

WALKER TALK

**SERVING LAWN
MAINTENANCE
PROFESSIONALS**

Down Under

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PROVIDE UNIQUE
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OWNER OF
CLEANSITE SERVICES
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SPECIAL ISSUE
II

WALKER TALK

SERVING LAWN
MAINTENANCE
PROFESSIONALS

Down Under



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CUSTOMERS, MARKETS, STATISTICS

It is interesting to look at the different kinds of customers that use Walker Mowers. Surveying customers from our warranty registration gives us the picture. We have found the following breakdown, which has been fairly stable over the last 10 years: Private Homeowners 30%, Landscape Contractors 60%, Governmental/Institutional 10%. This data mainly reflects the customers in North America, although a good number of customers from Australasia have registered and are included.

When we remember the market in Australia and New Zealand in 1984 and 1988, at the time the Walker was first introduced, the main customer seemed to be councils and institutions. Very few early customers were private owners or landscape contractors. The market has shifted dramatically in recent years, and it has been favorable to the Walker Mower. In Australia, the landscape contractors have flourished while private owners are increasing in New Zealand.

During my latest visits to your countries in 1999 and 2000, I watched the number of landscape contractors grow up right before my eyes. Accordingly, in this issue, we have selected the typical mix of customers that is found in each country today.

The importance of the Down Under market to Walker Mfg. continues to grow. Last year, export shipments were almost 1/4 of the total; Australia/New Zealand lead the way by taking 11%, balanced against 8.5% to Europe and 3.7% to Canada. Since our manufacturing operates year-round, we especially appreciate the balancing provided by the opposite seasons in the Southern Hemisphere.

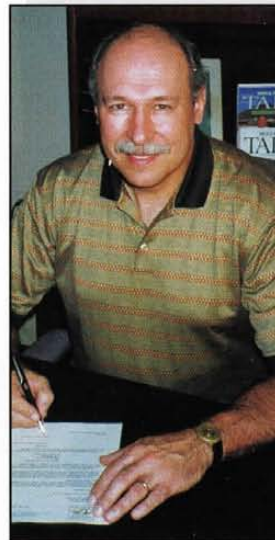
We want our "Down Under" customers to know that we are thankful for the opportunity to supply machines to you, and that we think of you as a major market for us. We will continue to work to earn your confidence.

In thinking of appreciation, we also want to recognize the partnership with our two Australian distributors, the New Zealand distributor, and the network of dealers in both countries that takes care of our customers. There would be no opportunity for our equipment to be used without the local service provided by this team. When there were problems, these folks staked their reputation and stood behind the product. It would not have been possible to send 3,500 Walkers to your part of the World over the last 17 years without them.

The story continues. We hope you enjoy this Special Edition of *Walker Talk*.

Bob Walker

Bob Walker
President



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Successful landscape contractors hone their service niche

■ "IT'S ALL ABOUT SERVICE"

When asked how he could grow from a one-person mowing operation into a full-service landscape maintenance and design company in 17 years, Rodmar Landscaping Services founder Rod Watson says the key is SERVICE. "It's all about service. We're giving as much service to the customer as possible. Without the customer we're nothing."

Located in Leppington, Western Sydney, Rodmar Landscaping Services attends to the needs of a wide variety of customers, including McDonald's and other large commercial accounts. Rod's four sons work in the business, along with eight other employees. Together they

design, install and maintain landscapes, and grow many of their own shrubs. In fact, an on-site nursery grows upwards of 90% of all plant material used on many of their commercial properties.

"It's all part of providing the best service possible to customers," emphasizes Rod. "Growing our own plants allows us to control the quality, and deliver the high level of service our customers want." In fact, he adds, one of the true strengths of the company is the integration among the three divisions — the nursery, installation and design and maintenance.



Rod with sons Brad (left) and Peter. Peter is general manager; Brad is the mechanic and heads up the landscape construction division with brother Mark (not shown). Andrew, also absent, manages irrigation construction.

This owner's discussion of service is not rhetoric. They posture their equipment, including Walker Mowers, in the same light, as well.

"We have lots of good things to say about the Walker Mower," says Rod. "But their most important attribute is the time savings they afford us. The mowers have reduced our cutting time dramatically, giving us more time to spend with customers doing other things."

Rodmar Landscaping Services purchased its first Walker, a 25-hp model, in 1997. They've since purchased another unit. "It was only a short time before we realized it

Rodmar owner Rod Watson puts it succinctly when he says, "Without a satisfied customer, any profit is short-lived."

was the perfect machine for us," Rod relates. "We've used several ride-on mowers over the years, but nothing compares to a Walker. They were either too big, too slow or just lacking maneuverability. Walkers, on the other hand, are very maneuverable and fast, and they can go places where we previously could only use a push mower."

Son Brad agrees, noting that the company's two Walkers are also very serviceable. "Key components are easy to get to, and the blades are easy to change."

Unlike other operators who often buy Walker Mowers simply because they appreciate quality, the Watsons purchased theirs for a slightly more pragmatic reason. The mowers free them up for doing other customer-related chores. As Rod puts it, "We don't charge the customer more because we have a Walker on the property. We are just able to deliver more services. The bottom line, of course, is profit, he notes. But without a satisfied customer, any profit is short-lived." ■

■ HE MEASURES MOWING IN KILOMETERS, NOT HECTARES

Talk about a lot of mowing! John Hobden's crews mow between 70 and 80 kilometers of roadsides every week for nine months out of the year. Then they back off to once every two weeks for three months.

John owns Muswellbrook Lawnmowing & Landscaping, Hunter Valley, NSW, and collects his mileage mowing a variety of properties, including horse farms, wineries, shopping centers and some private homes. He mows so much property, in fact, that in 14 months of use his two new diesel Walker Mowers each accumulated more than 1,000 hours.

"I think I'm as fast with a Walker equipped with a 52-inch deck as other operators who employ a 72-inch outfront mower," he tells. "We're so adept with our mowers that people driving by oftentimes stop to watch us work."

John purchased his first Walker, a petrol-powered model, four years ago after seeing an advertisement in a trade magazine. Last year he purchased two more, both diesels.

"These machines are incredibly quick, and they have to

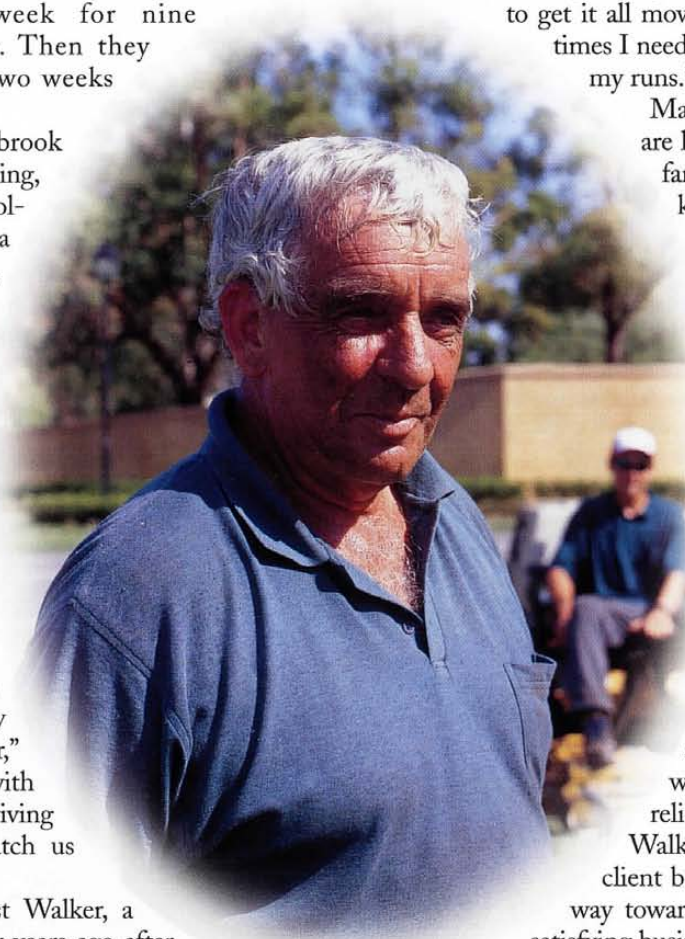
be," he relates. "During the spring growing season, grass around here grows upwards of four inches a week. I try to get it all mowed within five days, but sometimes I need a half day on Saturday to finish my runs."

Many of the rounds, he explains, are like those at the Coolmore Stud farm where his crews mow three kilometers of roadside in one run.

"It takes us two days of straight mowing to finish some of our properties. That's a lot of work for any mower, and ours are very reliable. My total downtime since I've owned the diesels would not be more than one day. I believe that is quite exceptional."

John started his business nine years ago with an 18-inch push mower, a bent-shaft brush cutter, a broom and a rake. He attributes his success over the years to quality workmanship, and prompt and reliable service. Do this, operate Walkers, and have a good sound client base, he adds, and you are a long way toward maintaining a successful and satisfying business. ■

John Hobden mows so much property that in 14 months of use his two new diesel Walker Mowers each accumulated more than 1,000 hours.



■ THE SECOND SALE MEANS BUSINESS

There's more to being a successful landscaper than making that first sale, according to Brisbane contractor, Paul Sneddon. "The trick in this business is to sell customers the second time. That means you're doing work that meets their expectations."

With son Mark, Paul operates "You Grow It, We'll Mow It." Mark started the business in 1992 with just four lawns. Three years later Paul joined the operation, and in a short time they were maintaining 120 lawns, using 18- and 21-inch push mowers. They brought out a self-propelled 24-inch slasher for doing rough paddocks.

"We mowed fast with the push mowers," relates Paul. "We had to with so many properties. I can recall mowing one 1.2-hectare property in 1 hour 40 minutes with push mowers. But you couldn't do this forever."

That's what Mark thought, too, when he saw his first Walker Mower. After watching another contractor mow a domestic yard with the machine, he announced to his mother, "We're getting a Walker."

Mark and Paul took delivery of their 25-hp Walker equipped with a 9.5-bushel catcher and 42-inch GHS deck in December 1999. By the middle of the next year they added a 52-inch side-discharge deck and all-terrain tires.



When Mark (right) and father Paul purchased their Walker, they thought they would use it on only a few properties. Now, they use it on every lawn.

"It's amazing just how fast we can mow some properties," relates Paul. "On average, we mow 15 lawns a day, six days a week. Some take five minutes; others may take 30 minutes."

"When we first purchased our Walker, we thought we would use it on only a few of our properties. Now, we use it on every lawn. Not only is it fast, but it leaves a nice manicured look, something our customers appreciate. It helps us make that important second sale."

Adds Mark, "The mower is reliable, too. The combination of being quick and reliable helps our business in two key ways. You don't make money running between jobs, and you don't make money if your mower is in the shop." ■

■ ONE UPGRADE LEADS TO ANOTHER

Peter Mertens, owner of Island Mowing, Phillip Island, Victoria, waited nearly 10 years to buy his first Walker. When he did, he found that he received more than he bargained for.

"After rebuilding my old mower 10 times, I wanted an engineered machine with backup support," he tells. "I wanted a mower with no downtime because when the mower stops the business stops. What I didn't realize is when you upgrade to a Walker, you have to upgrade everything else. You have to upgrade your brush cut-



Island Mowing's owner Peter Mertens (right) with employees Danny Dragojlo and Brenda Larsson: Says Mertens, "My mower has gone from being a major problem to being a major asset."

ter, you have to upgrade your employees, and you have to raise your own standards.

"Now, I'm like a lizard on a rock. I'm going all out all the time. My mower has gone from being a major problem to being a major asset."

Peter's two Walkers — a 16-hp petrol model with a 52-inch deck, and a diesel model equipped with a 62-inch deck — maintain 350 properties. Most are what he calls holiday

homes that need to be cut only once every three weeks. The remainder are on a two-week mowing schedule.

"We run a tight ship here," he says, looking at his two full-time employees Danny Dragojlo and Brenda Larsson, who nod their heads in agreement. It's bound to get even tighter as Island Mowing plans to double its business within the next couple of years. ■

■ FORMAL GARDENS PROVIDE UNIQUE MOWING SETTING FOR CONTRACTOR

One of the few Victorian-era gardens still surviving in concept and design, the formal gardens at Werribee Park, Werribee, Victoria, offer a change of pace for Melbourne mowing contractor Paul McGrath. He's on the property every Thursday with his Walker, mowing in and around the 10-hectare garden area.

"I've been maintaining the property for three years, and really look forward to the days I spend here," tells Paul. "The property is spectacular, and the gardens are peaceful and beautiful."

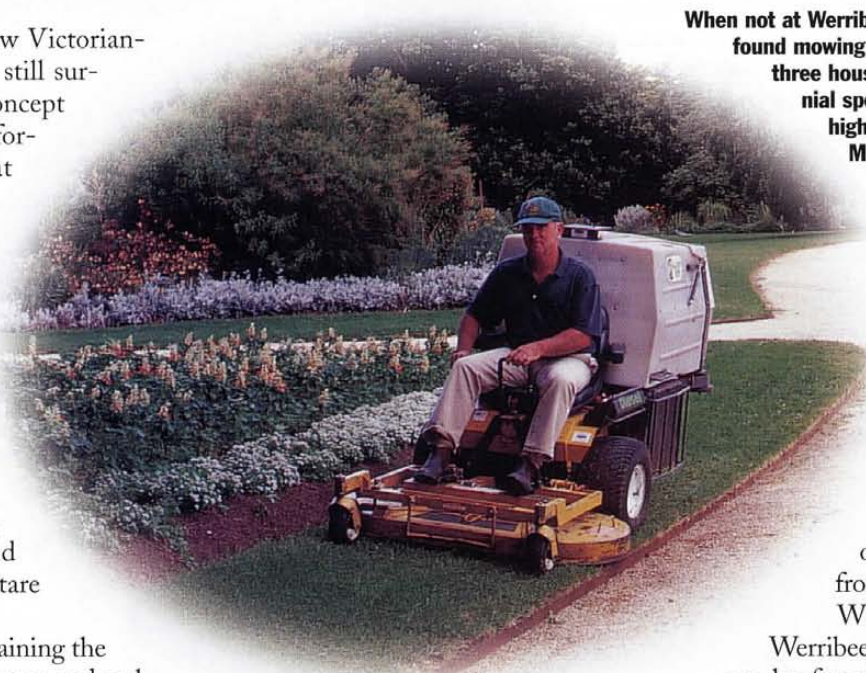
McGrath has been in the landscaping business nearly six years. Before that, he worked in the grounds department for a local council.

"When I worked for the council, I always wanted a Walker Mower, but we never purchased one. That was one of the first things I did when I formed my own business. I bought a second-hand Walker.

Today, he still owns that second-hand machine, but he also operates a new diesel model.

"The Walker really stands out here," Paul explains. "The nice clean cut it leaves behind helps to set off the gardens." He mows the property every week all year long, and collects

When not at Werribee Park, Paul can be found mowing six or seven schools, three housing estates, a new colonial sports facility, and other high-profile areas around Melbourne.



all the clippings, which are taken to a compost location on site.

In addition to mowing the formal garden area, Paul also mows the open areas. Two employees operate Kubota out-front mowers for that task.

When he's not at Werribee Park, this contractor can be found mowing six or seven schools, three housing estates, a new colonial sports facility, and other high-profile areas around Melbourne.

"I receive most of my work from working with other landscapers," says Paul, who adds that just having the Walker Mower generates work. "They like the cut it leaves, and hence, look for me to maintain more of their properties. Right now, I have more work than I can handle."

That's the good news; the bad news is that every property isn't as glorious as Werribee Park. The Park is open to the public 10 a.m. daily (except Christmas Day). Visitors can walk the formal gardens, tour the famous mansion or visit other interesting sites, including a farm, a grassland filled with indigenous flora and fauna, and the Victoria State Rose Garden that boasts over 4,500 rose bushes. ■

■ MOWING IS A FAMILY AFFAIR FOR THIS CANBERRA COUPLE

If you see a Pete's Landscaping and Gardening crew in your neighborhood, you no doubt will find owner Peter Holberton, wife Cheryl and their 15-year-old son Michael. Twelve-year-old Sarah and 10-year-old Mark will not be far behind either. Why? Because landscape maintenance for this family is a family affair.

Peter started in business in October 1989, with a very small car pulling a little box trailer. Inside the trailer was a push mower. Today, his crew is well-equipped with two diesel Walkers, each with high-lift systems and a GHS deck. He uses a Stevens edger to put the exclamation point on his properties that range from body corporates and town homes to a school.

In addition to mowing, Pete's does pruning, provides gardening services and re-mulches garden beds. The company has one cleaning account, as well.



Peter Holberton had seen Walkers years before he purchased one. He heard they were the Rolls Royce of mowers.



(left to right) Peter sitting, with employee Chris Skoropa, Cheryl, Michael, Sarah, and Mark. Peter says he tries to limit the work week to five days, so he can have more time with his family.

"I like to think we're as reliable as any other landscaping company," tells Peter. "We strive to provide excellent service, a large part of which comes from communicating with our customers and listening to what they have to say."

Peter purchased his first Walker in 1996. "I had seen Walkers years before then, and heard they were the Rolls Royce of mowers," he relates. "The first thing I noticed about the machine was that it immediately allowed me to

expand our business." And expand he did, taking on a new full-time employee and performing more services for body corporates.

He still has that first Walker, which now has 2,200 hours on it. But his bread and butter today are the newer diesels, which he says are truly robust. He has plenty of work for them, too, but falls short of being excessive.

"I try to limit the work to five days a week," says Peter. "We all put a high premium on family time." ■

Franchise opportunities abound Down Under

■ WANT TO BE A MILLIONAIRE?

There are approximately 1,500 Jim's Mowing franchises throughout Australia and New Zealand. According to founder, Jim Penman, five people among "Jim's" ranks are already millionaires. Not to say that's a realistic goal for the average person investing \$20,000 or so for a mowing franchise. But the truth is, most of Jim's Mowing Franchisees are making a good living. As Penman puts it, "On average, our franchisees earn about the same as in their previous job, but with a better lifestyle."

Penman, who has franchises in 15 different service industries, says the service industry by nature is a winner. "There has never been a time with more opportunities," he emphasizes. "You don't need a lot of money, and you don't need a lot of education to operate a franchise or to otherwise compete in the service industry. But you do need the right attitude."

Jim encourages his Jim's Mowing Franchisees to have a Walker Mower. In fact, he is a staunch supporter of the Walker line.

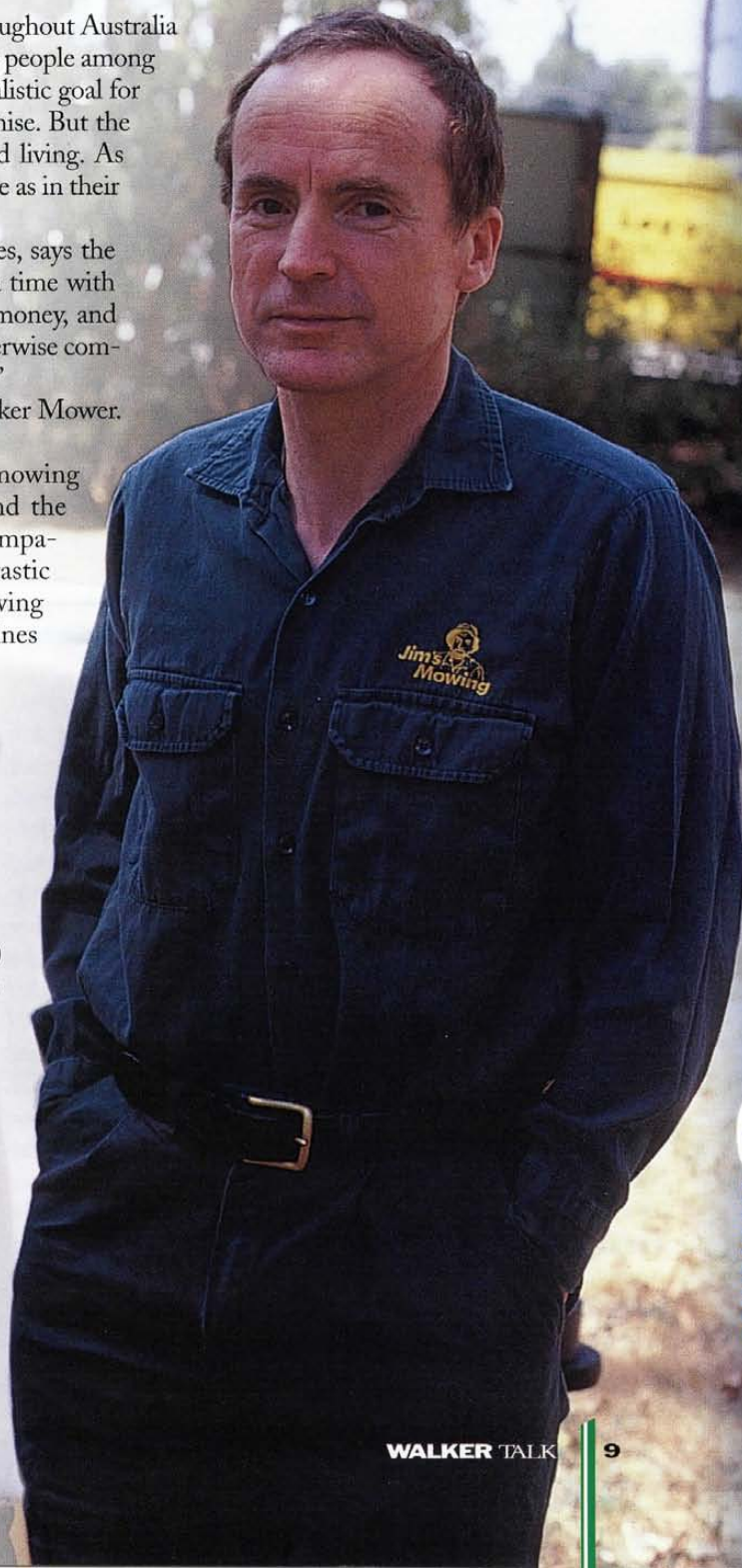
"I wished I had a Walker Mower when I started in the mowing business," he relates. "The amount of time you can save and the extra money to be made with a Walker is incredible. The company stands behind the machines, and overall it's just a fantastic company to do business with." A recent survey of Jim's Mowing Franchisees, he adds, points out how effective these machines can be for operators.

**The amount of time you can save
and the extra money to be made with
a Walker is incredible.**

Two surveys were conducted: A random survey of 40 Melbourne franchisees and another survey of 30 franchisees owning Walkers. The results are striking. Random survey respondents reported average annual earnings of \$57,650 compared to Walker owners who reported average annual earnings of \$87,700. As Penman points out, Walker owners need to subtract \$6,000 in yearly leasing costs from their earnings statement, but even then they far outdistance their counterparts.

The key to operating a Jim's Mowing Franchise or any other franchise, Penman adds, is to provide exemplary service. The most successful franchisees find a way to provide the best service possible at the lowest cost. Owning a Walker, he adds, is one sure way to help accomplish that goal. ■

**Jim Penman says having the right attitude is
key to becoming a successful franchisee.**



■ SHOE SALESMAN TURNS TO MOWING LAWNS

We are a service company that happens to mow lawns." That's how the owner of Graham's Garden Care, Ron Sleet, describes his franchise operation. He's not being facetious, either. Like Jim's Mowing's Penman, he understands the dynamics of a successful mowing franchise, and that dynamic is providing the best service possible.

There are approximately 100 Graham's Garden Care franchises that operate exclusively in Queensland. Franchises sell for approximately \$20,000, a price that includes a trailer, mower, uniform and other basic necessities. Franchise owners provide a myriad of services, including mowing, pruning, fertilizing and cleaning. New owners are guaranteed \$800 per week for 16 weeks, and all pay a fixed monthly fee back to the franchisor. According to Ron, the lion's share of their work comes from domestic properties; only about 20% comes from maintaining commercial sites.

Veteran Graham's operator Mark McDonald is the exception to this rule. A one-time shoe salesman, McDonald works exclusively in the commercial market, maintaining 50 properties for 12 clients.

Mark operated a walk mower for the first six months after buying his franchise. He then took a big step by purchasing a John Deere ride-on mower. He used that for 18 months before taking an even bigger step, buying his

Saving mowing time with his Walker allows Mark to spend more time on extra services.

first Walker. He operated the second-hand Walker for two years before buying a new 16-hp model equipped with a 42-inch GHS deck.

"The move to the Walker Mower helped increase my annual income from \$50,000 to \$90,000," he relates. "The mower allows me to make a good living without being maxed out all the time. In addition, I find that commercial customers need more than just a mowing service, and

When veteran Graham's operator Mark McDonald moved to the Walker, his annual income increased from \$50,000 to \$90,000.

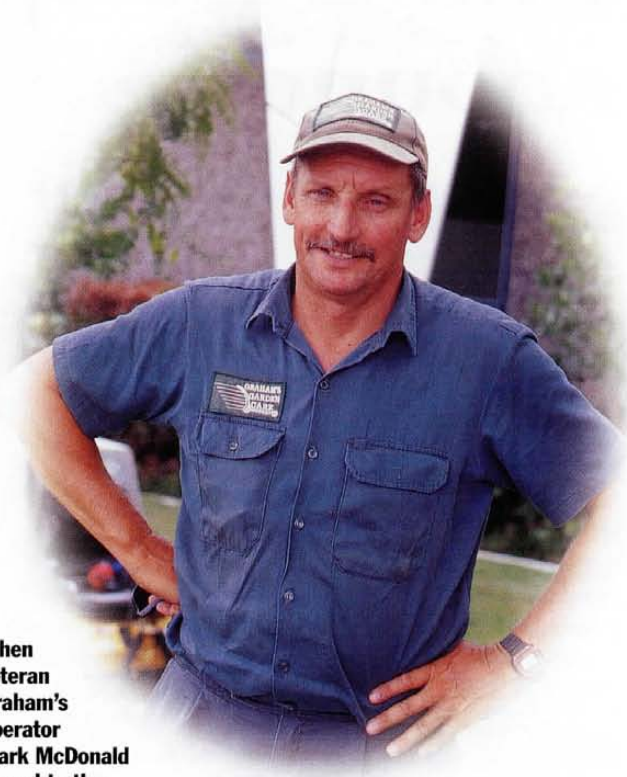
the Walker gives me the time I need to perform the extra services."

Sixteen Graham's franchise owners operate a Walker, and Ron suspects more will follow.

"Franchise owners who operate a Walker not only make more money but they stay around longer," he tells. "They don't burn out like other owners. That is good news for franchise owners, and it's good for the franchisor. The more successful franchisees are the more successful we are."

To help ensure franchisees are successful, Ron provides a quality client base up front, backup support if a franchisee needs it, and a constant regimen of training through at least 10 meetings a year.

"Owning a franchise is particularly attractive to people who either don't have a lot of business and marketing savvy or who don't want to spend their time on the business side of the business," Ron reports. "We provide plenty of support in this arena for them. When it comes to gear, we offer suggestions, but owners make the final decision." In McDonald's case, a few months of pushing a mower helped in the decision-making process. ■



■ HOW TO RETAIN CUSTOMERS AND EMPLOYEES

Colin Grosvenor has been operating a Jim's Mowing Franchise for more than four years in Brisbane. Like other franchisees, he started with a push mower, power blower and edger, and maintained primarily domestic accounts. Today, his account mix is 45% commercial and 55% domestic. Needless to say, his business has grown, and he attributes much of that growth to his Walker Mower.

Colin purchased a 20-hp Walker equipped with a 42-inch GHS deck a little over a year ago.

"What used to take me three hours with a push mower now takes 40 minutes," he tells. "The mower has taken the place of a worker, and I've increased my work at the same time."

Colin says the mower's cost has not been insurmountable, either. "I lease it for \$110 a week and get that back within 1.5 days. Consider the fact that I don't pay an extra person, and I'm well ahead of the game." In addition, the new mower has helped him grow his customer base on both the commercial and domestic side. And it's even helped retain his key employee, Rick Humphries.

"I've never had a customer complain about the Walker, despite the fact that they may never have had a ride-on mower on their property before," notes Colin. "Rick operates the Walker, and I'm convinced the new mower has given him more incentive to continue to work with me."

As for Rick, he says, "No other mower could withstand the punishment I dish out."

There's another advantage to having a Walker for this franchisee, Colin points out. "My wife likes the idea of me coming home earlier than I used to, being less exhausted than I was after pushing a mower around all day, and making more money." ■

Colin Grosvenor (top) leases his Walker for \$110 a week and gets that back within 1.5 days of work. He also saves paying an extra employee. Operator Rick Humphries says, "No other mower could withstand the punishment I dish out."

■ IN THE LIFESTYLE BUSINESS

I've been a V.I.P. Home Services franchisee for six years, and have worked only one Saturday," tells Eddie Taafee. That statement means a lot in itself. But considering the fact that this franchisee serves 160 to 180 customers, wow! He must get his work done in a hurry.

Helping out is Taafee's customer base, which is primarily domestic, and a Walker Mower which, he says, "Can do the work two people were doing."

According to V.I.P. Master franchisee Grahame Collins, Taafee is not alone. Thirty-five to 40 V.I.P. operators in Queensland have Walkers for the same reason. The machine helps them make money and, as he says, "The name of the game is to help make our franchisees win."

V.I.P. Home Services is a total facilities management franchise operation. In business for 29 years, the company

Master V.I.P. franchisee Grahame Collins (left) with Eddie Taafee: Close to 40 V.I.P. operators in Queensland have Walker Mowers.



has 1,000 franchisees nationwide. New franchisees pay a flat franchisee fee and monthly fee. In return they receive four weeks of training, a guaranteed customer base, on-going training, backup support and longevity awards. ■

Homeowners look for time savings, too

■ PUTTING PRESSURE ON HIS NEIGHBOR

Dennis Gall, Karona Downs, Queensland, didn't buy a new 16-hp Walker with a 42-inch GHS deck just to rile his neighbor. But he has fun doing it.

What used to take Dennis two hours to mow with a push mower, now takes him an hour with the Walker. His 1/2-hectare property is very steep, as well, which means

Dennis feels more relaxed after the job is finished, not just plain tired out.

"I looked at other ride-on mowers before I purchased the Walker," he relates. "Everyone told me a ride-on couldn't catch as good as my Honda push mower. They were wrong. The Walker does."

Everyone told me a ride-on couldn't catch as good as my Honda push mower. They were wrong. The Walker does.



Dennis Gall's property is replete with several gardens, and it is steep. His new Walker saves him time mowing, and doubles as a motorized wheelbarrow for his wife and garden-lover Vlasta.

"I'm very pleased with it, and so is my wife, Vlasta, who loves to garden. She used to spend hours every day hauling mulch with a wheelbarrow. Now, she hooks a trailer behind the Walker, saving her time to do what she really wants to do."

In the meantime, Gall's neighbor is seething with envy. "I was going to mow his lawn over the Christmas holiday, but time got away from me," says Dennis. "Someday I will help him. But in the meantime, he will just have to watch me from a distance." ■

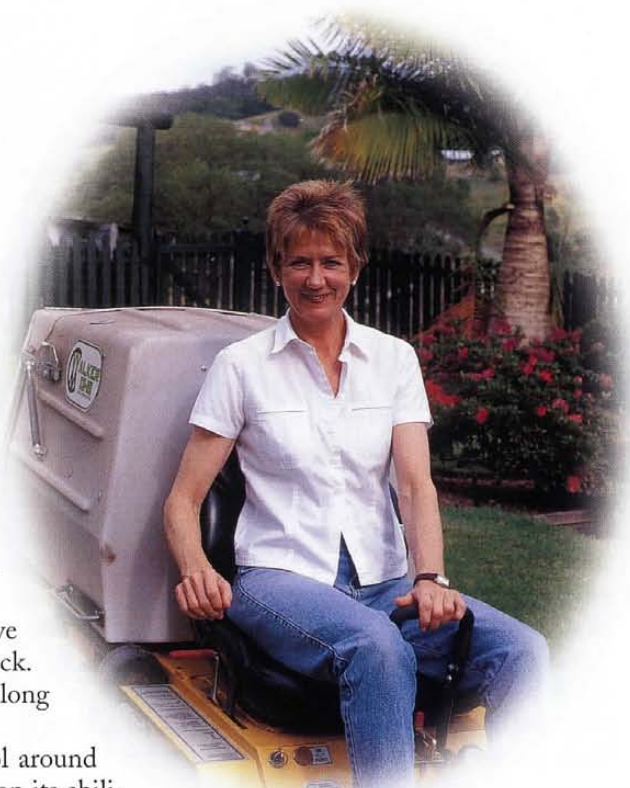
■ "IT HAS CUT MY WORK IN HALF"

With husband Graham, Bernice Chapel lives in a beautiful turn-of-the-century Queenslander home in Brookfield. Their 8-hectare property is home to three horses, too, and is a virtual "wild kingdom" for both birds and plant life. For little more than a year now, Bernice has used a Walker to keep her property looking in tip-top shape.

"A landscaper was helping me out one day, and I noticed he was using a Walker," Bernice remembers. "He raved about the machine, and I tried it out. I knew immediately that it was just what we needed. All I had to do was convince my husband."

She was an effective salesperson. Today, she mows her extensive yard with a 16-hp Walker equipped with a 42-inch GHS deck. Bernice says she can mow her lawn in five hours, about half as long as it used to take her.

Over the last year, the new mower has been an effective tool around the yard. In fact, six months out of the year, Bernice capitalizes on its ability to pick up leaves. But pragmatics aside, she has become quite possessive of her mower. "I don't let anyone on the Walker," she tells. "I quite enjoy it, and it's relaxing." ■



Bernice Chapel is possessive of her Walker. "I don't let anyone on the Walker," she tells. "I quite enjoy it, and it's relaxing."

■ BACKYARD CORNUCOPIA KEEPS BREAKFAST TABLE FULL

Ron Smith and son, Paul, spend their days processing soy beans at their plant in Wandin, Victoria. For relaxation, they return home and nurture a yard replete with just about any fruit or nut under the sun. Lemons, nectarines, grapefruits, olives, oranges, limes, almonds, plums, apples, figs ... the list goes on and on.

Mabel and Ron Smith, with son Paul at the controls: Their 2-hectare property is robust with fruit trees and other plant life.



When the fruit is ready for harvest, the Smiths oblige, and deliver the bounty to Ron's wife, Mabel, who transforms it into a breakfast-table delight.

The Smiths are fastidious about caring for their 2-hectare property and the gardens that surround them. They are totally organic, keeping birds and other prey away with netting and other natural devices, and returning clippings and leaves back to the soil in the form of mulch. Helping them is their new 26-hp Walker with the large 9.5-bushel catcher.

"One of our gardeners introduced us to the Walker," tells Paul. "We liked many of the features on the machine, especially its ability to pick up debris and to tame the grass that grows upwards of three to four inches during the growing season." With so many trees, they also required a maneuverable machine with an outfront deck.

Among other features, the Smiths also enjoy the easy operation of their new mower. But more than anything else, they like the job it does to enhance a property that is both beautiful and productive. ■

More Australian Walker family

■ NEW DEALERS PUT EMPHASIS ON SERVICE

Australia is a big place, oftentimes leaving lots of space between mowing contractors and the dealers who service their product. To shorten the distance, Walker's Australian distributors have devised an ingenious plan — establish a network of dealers who will be trained to service Walker Mowers even though they don't sell the product.

Sam's Mowers in Mt. Annan, NSW, is a new Service Plus dealer for Walker. In business five years, the store handles premium lines such as Stihl, Honda and Tanaka. Store owner Sam Ruiters understands the value of service to both his commercial and homeowner customers.

"No matter who my customers are or where they're located, they need to be assured that they can get prompt service when they need it," Ruiters tells. "Because of that, we stock a

full line of repair parts and even have a truck on the road providing service to commercial operators, homeowners, or anyone who needs service."

By becoming a Walker Service Plus dealer, Sam has increased his service potential, and now offers just one more reason for a customer to walk through his door. In the meantime, he is set up with a complete contingent of Walker owners manuals, parts manuals and service bulletins, as well as having a broad range of repair parts to ensure that Walker owners can get the service they need, when they need it. ■



Sam Ruiters understands the value of service to both his commercial and homeowner customers.

■ NEW RESORT HIGHLIGHTS GARDENS

If you haven't heard the name yet, you soon will. Hunter Valley Gardens in Pokolbin, NSW, is expected to become a popular attraction in Australia. This 80-hectare development features a lodge, retail-shop village, health spa, Irish pub with accommodations and an international garden.

The focus of the resort is the gardens; the responsibility of maintaining them goes to Stuart Neal.

"We look for these gardens to rival some of the most beautiful gardens in the world," Stuart says proudly. "When completed, they will contain more than 5,000 species of trees, reflect the flora from at least 15 countries, and occupy 12 hectares." In addition to the gardens, there are more than 16 hectares of vineyards.

Sounds impressive — and it is. But it's also a challenge. Thirteen gardeners currently work on-site. And by completion, the resort will employ 30 full-time gardeners. And there's grass, lots of grass to mow. In fact, Stuart's crew can be found mowing grass six hours a day, all week long, all year long. To help with the task, last November the resort purchased a diesel Walker with a mulching deck.

"We purchased a Walker because of its reputation," Stuart explains. "We have high standards here, and wanted a machine that would meet them. We haven't been disappointed."

"In addition to the mower, one of the best investments we made was buying a mulching deck. It allows us to recycle nutrients back into the soil, and it cuts down on mowing time. Interestingly, you don't even know that grass clippings haven't been caught."

Hunter Valley Gardens is less than a two-hour drive from Sydney. The lodge, village and pub are open. The health spa is due for completion in 2002; the gardens will be completed over two phases, with final completion date set for 2005.

Phase two of the garden has been underway since 1999 and includes the gardens themselves, a nursery with over 500,000 plants, as well as a church and restaurant. ■



Stuart Neal with Walker operator Dean Freebairn: Stuart says the resort purchased the Walker because of its reputation, and it hasn't been disappointed.

■ WHEN A PARK IS MORE THAN A PARK

To the casual observer, Queanbeyan, NSW, is a quiet community of some 27,000 people. To park supervisor, Bill Maleganeas, it's really a beehive of activity. With the help of 34 grounds maintenance personnel, Bill looks after two cemeteries, the sports fields, the swimming area and the parks themselves.

In between time, he and his staff are growing their own plants in the nursery, and making compost in a green-waste disposal area. Excess plant material and compost are sold to the public.

Bill has a horticulture trade certificate, and has been with the grounds department for more than 10 years. He comes from a long line of horticulturists. In fact, his grandfather, father, uncle and one brother were at one time, or still are, in horticulture.

"If you work here, there's something to do year-round," he tells. "If you're not picking up leaves in the fall, then you're mowing down grass, lots of grass in the spring."

To help at both ends of the season, the grounds department operates four Walkers — one petrol model and three diesels equipped with high-lift systems. The council purchased its first one in 1988.

"We use the Walkers because they're reliable, and nothing beats them for picking up leaves," says Bill. "And we have lots of leaves here. Over the years we've demonstrated other mowers, but nothing compares to a Walker."

As he explains, the machine is a good fit, since everyone working for the council takes pride in the work they do. ■



Park supervisor Bill Maleganeas says they've demonstrated other mowers, but nothing compares to a Walker.



Private contractors

■ WITH CONDITIONS LIKE THIS, YOU NEED QUALITY GEAR

Mowing conditions in New Zealand are tough, with plenty of rainfall in most parts of the country and a maintenance season that lasts year-round. Private contractors competing in this environment not only need a durable machine that increases productivity, they also need a mower that delivers a cut their customers can be proud of.

Eco Maintenance is a good test case for equipment. In five years, the Auckland company grew from a \$1 million operation into an \$8 million-plus concern. The move toward privatization by the local council helped spark this growth, along with the forward thinking of managing director Peter Garvey.



"There's no question we've taken advantage of opportunities," relates Peter, who notes that nearly 65% of the company's business is council-related work. "But we've also had a vision and developed good business sense over the years."

Part of the Eco Maintenance's vision is to provide full facilities management to customers. In addition to green-scaping, the company provides litter control, cleans car parks, offers plumbing and electrical support, among a variety of other services. As Peter emphasizes, "We will perform nearly any service a customer wants. If we can't do it, we will find someone who can."



In addition to council work, Eco Maintenance maintains the Auckland airport grounds, 20 school properties, and other large commercial and residential sites. The mowing part of the operation is accomplished with 14 Walker Mowers.

"We like the Walkers because they are compact," Peter tells. "They are not as obtrusive as other mowers, and our operators can get in and out of sites quickly. This is especially important for our 1,700 retirement properties whose residents are not particularly fond of noise and activity."

He also appreciates the machine's durability. Auckland is renowned for having some of the toughest mowing conditions in the world. His Walkers literally work non-stop year-round, putting on an average of 100 hours a month. "With conditions like this, you need to operate quality gear," he emphasizes.

His operators agree. "We can get the job done a lot quicker with a Walker," tells Lee Tate. Five-year veteran Steve Ashley adds that they are especially nimble for getting around obstacles. In his words, "They're simply an awesome machine." ■

■ DIVERSE PROPERTIES CALL FOR VERSATILE MACHINE

Graham Eyre, owner of Pro-Mow, Drury, has been in business a little over a year. Yet the type and number of his mowing accounts tell otherwise. Among his 30 properties are lifestyle blocks, schools and orchards. In a fortnight, he mows 16 hectares of grass.

"When I first saw the Walker, I told myself I could make money with it," he relates. "So I purchased an MT26 with a 42-inch GHS deck and 52-inch mulching deck. I ran that unit for 11 months, putting about 700 hours on it. Then I started picking up orchards, and found that a larger deck would save one complete pass."

Graham traded in his mower for a new model with a larger 62-inch deck. When teamed with his mulching deck, the gear keeps all his customers satisfied, he explains. "I found early on that picking up grass clippings was unnecessary, even on the lifestyle blocks, as the mulching deck made them disappear."

"I think one of the best things about a Walker, and one of the keys to my success, can be summed up in one word — versatility. The Walker is very versatile. Operators like myself are able to run different decks in several different applications. Did I mention, the back-up and service is great, too?" ■



Graham Eyre says, "When I first saw the Walker, I told myself I could make money with it."

FROM ROADS TO LAWNS, JUST LIKE THAT



What used to take Alvin Johnston 40 minutes to mow with his push mower, now takes only 15 minutes with the Walker.

Prior to going on holiday, Alvin Johnston managed a road maintenance operation for Fulton Hogan's Nelson office. When he returned, he was managing the newly formed facilities management division. "I went from maintaining roads to maintaining lawns, just like that," Alvin laughs. But to the casual observer, he looks like he has spent the better part of his working life behind the controls of a Walker Mower. He zips over the lawns effortlessly, belying the little time he has spent accruing only 167 hours on his new machine.

The Walker is brilliantly designed, all the way from the perfect seat and great controls to its compact size.

"The Walker is truly amazing," he explains. "It is brilliantly designed, all the way from the perfect seat and great controls to its compact size. What used to take me



Fulton Hogan division manager Alan Davies notes that the company's recent diversification efforts is the result of incredible growth over the last 10 years.

40 minutes to mow with my push mower, now takes only 15 minutes with the Walker."

Recognized primarily as roading and civil engineering contractors, Fulton Hogan employs 2,000 people throughout New Zealand. As surfacing division manager Alan Davies relates, the company experienced incredible growth over the last 10 years, and several of its locations are now looking to diversify into facilities management. The Walker purchase was the result of a recommendation from another company location. With Johnston at the controls, the machine maintains 30 half-way homes and a hospital grounds each week. ■



Before Matthew Pearce purchased his Walker, it was taking him 3.5 days out of five to mow his properties. Now, he spends about a day mowing.



■ "GOING IT ALONE"

"If I can do it myself, I'm better off," tells Matthew Pearce, owner of Cleansite Services in Palmerston North. But that's saying a lot when you have more than 13 very large commercial properties to mow, sweep, landscape, and otherwise maintain on a weekly basis. Matthew relies on his 26-hp Walker fitted with a 42-inch GHS deck to help get the work done.

One commercial customer wanted me to mow only after working hours. The Walker allows me to cut the grass during that short window of opportunity.

This owner/operator became acquainted with the Walker while bidding for a large job. A Walker dealer dropped off a model MC demonstrator, and Matthew

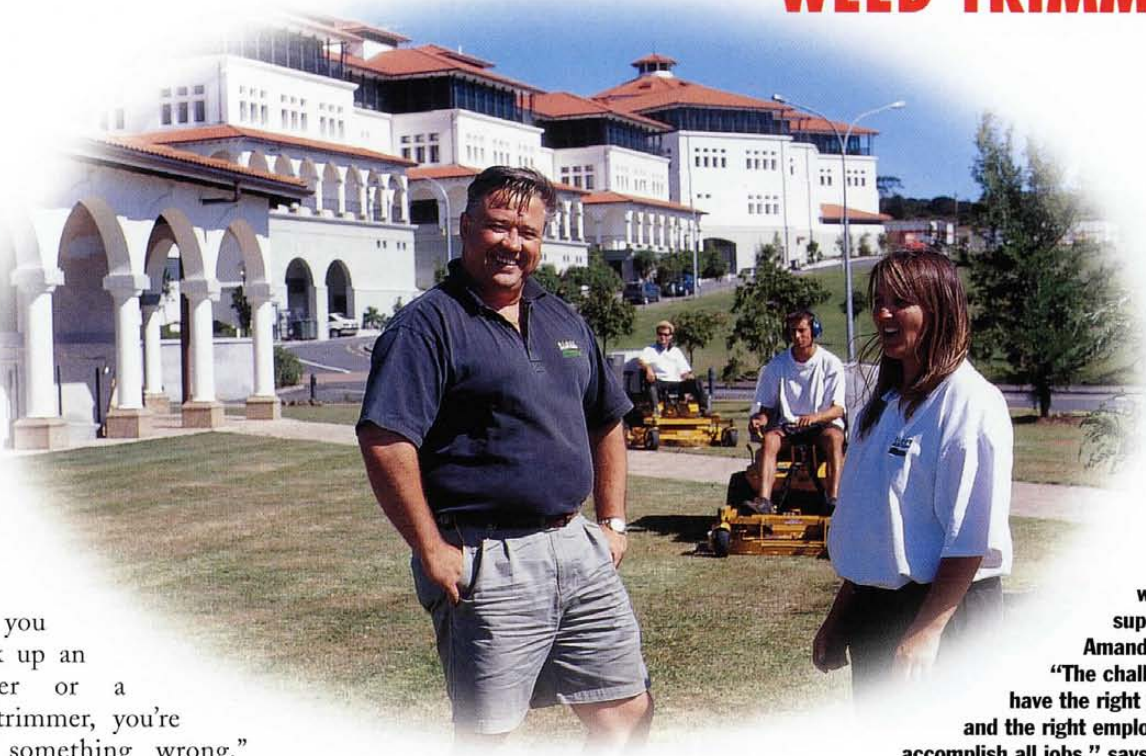
The New Zealand Dairy Research Institute is one of 13 large commercial properties maintained by Cleansite.

later purchased an MT 26. If Matthew doubted the wisdom of his purchase, that was put to rest after he completed one project in 1.5 hours that the property's previous contractor told him would take two days to mow.

Speed and maneuverability are the keys to Cleansite's operation, explains Matthew, who has been mowing and maintaining lawns for 20 years. "One commercial customer wanted me to mow only after working hours. The Walker allows me to cut the grass during that short window of opportunity." Offering the full line of services he does also requires Pearce to spend as little time mowing as possible, so he can spend more time performing those other services. The Walker helps simply because it cuts his mowing time in half, if not more.

"Before I purchased the Walker, it was taking me 3.5 days out of five to mow my properties. Now, I spend about a day mowing." ■

■ "THROW AWAY THE EDGER AND WEED TRIMMER"



"If you pick up an edger or a weed trimmer, you're doing something wrong," explains Andrew Robertson, owner of Blockbusters, Auckland.

Five short years ago, Andrew and his father Keith started a company geared toward maintaining lifestyle blocks. Now, Blockbusters has seven full-time employees, and provides full-service to commercial properties, retirement villages, universities and sub-division developments. With so much expansion in such a short time, Robertson had to generate efficiencies. Four years ago, he purchased a "second-hand" 20-hp Walker. Now he owns two — a 25-hp model and 26-hp model.

To be successful you have to buy the right equipment, and train and retain your employees.

"It's not what it costs but what it can do," tells Andrew of his equipment. "The Walkers, for example, can catch, side-discharge or mulch. And with a Stevens edger, countless manhours are saved on virtually every job."

Andrew Robertson
with crew
supervisor

Amanda Fergeson:
"The challenge is to have the right equipment and the right employees to accomplish all jobs," says Andrew.

In addition to providing mowing and maintenance services to its 80-plus properties, Blockbusters offers landscape installation. "I've learned that mowing and maintenance compliment one another," notes Andrew. "The challenge is to have the right equipment and the right employees to accomplish all jobs."

In addition to mowing equipment, then, Blockbusters has a John Deere 855 and 955, both equipped with front-end loaders. The company also has a staff of highly trained individuals.

"Two of our employees have trade certificates," he adds. "To be successful you have to buy the right equipment, and train and retain your employees. You're not going to get rich overnight in this business. But if you do it right with the long term in mind, you can build a nice operation, not to mention careers for your employees."

Some other tips from Robertson? "Avoid working on Sundays, and use Saturdays as a catch-up day. No matter how big your company is, take time to get on a machine and show employees you don't mind the work." ■

Council contractors work to please a wide variety of customers

■ KEEPING THE PARKS BEAUTIFUL IN TARANAKI

Taranaki receives as much sunshine and rain as anyplace in New Zealand. The beautiful parks in New Plymouth benefit from the climate, and so do the maintenance crews charged with keeping the parks looking nice. That job goes to Parkscape Services.

"Our mission statement is to enhance the environment," tells operations manager Nigel Dravitzki, who adds that like other council entities, Parkscape has geared up for both council and private sector work as well as contracts such as the local hospital and Dow agro sciences.

"We've always taken great pride in the work we do with the parks," Nigel relates. "We take this pride in our private sector work, as well, along with a commitment to be as competitive and efficient as possible."

Part of this commitment can be seen in Parkscape's transition from using walk-behind mowers to Walker Mowers. Over the years, the division has replaced 11 of its 12 Gravely walk-behind mowers with six Walker Mowers. Its most recent purchase includes two 26-hp Walkers and one diesel.

"The Walker has become the benchmark for the type of work we do," explains Nigel. "We not only have a variety of

work, but the machines easily handle the heavy mowing conditions here. We expect to get at least 3,500 hours out of each of our mowers before we trade for a new one."

A number of Parkscape's Walkers are equipped with mulching decks. Nigel adds that the mower's low profile, which enhances safe operation, is also an attribute for both public and private companies alike. ■

Parkscape has replaced 11 of its 12 Gravely walk-behind mowers with six Walker Mowers.



Parkscape operations manager Nigel Dravitzki (center) with operators Roger Willing (right) and David Lawn

■ TOP-QUALITY MOWING WINS THE LEAF BATTLE IN CHRISTCHURCH

With 650 parks and who knows how many trees, Christchurch has more than its share of leaves. The task of removing them and keeping the parks neat and clean goes to City Care.

"We bought our first Walker for a special Transit project, and then we found it was the best machine for the type of work we do," explains parks general manager Steve Chandler. "You can imagine that with about 4,000 hectares of lawn to mow, we have a variety of applications, and we have leaves."

Since their first Walker Mower, the city has purchased 14 others, and today operates seven Walkers. All of them are equipped with GHS decks, and four have high-lift systems. City Care's most recent purchase is a Model MD diesel. Each mower receives somewhere between 800 and 900 hours of use a year.



City Care's business development manager Brian Keown (left) with operator Chris Allen (center) and parks general manager Steve Chandler.

City Care is comprised of seven divisions, and employs more than 500 people. The parks division has 140 full-time employees, and adds 60 more during peak season.

According to business development manager Brian Keown, "The quality of cut and maneuverability are a winning formula for our parks and reserves mowing." Walker operator Chris Allen, who has been with City Care for the past 20 years — the last nine operating Walkers — agrees, noting, "The faster cut times can only be achieved with a Walker Mower." ■

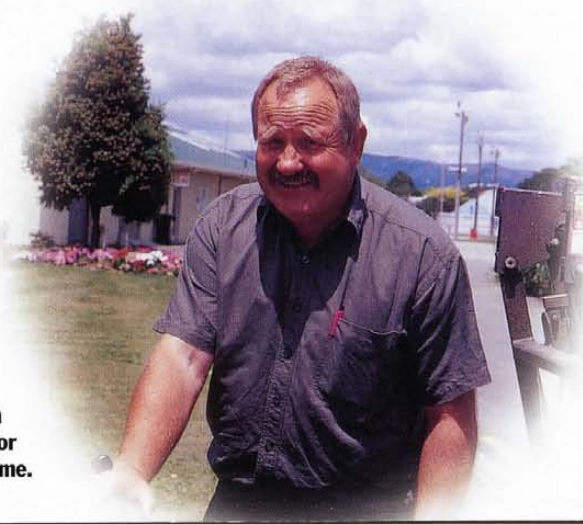
■ FROM PARKS TO RACE TRACKS

Five years ago, you wouldn't have seen Heartland Contractors, Feilding, mowing and maintaining golf courses, race tracks, residential properties, schools and athletic fields. The reason? Back then, the entity was still a division of the city council. The group has since spun away from the city, and, with a staff of 110 employees, now provides a wide array of services from grounds care to road work.

Observers will note that despite the many changes in the company, at least one thing has remained constant throughout the transition: Walker Mowers. Heartland was among the first Walker users in New Zealand, and among the first to equip their mowers with high-lift systems.

"We've always been pretty impressed with them," tells fleet manager Jim Nicholls of the Walkers. "Over the years, they've done an exceptional job picking up leaves and increasing our productivity. The outfront deck design alone has been important for reducing our trimming time."

The Open Space Management division of Heartland employs 54 people. Its extensive equipment lineup includes five Walkers and 12 tractor-mounted mowers. The most recently purchased Walker has 460 hours in only six months of operation. ■



Heartland fleet manager Jim Nicholls says the Walker outfront deck design has been important for reducing trimming time.

One more New Zealand Walker user

■ TEAMWORK PAYS OFF FOR MARLBOROUGH VINEYARD

It took every one of the 13 workers at Forrest Estate Winery to produce 70,000 cases of wine last year. "We're all a team," tells vineyard manager Don Shefford. "Everyone is accountable for a bottle of wine."

Teamwork pays off for one of the largest privately owned vineyards in New Zealand. Last year, Forrest Estate won 15 gold medals for its wines. The vineyard attracts thousands of tourists annually to its 60-hectare site and tasting facility. Visitors taste the wine and enjoy the environs, which are kept neat and clean by a Walker Model MS.

Operator Tim Alexander completes the mowing job in 4.5 hours, a task he performs twice a week during the spring. The Walker, equipped with a 42-inch GHS deck, does a gold medal job on the grounds, adds Don.



Operator Tim Alexander (sitting) with Don Shefford (red shirt) and vineyard owner John Forrest

The Walker Mower may look out of place at Forrest Estate Winery, but it's not, says vineyard manager Don Shefford. "An operation like ours prides itself in perfection, all the way from the wine we produce to the property we maintain."

"The machine is not only fast and does a great job, but it mows close around the trees without damaging them. That's important for an operation like ours that prides itself in perfection, all the way from the wine we produce to the property we maintain."

The dry conditions that slowed grass growth this summer were good for the grapes, as the vineyard looks forward to another excellent vintage. Thirty-five percent of the wine produced by Forrest Estate Winery is marketed locally; the remainder is exported. ■

Franchisees see opportunities in New Zealand

■ "THE BEST THING SINCE COCA-COLA AND HARLEYS"

Franchise mowing operations are popular for several reasons. For starters, they don't require a tremendous amount of capital up front. They also operate with proven business and marketing plans, so all the new owner has to do is get his gear and get into gear.

Over the years, buying a franchise has been particularly attractive for employees who have been either made redundant or for those who just want to start on a different career path. Many have found Walker Mowers to be valuable tools for overall enhancing their operations and growing their businesses.

Rod Skelton is no exception. After 16 years in an office job in Christchurch, Rod was ready for a new challenge. He responded to several franchise advertisements, and was quite taken by the opportunities presented by Jim's Mowing. The year was 1996 and, at the time, there were no Jim's Mowing franchises in the area. Today, Rod,

with business partner Michael Strettle, operate the master franchise in Christchurch, and oversee 52 franchise operations.

Not bad for a former typewriter repair person. Like other Jim's operators, Rod started out with a territory, and simply grew his customer base. Over the years he began to transition from primarily domestic accounts to commercial sites.

"I realized I had to become more efficient in my mowing," he relates, "so I purchased a 20-hp Walker Model MT. Its speed and the mowing job it does speaks for itself. I found it wasn't unusual to cut my mowing time from two hours on a property to 40 minutes.

"It's a brilliant machine. In fact, it's the best thing to come out of the States since Coca-Cola and Harley Davidson motorcycles."

That's a fairly strong statement. Yet, this operator truly believes his new Walker has allowed him to change the direction of his business.

"I've sold some of my domestic rounds and am now looking to develop commercial rounds as I have plenty of capability. I mow 50 to 60 properties a week, and use the Walker for 60% of my work."

When asked what it takes to be a success in the franchise mowing business, Rod says the key is self-motivation. It doesn't hurt to have a Walker either, he adds. ■

Rod Skelton says his Walker cut his mowing time from two hours a property to 40 minutes. In fact, in his words, "It's the best thing to come out of the States since Coca-Cola and Harley Davidson motorcycles."



■ THEY DROVE ME TO IT

As a Mr. Green master franchisee, Alan Gare oversees six franchises in the Blenheim area. He purchased a Model MC 16-hp Walker because his customers literally demanded too much of him. The only way to accomplish his work was with a machine that could get the job done fast.

"The Walker is very maneuverable and easy to load," tells Alan, who says he uses it for a variety of applications from mowing home lawns and the sides of roads to mowing a vineyard or two. "I can tackle all sorts of jobs with it. The 54-inch, rear-discharge berm deck is ideal for mowing roadsides where a side-discharge would be inappropriate. For vineyards, the front-deck configuration allows me to mow close to the vines. And homeowners tell me they appreciate the machine's striping effect."

In fact, one of his high-end homeowner customers actually designed her new flower gardens so Alan could mow around them with his Walker.

A typical Mr. Green franchisee maintains somewhere between 80 and 100 properties. By virtually doubling his production, Alan says his Walker has allowed him to pursue larger accounts, and reduce his account load to 50. In his words, the mower gives him added flexibility and saves time, and he "wouldn't use anything else, period." There are approximately 180 Mr. Green franchises in New Zealand. ■



Alan Gare oversees six Mr. Green franchises in Blenheim.

One of Alan Gare's high-end homeowner customers actually designed her new flower gardens so he could mow around them with his Walker.

Max Hair, who mows 70 properties, says going back to a push mower now would be like using a pair of scissors on a property.

■ MR. EFFICIENCY

TIME IS MONEY FOR CREW CUT OPERATOR

Max Hair has been mowing lawns for only a year, yet he's already learned an important business axiom: Time is money.

Four months after purchasing a Crew Cut franchise in Auckland, Max purchased a 26-hp Walker Mower. The move significantly reduced his mowing time. A round that once took him six, possibly seven days to mow with a push mower, now takes him only four days.

"With the Walker, I was finishing my run halfway through the day and still had three hours up my sleeve," he says. "The mower is so efficient that my mindset has changed: I look for properties that I can access with it."

Max, who mows 70 properties, says going back to a push mower now would be like using a pair of scissors on a property. In other words, you have to have good gear to be efficient.

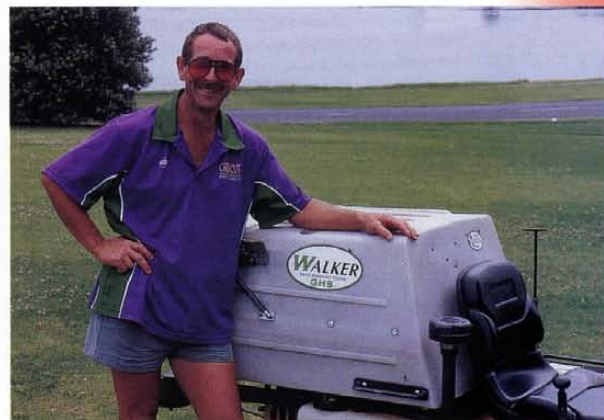
"When I started in this business, my idea was to make my round as efficient and as easy as possible. All my gear is stowed on the trailer for easy access, and a ramp allows quick

loading and unloading of my Walker right onto the lawn.

"What I've found over the last year is that the Walker is not only an exciting machine to drive, it's also amazing. It is very maneuverable, and features a truly precise design." But even more important, he adds, an operator can make money with it.

"It's simple. You can mow all week long with a push mower and make just enough money to live on, or you can use a Walker and really make some money."

With the help of his new mower, Max has nearly doubled his weekly earnings. Still, he only uses the Walker on 45% of his properties. If he has his way, that figure will increase dramatically in the future, along with his bottom line. ■



Having the right gear is important for homeowners, too

■ ENGINEER APPRECIATES QUALITY

People who mow lawns professionally are not the only ones who appreciate a Walker Mower. Homeowners all over New Zealand have found Walker Mowers to be an indispensable part of their lawn maintenance regimen.

Peter Robinson is a case in point. Being an engineer, he understands the value of owning a quality machine. His

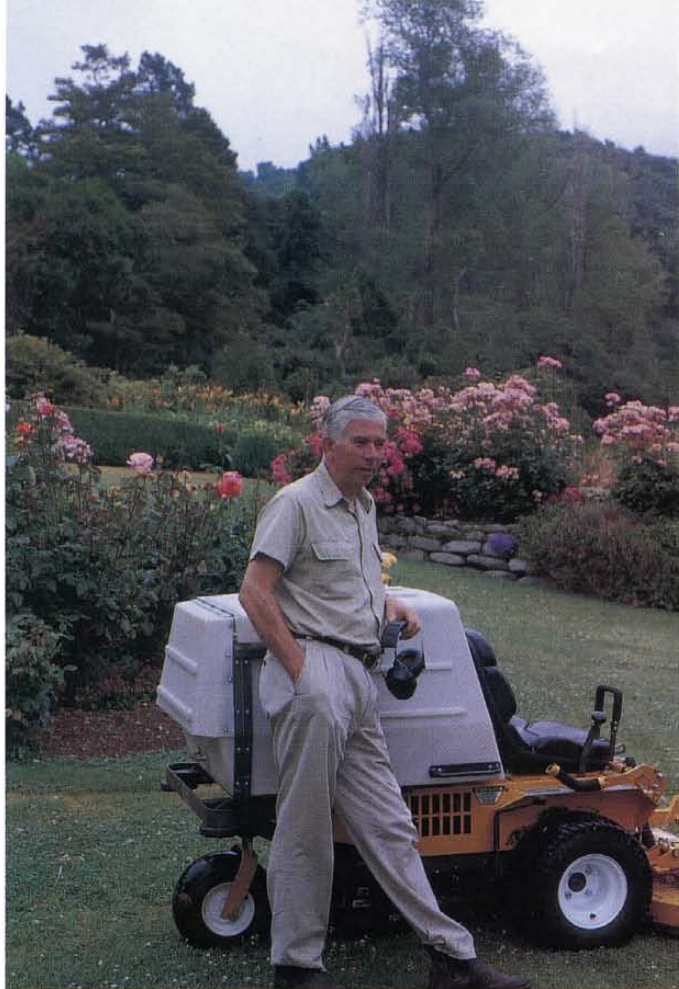
MT 20-hp Walker with 48-inch deck has cut his mowing time from seven to three hours, and he is mowing a bigger area than before. His 8-hectare property, Frog Hollow, is located in Ashley, near Rangiora. He first noticed the Walker being used by the city council, and he really liked what he saw.

"Once you've seen a Walker in action you become critical of what other mowers can and cannot do," Peter relates. Wife Gill adds, "When you have a piece of property like this you have to have the right equipment."

The Robinsons recently planted an olive grove with 220 trees, which will mature in four years. They plan to use the Walker to maintain that area, as well. ■

Once you've seen a Walker in action you become critical of what other mowers can and cannot do.





■ GETTING THE ARTICLE YOU WANT

Graham Peacock, owner of Orari George Station in South Canterbury, used to devote two days for mowing his 1.6-hectare lawn. Since purchasing his 11-hp Walker equipped with a 42-inch GHS deck, he can finish the job in half the time. Graham operates a 4,000-hectare cattle and sheep farm.

His residence, with 12 bedrooms and six fireplaces, was built in 1866, making it one of the oldest homes in the area. The owner, who spends half the year in England where he owns another farm, has had his Walker two years.

"I wanted something that would mow in wet conditions. Most mowers can't handle wet grass. Buying a mower is not unlike buying farm equipment. You have to be certain you're getting the article you want." ■

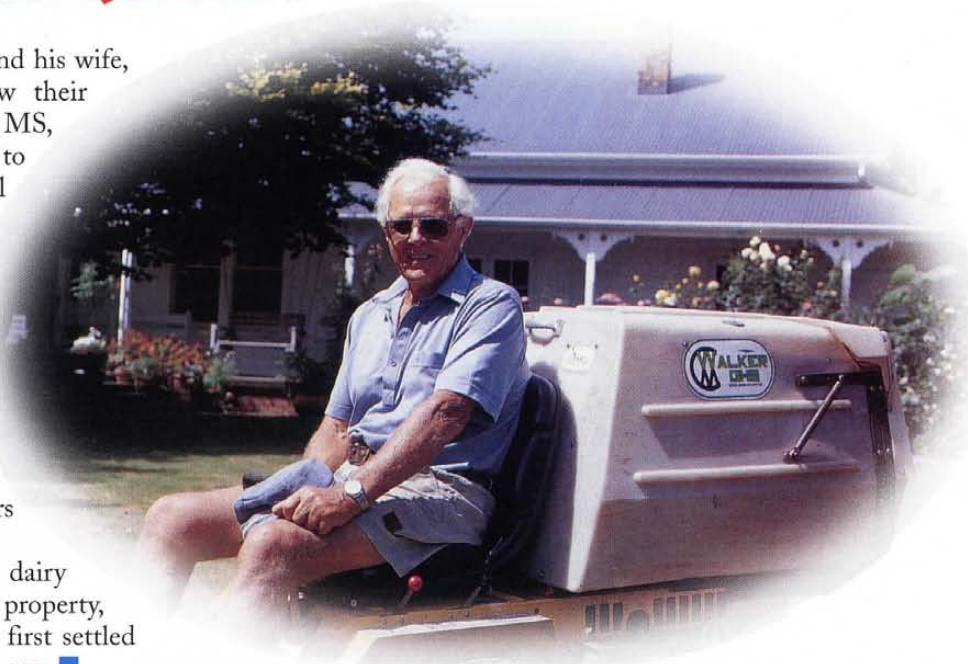
Graham Peacock operates a 4,000-hectare cattle and sheep farm.

■ FOURTH GENERATION FARMER APPRECIATES QUALITY

It used to take Denis Lepper and his wife, Pauline, eight hours to mow their property. Now, with a Walker MS, it takes them from 1.5 to 2 hours to complete the job. But like a typical Taranaki farmer, Denis needed lots of convincing upfront before investing in new equipment.

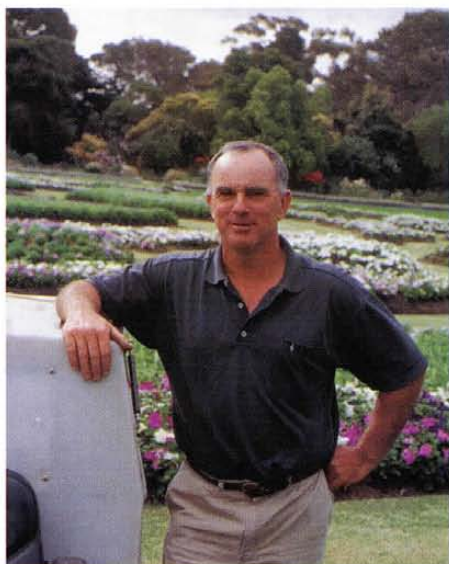
"I liked the concept of a solidly-built mower," he tells. "After purchasing the Walker, I've found nothing to be as maneuverable, either. In fact, I haven't used a push mower since we bought the Walker three years ago."

Denis operates a 164-hectare dairy farm that milks 450 cows. The property, located near New Plymouth, was first settled by his great grandfather 150 years ago. ■

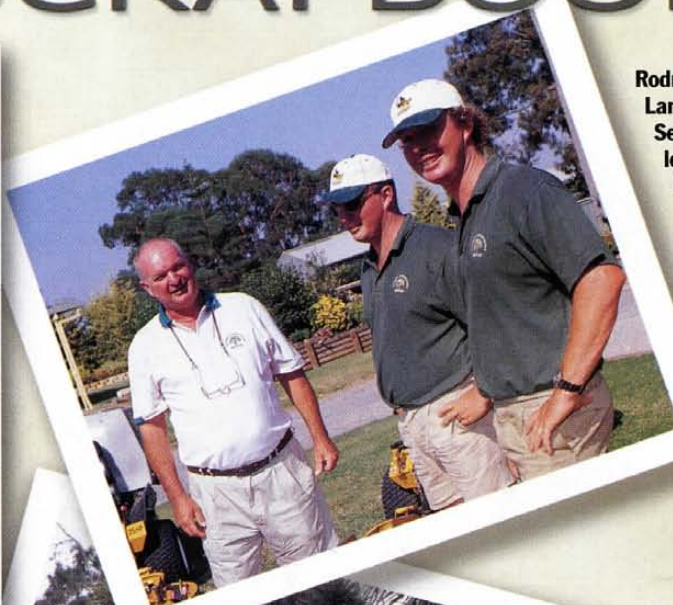


WALKER SCRAPBOOK

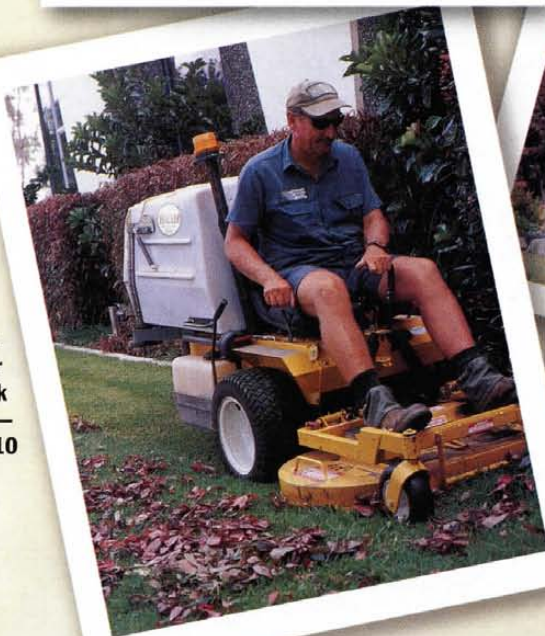
**Contractor
Paul McGrath
— Page 7**



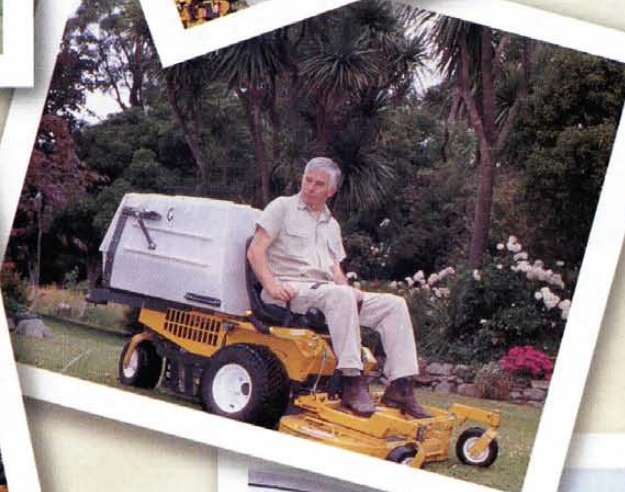
**Rodmar
Landscaping
Services. From
left to right:
Rod Watson,
son Peter
and son
Brad —
Page 4**



**Graham's
Garden Care
operator
Mark
McDonald —
Page 10**



**Homeowner
Graham
Peacock —
Page 27**



**Alan Gare, Mr. Green
Franchisee — Page 25**



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