

Bill Kunze of Jungle Taming

By John Temple Ligon Temple@TheColumbiaStar.com



Bill Kunze

Bill Kunze was born in Norfolk in the first wave of Boomers. His father went back to school at Virginia Polytechnic Institute, now Virginia Tech, where he earned a degree in mechanical engineering.

The family settled in Newport News, a ship- building town close to Norfolk. Kunze graduated from Warwick High School where he played varsity right tackle but didn't apply his football skills at the college level.

Kunze went to Hampden- Sydney College, founded in 1775 as the country's tenth oldest college.

He majored in economics with a minor in history. The college did not enroll women, but the Hampden- Sydney men introduced themselves to the women at Longwood, a nearby teacher- training school.

Kunze followed the BS- degree track, but the requisite chemistry and biology classes were packed with competitive pre- med majors so he took biology in summer school at James Madison University, which is where he met his future wife.

Directly after college graduation, Kunze moved into the insurance industry. He worked for Connecticut Mutual in Norfolk for three years and transferred to the company headquarters in Hartford, Conn.

After four years in Hartford, Kunze and his wife moved to Columbia, where he was still with Connecticut Mutual.

In 1980, Kunze moved his career to Columbia- based Ellison Insurance, where he stayed for 15 years.

Several years ago, Kunze decided to start a business for himself but not in insurance. He began a landsculpting service, a professional practice somewhere between landscaping and lawn care.

Landsculpting is not the only original descriptive term in Kunze's new business. The other is the name of the business, Jungle Taming, which came from clients thanking Kunze for "taming the jungle."

Focusing on the bushes, beds, and trees, Kunze and his crews restore Columbia yards to their original planted gardens. Before Jungle Taming came along, the clients' planted gardens were overrun with unwanted and unplanned plants.

Kunze and his wife have three children. Their oldest son is expected to return to Columbia to work in the family business in about a year. Their other son is a firefighter in Columbia who also moonlights at Jungle Taming. Their daughter is majoring in interior design at Winthrop.

Jungle Taming originally began with Kunze's son. He took a summer job repairing neighborhood yards before leaving for college. Once his son was away at college, Kunze stepped in to meet his son's clients' lingering callbacks.

Kunze then took 228 hours of instruction and earned Midlands Tech's land management certification.

Kunze's Jungle Taming is a growth business, literally. He has nothing but praise and thanks for the help he had getting started from the Service Corps of Retired Executives (SCORE), a nonprofit national organization that works with the Small Business Administration to provide free counseling to start- up and existing small businesses.