

# PAVING ADVENTURES

*Extraordinary tales of paving St. Louis' tennis courts.*

**W**hen St. Louis Paving President Paul Munsch expanded his paving business to include tennis court construction, he had no idea wildlife would be a hazard.

Take the buffalo at Grant's Farm, for instance. One day when St. Louis Paving was installing tennis courts at the Busch residence at Grant's Farm, the buffalo decided to join the workmen on their lunch break. It was buffalo one, workmen zero when the head buffalo put his foot down, so to speak, right on the water cooler and led his group off with the cooler in tow.

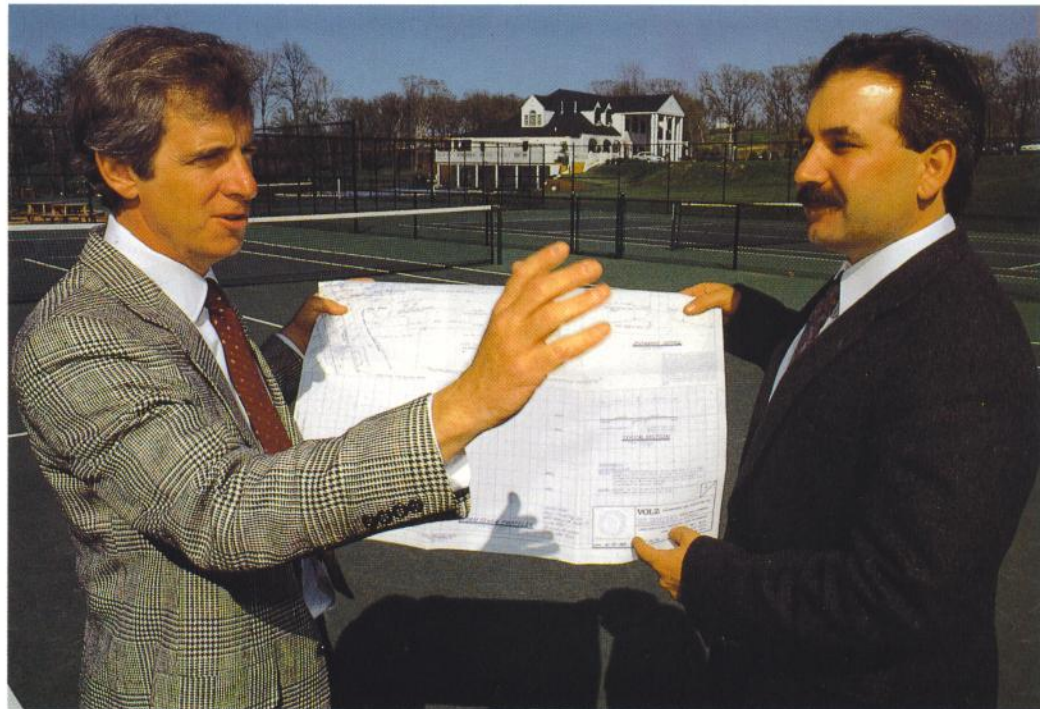
Unfortunately, this wasn't an isolated wildlife encounter. The night before a crew was set to put the finishing touches on three new tennis courts at Whitmoor Country Club in St. Charles, a couple of deer decided to beat the crowd to the courts. The crew had to remove more than a thousand muddy hoof prints before they could complete the job.

St. Louis Paving's expansion into tennis courts wasn't by design. Before they ever set a roller to a tennis court, the firm had spent 15 years paving everything from parking lots to Phantom jet taxiways for clients such as McDonnell Douglas, Ralston Purina, Capitol Land and Nooney Company. As a natural expansion of services, existing paving clients began asking Munsch to perform the related task of tennis court resurfacing.

When Munsch realized the potential of this market segment, what began simply as a client service resulted in the development of a whole new division. By 1984, St. Louis Paving evolved into a turnkey operation for tennis court construction.

"Our tennis court business has grown exponentially," said Munsch. "When we helped Phillips Petroleum test their then new Phillips Petromat fabric on eight courts at Villa Duchesne in the early eighties, I never thought tennis courts would be big business for us. Now we have approximately 50% of the market share in new tennis court and tennis court renovation projects. And tennis courts currently represent about 25% of our annual revenues, compared to 15% in 1986."

St. Louis Paving is the only company in the area that performs all aspects of tennis court construction, start to finish, using its own crew. Maintaining total control over each project means control of scheduling,



costs and, most importantly, quality. According to Munsch, "This gives us a significant edge over the competition, which invariably subcontracts one or more critical aspect of each tennis court project."

With thousands of jobs, large and small, to their credit, the crew is well versed in the exacting requirements needed in quality tennis court construction.

"You have to be extremely precise. You don't just pour some asphalt and paint stripes," explained Munsch. "We design and construct courts so they're as flat as possible, yet still shed water. And every aspect of construction, from grading and rock work to coating, has to be implemented properly to prevent cracks from developing for as long as possible."

One of St. Louis Paving's largest tennis court projects was the 1987 renovation of the Dwight Davis Tennis Court Complex in Forest Park. St. Louis Paving completely renovated the 19-court complex, which involved everything from removing many of the old courts and reconstructing from scratch new ones, to repaving and recoloring some of the less deteriorated courts.

"Tennis court design hasn't changed much over the years," says Munsch. "But technology and materials have improved.

*Paul Munsch, President of St. Louis Paving, left, and Chris Tsevis, Assistant Manager of Whitmoor Country Club, survey possible sites for additional tennis courts.*

This has enabled us to more effectively steer subsurface water away from the courts through the use of an underground draining system. And in the last few years, I've seen people move to a little bit more individualization."

Munsch cited color as an example of an area where he's seen some flexibility. While most tennis courts are all green or a combination of red and green, custom colors are available and are becoming more common. For example, when the company renovated the Riverview Gardens School District's ten courts, they used the high school colors of cobalt blue and maroon.

All tennis court projects are bid in advance and encompass a wide price range. Resurfacing a court averages around \$3,000, repaving and recoloring around \$8,000. Constructing a single tennis court with minimal excavation and grading can cost as little as \$20,000, including a fence, while a complex job with a great deal of preparation and elaborate lighting around the court can cost up to \$40,000. ■