. "We have an adage here that profit funds the great things that we do," he says. "The great things we do aren't designed to make a profit." ●