

# Munson digs his work

by Deborah Straw

"I loved to play dump trucks when I was a child," reflects Randall "Randy" G. Munson, president and founder of Munson Earth Moving Corp. of South Burlington. "You know how most kids build tree houses in the branches? My first tree hut was built in the roots underground—it was a big project."

He continues enthusiastically, "I always liked to dam up water, too. And when I was in high school, I worked on a farm; I always had a great interest in working in the earth."

For Munson, this love of the earth transformed itself into a very successful construction business, one which he started in Shelburne in 1957. That, and his love of large equipment and machines, have made Munson a contented man, one who turned his avocation into a vocation.

His company, which employs between 100 and 160 depending on the season, handles what Munson calls a mix of utilities, site work and road construction. It occasionally does building construction such as the Meadowbrook Condominiums in South Burlington, one of the first first-home condominium developments in the area, completed in 1974.

A minor part of the company's work is snow plowing, which it has done since 1960. "We plow primarily for shopping centers, places like the Ramada, motels and businesses in the Burlington area. We bid on these jobs and get many back every year. We have large equipment, like loaders and graders. We think they're more applicable to the accounts we service. When there's anything over a little bit of snow, with large expanses, smaller plows just aren't efficient," Munson explains.

Munson grew up in Shelburne (his father worked at General Electric), and attended UVM where he obtained a B.S. in engineering. His first job was as a mechanical design engineer for the Wallace-Tiernan Co. of Belleville, New Jersey; it is the inventor of clorinators.

Next he worked for the Marion Power Shovel Co. in Marion, Ohio, where he sold and operated heavy equipment. These were his only stints outside of Vermont.

Munson joined the Navy in 1955, and spent two years in the C.B.s, the construction battalion. With the Navy, he traveled to

exotic spots like Morocco, to other parts of Africa and to Newfoundland. "I've still got a lot of good friends in Newfoundland," he explains.

When he finished his hitch with the military, Munson returned to Vermont and started his business. In 1969, he relocated from the original Shelburne location to Dorset Street where he has been since that time.

"I was always interested in construction," he relates. "We originally started out doing equipment rentals—bulldozers, backhoes. But then we got into contracts and bidding on jobs."

Early on, the company did road construction, water and sewer lines, utilities, site work and housing subdivisions. Most work was done for municipalities and the state of Vermont highway department.

Munson remembers the company's first job. It was for Charles and Oda Hubbard in Shelburne. "We built six earthen dams for impounding water on their property," he recalls.

His most rewarding job in recent memory was a 58-acre site preparation contract for

IBM when it expanded over the river into Williston. His company was one of four invited bidders on the large job. Munson speaks of it fondly. "That was a challenging job with many variables. There were design changes on the site, the time schedule changed, and the soil conditions—high and dry and sandy in some areas, wet and clay and deep in others—required different kinds of equipment. It was a fast-track job for IBM. We completed it in four months and they were very pleased with our performance. We got it done just as they wanted it. They're really good to work for."

For that job, a large crew was necessary. William Bohlen of South Hero, vice president of Munson Earth Moving for nine years, was both the engineer and project manager. There were also a general superintendent, three or four superintendents, and a cadre of foremen and operators.

A current large project is Corporate Circle, off Dorset Street, which is principally owned by South Burlington Realty Corp., another company which Munson has headed since 1965. Munson Earth Moving is doing the road and utilities work for that

**Randall G. "Randy" Munson would rather be out driving the equipment than in his South Burlington office. "We have these new Mack dump trucks that are really great."**

