

WALKER TALK

SERVING LAWN MAINTENANCE PROFESSIONALS FOR YEARS TO COME



Mowing lawns in Winnipeg

What do you charge?

Secret weapons in Tennessee

Mississippi grocer swaps apron for mower



WALKER TALK

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THE DISCIPLINES OF REST AND WORSHIP

In addition to promoting our products and our company, an important purpose of *Walker Talk* is to communicate ways to success for our readers. "Work hard and play hard" as the mantra for successful living tells the popular culture in the USA. In our family and our company, we believe that "rest and worship" are being overlooked and ignored by many as an important part of successful living; living life as it was meant to be lived.

This thinking is based on our belief in God as our creator and believing the biblical account of creation. It is accepting that the One who made us has made ways of living that are best for us. This is ancient wisdom, but it endures.



What do we mean by rest? First of all, rest in this sense is not recreation, sleeping or "doing your own thing." Rest is stopping production and the production of livelihood every seventh day. It is a day when we stop and honor our Creator for making us and making the world (how wonderful is His workmanship!). Our rest

from production acknowledges His rest from production on the seventh day of creation.

And about worship? Ancient tradition couples the seventh day rest with worship. Worship in this tradition is setting a regular, habitual time and place to meet with others of like faith to purposefully honor our Creator and to seek His ways for us. While we can (and should) individually worship God every day, there is something powerful and wonderful that happens when a group of people gather with purpose to praise God and acknowledge Him. I have found no other experience in life that compares.

The last point is discipline. Rest and worship need to be pursued as a discipline. These activities are not always pleasurable, immediately satisfying, gratifying or rewarding, nor are we naturally inclined, yet they are good for us. In the same way as physical exercise and training is a proven, beneficial discipline for our body, so are rest and worship a beneficial discipline for our soul.

That's the end of the sermon. I hope many of you find the encouragement intended in these words, shared from our experience.



Bob Walker
President

Tennessee company has more than one *'secret weapon'*

Exchange business cards with Scott Graby and be prepared to get more in return than you gave. Whereas the normal business card fits nicely into a wallet, his 3.5"x9.5" card barely squeezes into a coat pocket.

After talking with the owner and president of Hearthstone Property Services in Murfreesboro, Tennessee, one would be surprised in anything less. His crews can be found day and night on 200 properties: maintaining shopping centers, condominiums, offices and warehouses. By day they perform a myriad of exterior maintenance services, including landscape maintenance, irrigation and snow plowing. By night they are sweeping parking lots and pressure washing sidewalks.

In between, crews are on call to perform nearly two dozen other job functions, what the company refers to as "Watchdog Services." These include repairing asphalt, concrete, drywall and roofs; removing debris and graffiti; fixing plumbing and lighting; replacing windows; and, yes, installing flowers.

"Nearly 99% of our clients are property managers," says Graby. "Our niche is our ability to respond quickly to just about any of their requests. If we can't get the job done ourselves, we will help our client find someone who can. If we don't have anybody we feel comfortable recommending, then we will find a way to get it done in-house, and often incorporate that service as part of our regular offering. This is how most of our services have originated."

The approach has been more than successful for Scott and his wife, Sandy, who started the business in 1986 cleaning houses and small offices. As they say, one thing led to another. Soon, his crews were sweeping parking lots and then mowing grass, plowing snow and pressure cleaning sidewalks. Other services were added per client request until property managers looked almost exclusively to Hearthstone Property Services for their interior and exterior service needs.



Scott Graby purchased his first Walker Mower seven years ago. In his words, the mowers quickly became their "secret weapon."

Today, the company has 50 employees and 26 radio-dispatched trucks that cover nearly 2,500 square miles of Middle Tennessee, including greater Nashville. Landscape maintenance accounts for 50% of its annual revenue. Parking lot sweeping is a close second with 40% of the pie. The remainder is made up of plowing snow, pressure washing, and the “Watchdog Services.”

SECRET WEAPON

You can't provide this depth of service without the tools, and Hearthstone employees have the tools. In fact, their equipment lineup reads like a Who's Who in equipment manufacturing. On the fleet side there are nine GMC sweeper trucks and five Isuzu box trucks. A 1-ton GMC truck is outfitted with two pressure washer units and a 500-gallon water tank.

“Nearly 99% of our clients are property managers.”

There's also a bucket truck, two GMC dump and flatbed trucks, and seven other 1/2- and 3/4-ton service vehicles. On the equipment side, the company operates seven Walker GHS Mowers, 10 Great Dane and Wright Stander mowers, 20 Shindaiwa weed trimmers, 30 Shindaiwa and Echo blowers, four Shindaiwa power brooms ... and more.

“Having the right equipment for the job is an important part of any operation,” Graby relates. “As an owner, you can't expect to get the job done with inferior equipment. And you can't expect employees to remain happy if they have to operate this inferior equipment.”

Graby says his company was one of the first to introduce Walker Mowers to the Nashville area. They purchased



Graby says Hearthstone's niche is maintaining commercial properties, especially shopping centers where crews provide a turnkey maintenance service.

their first one used seven years ago and, in his words, the mowers quickly became their “secret weapon.”

“We started to use the mowers on properties where customers wanted a nice look,” Graby continues. “The GHS deck not only left a manicured look, it also eliminated damage to automobiles caused by flying stones and other debris, an inherent problem at shopping centers. The mowers also dramatically increased productivity, and were found to be easy to maneuver on grassy islands, a common landscape element on these properties.”

As Hearthstone purchased more Walkers, the company looked toward standardization. All seven of its current mowers are powered by Kohler 20-hp gasoline engines, and feature 48-inch GHS decks and big grass catchers. Each machine logs between 400 and 500 hours a year, and is scheduled to be replaced every three years. Graby says area landscape contractors make for an instant market for used Walkers.

The Great Dane and Wright Stander mowers comprise the other side of the mowing equation, notes Ray Livsey, operations vice president. Livsey, who's been with the company for six years, is that one-in-a-million person who can do just about anything — from equipment repair and construction management to overseeing all aspects of a 24/7 service operation.

“We purchased our first Great Dane mower in 1997 and were probably one of the first contractors in the area to buy a fleet of them,” says Livsey. “We use them where we don't require collection capability. These mowers are easy to maintain and they turn on a dime, too.” The two machines, the Walkers and the Wright Standers (the company is switching from Great Dane to Wright), compliment one another, Livsey adds, and they work to make his life easier.

The same can be said for a new pay system that he helped introduce last year. As Livsey explains, during the busy season, the maintenance crews work on “book rate.” A combination commission/grading pay system, “book rate” essentially pays crews a pre-established dollar amount for completing each property. The more properties they complete in a day, the more they earn at the end of the day. The kicker is the grading system. If a crew fails to meet standards on a particular job, every crew member reverts to hourly pay for that job. “The cut in pay is significant,” Livsey emphasizes, “and is plenty of incentive to ensure jobs are completed up to specification.”

According to Graby, it took awhile to work the kinks out of the new system, but the end results have been more than gratifying. “One of our foremen was dead set against going to the

system,” he recalls. “When it was finally in place, however, he realized his crew could get just as much done with one less person, which meant there was more money left over for everyone else on the crew.

“The truth is, using the system helps to eliminate waste. Crews are smaller, they accomplish more, and, since employees don’t get paid if they’re not working, they take better care of their equipment. Our landscape staff has been consistently earning 50% to 75% more money under this pay plan due to the fact that the crews are working at very high efficiency and are able to service more properties. Since the book rate also locks in our labor expense at the exact amount we have budgeted, it’s a wonderful win-win arrangement.”

The program, Graby continues, has been so successful that the company recently extended it to mulching, trimming and spraying crews.

SOFT SELL

Developing a new pay system is part of an overall effort by Hearthstone’s owner to create a healthy work environment, one that encourages employees like Livsey and Pat Smith, vice president of finance, and Brenda Farmer, property management and personnel manager, to stick around. Offering competitive pay and benefits, and having well-maintained, high-quality equipment like Walker Mowers, are obvious reasons to stay, he

adds, noting there are less obvious ones, too. He calls these the “softer” components of a workplace.

“We try to create a workplace where employees feel at home,” Graby says. “Every morning we serve a hot breakfast buffet for all staff in our newly constructed Hearthstone Café. Doing so gives everyone an opportunity to plan together and to relax a bit before they have to jump into the day’s activities. We also sponsor company trips to theme parks, whitewater rafting and cookouts, and staff members have an opportunity to use the company chalet in the Smokies. All of these activities help shape our company culture and build a camaraderie that is essential to building and maintaining teams.”

One very pivotal “soft” item, he continues, is the company’s monthly profit-sharing program. “We currently distribute 15% of our monthly net profit in cash to all employees who have been here at least one year. Accompanying the cash is a summary of the actual numbers for the month with my analysis of where we performed well, where we fell short, and what we can do to improve. Since all of us, including me, receive bonuses from this same pot, we’re all motivated to find ways to make the pot bigger.”


Graby says that one of the most surprising developments from his company’s investment in these “soft” components has been the bottom line benefits that have appeared almost magically. Turnover has been reduced

to practically nothing, which for a company his size represents a huge savings not only in training dollars, but also in fixing the problems and complaints that accompany the turnover phenomenon.

UPWARD MOBILITY

The future looks bright for Hearthstone Property Services. The company’s growth is predicated in large part on keeping its property management clients satisfied. New properties for them translates into more work for the Hearthstone team. And when a property manager wants a new service, he or she has to look no further than ... Hearthstone. That’s a pretty good relationship to have, but it didn’t happen overnight. It has taken this contractor the better part of 16 years to develop relationships and put systems in place to help perpetuate them. In the process, the company, in his words, “has moved up the food chain.”

Graby, who as a hobby has built a good-sized portfolio of rental properties, recently combined this interest in real estate with the strengths of his company. Over the past two years, he has acquired two shopping centers, which they manage and, of course, maintain. Says Graby, “These have not only been profitable ventures for us, but they have also given us a much better understanding of the needs of our property managers and owners.”

None of the above — the success, the growth, the changes — would have been possible without the support of his people, he explains. “That’s where the ‘soft’ side of the business pays dividends over the long haul. The final unexpected benefit from these ‘soft’ items has been to the extent that when we take care of our staff, they, in turn, take equally good care of our clients.” 

Every morning, all staff members are served a hot breakfast buffet in the newly constructed Hearthstone Café.



The price is right!

How much do you charge for your services? Do you have a minimum fee for maintaining a property? What criteria do you use when coming up with a pricing strategy? Do you have a different pricing strategy for different customers or when using different pieces of equipment? These are just a few of the questions Walker Mfg. asked in a survey sent to a random sample of 2,000 Walker Mower users in September 2002. More than 400 contractors responded to the survey. The results follow.

The two key questions on the survey asked Walker users how they priced their mowing/maintenance service and what rate they charged customers. Nearly 85% of the respondents reported that they priced their services by the hour vs. by the square foot or other method. **The average hourly rate for Walker users across the country was \$37.75/hr.** Companies in the North Central states charged the most for their services (\$39.51/hr) compared to those in the South Central and Mountain states who charged the least at an average rate of \$34.78/hr.

According to survey results, the least-experienced contractors charged more for their services than their more experienced counterparts. Contractors who had been in business less than a year reported that they charged an average of \$38.75 for their services compared to an average rate of \$37.91 for those who had been in business longer than 15 years.

Despite the relative parity in pricing across the country and among firms with different levels of experience, survey results indicated that there are extremes in the marketplace. One contractor, for example, charged only \$15/hr for his mowing/maintenance services whereas another checked in at the other end of the spectrum with an hourly rate of \$100.

More than 87% of survey respondents have a minimum charge for their mowing/maintenance service. The average minimum charge was \$31.72.

PRICING STRATEGY

When contractors were asked what they based their pricing strategy on, 43% indicated it was based strictly on costs plus desired profit. The other 57% also weighed competition, customer perceived value, and other factors such as the age of their customers. Among these respondents, nearly 75%

indicated that competition played a significant role in their pricing strategy. And slightly more than half reported that customer perceived value played an important part, as well.

More than 2/3 of the respondents kept their pricing strategy as simple as possible, charging the same rate for all their customers, for operating different pieces of mowing/maintenance equipment, and for handling clippings in different ways. For the 32% who charged a different rate for their equipment, the average price for operating their Walkers was \$42.52/hr vs. \$36.48/hr for using other riders, \$34.48/hr for mowing with mid-size walk mowers, \$29.48/hr for operating handheld equipment and \$28.40/hr for using trim mowers.

Roughly 28% of the respondents indicated they had a different pricing structure for handling clippings. They charged an average of \$46.40/hr for picking up clippings, \$43.14/hr for mulching clippings, and \$37.77/hr for side discharging them. The 34% who had a different rate for different customers charged an average of \$37.33/hr for residential customers, \$47.71/hr for commercial customers and \$48.48/hr for municipal/institutional customers.

More than half of the Walker users surveyed provided aeration, dethatching and bed edging services. They charged an average of \$52.62/hr for aeration, \$48.07/hr for dethatching, and \$36.98/hr for edging beds.

AVERAGE VS. MEDIAN

In any survey, there are responses that fall far out of the normal response range. To lessen their impact on results, researchers oftentimes use "median" instead of "average" figures to report results. A median figure, as the name implies, is the midpoint of the response range. It is the figure at which there were an equal number of respondents who reported a higher amount and a lower amount. Keep



WHAT CONTRACTORS ARE SAYING ABOUT PRICES

“The increased productivity of the Walker has allowed me to keep my pricing the same while increasing profits. I have also reduced my labor costs, as well.” **(New York)**

“I raise my rate slightly every year just to keep up. I really have no real basis for what I charge. I just try to be fair.” **(Montana)**

“During the summer when I put my 62-inch deck on my 26-hp Walker, I need to be making a dollar a minute and my price is perfect.” **(North Carolina)**

“My best advice is always do quality work, and if you are growing really fast, raise your prices a little. Focus on your own business, not your competition. You don’t have enough energy to worry about both.” **(Pennsylvania)**

“We experience low-balling in our

market and we occasionally lose an account to that. But there are always more accounts waiting. We strive to push quality.” **(Ohio)**

“We use a two-tier pricing strategy. Residential is lower due to the competition. Commercial is higher due to insurance.” **(Louisiana)**

“I feel there is no definite equation to price maintenance. There are too many variables: routes, quality of your work, clients, area, reputation, reliability. My Walker has made my business more efficient. Therefore I have raised production per day ... more volume and same time equals profit.” **(Massachusetts)**

“When I cut I take one person with me. I like to make \$60-plus per hour. This is a part-time business and I do \$75,000 per year.” **(Alabama)**

setting their price rate, most of the contractors would also admit that covering their costs has to be their primary concern. If it isn’t, they won’t be in business long, according to one survey respondent.

“There’s no question your market and your competition weighs in on your pricing strategy,” relates Tim Rummins, president of Hartville Nursery in Canton, Ohio. “But you have to know your overhead.”

There are several areas where contractors can underestimate their overhead, he adds. “If we mow a church or perform another community service for free, there is a cost tied to it and it becomes part of our overhead.” Rummins, whose company has been in business 24 years, says knowing their full labor burden can present another challenge for contractors, and all contractors should be recovering their equipment costs on every property they mow. For example, included in Hartville Nursery’s hourly rate is between \$4 and \$5 to cover the cost of operating its Walker Mowers, \$9 for its truck, \$0.50 for its string line trimmer and \$0.65 for its backpack blower.

Arkansas contractor Gerald Paulton employs a similar approach when setting his hourly rate. “I want my Walker Mower to pay for itself by the 1,000-hour mark,” says Paulton. “If I paid \$10,000 for the mower, my hourly rate would include \$10 for operating the Walker. Five dollars of his hourly rate goes toward funding his retirement, \$11 pays for his employees’ time (he works primarily through day-labor agencies) and he charges a per-

this in mind when comparing this pricing survey to your operation.

In most cases, the median price will be a dollar or two below the average. For example, contractors charged an average price of \$37.75/hr for their services compared to a median price of \$35/hr. Similarly, the median minimum charge for mowing is \$30 compared to an average charge of \$31.72.

An interesting demographic of this survey is the size of the respondents. Slightly more than **half of the respondents represented small companies that had annual sales of less than \$100,000**. Roughly 23% of the respondents indicated sales between \$101,000 and \$250,000; 13% had sales between \$251,000 and \$1/2 million; and the remainder posted an annual revenue of more than \$1/2 million. The size of the company, however, had little bearing on experience. Nearly half of the respondents reported being in business more than 11 years.

Respondents reported owning Walker Mowers for 4.7 years, and they service a mix of accounts heavily

weighted toward residential. The average contractor services 78 accounts consisting of 16 commercial, 61 residential and possibly one municipal/institutional account. The average operator owns two Walkers and mows 33 weeks out of the year. Slightly more than 1/3 of the respondents mowed between 6 and 20 acres a week; slightly less than 1/3 mowed between 21 and 50 acres a week with their Walkers. Geographically speaking, responses were spread nearly evenly across the country, with the highest representation coming from contractors in the South Atlantic and East South Central portion of the country and the fewest from the Pacific Coast region.

KNOW YOUR OVERHEAD BEFORE YOU SET PRICE

Although more than half of the respondents in the pricing survey indicated they took factors other than their costs and desired profit into consideration before

Hourly mowing/ maintenance rate by region

Region	Average Rate
New England/Mid Atlantic	\$38.65
North Central	\$39.51
South Atlantic/South Central	\$36.78
W. South Cent./Mountain	\$34.78
Pacific	\$36.85
Canada (Canadian dollars)	\$39.00

**Hourly rate for operating equipment
(includes labor costs)**

Equipment	Average	Median	Min/Max
Walker Mowers	\$42.52	\$40.00	\$15/\$100
Other riders	\$36.48	\$35.00	\$12/\$85
Mid-size walks	\$34.48	\$34.00	\$18/\$70
Trim mowers	\$28.40	\$27.50	\$10/\$65
Handheld	\$29.48	\$27.50	\$15/\$75

Based on 32% of the respondents who had a different pricing structure for operating different pieces of mowing/maintenance equipment.

**Hourly rate for customers
(includes equipment/labor costs)**

Property type	Average	Median	Min/Max
Residential	\$37.33	\$35.00	\$10/\$100
Commercial	\$47.41	\$40.00	\$20/\$150
Municipal/ Institutions	\$48.48	\$45.00	\$25/\$150

Based on 34% of the respondents who had a different pricing structure for different types of customers.

cubic-yard fee for hauling debris. His hourly rate also pays for taxes, including social security; gas, oil and equipment maintenance; transportation costs; downtime; and his profit.

In business since 1991, Paulton says it seems that everyone in Central Arkansas has a mower. “Especially within the last three years, we’ve seen a near 100% increase in the number of contractors in the maintenance business. There are literally hundreds of people mowing lawns and it has watered down the pricing.” To be competitive, he adds, you need to have a sharp pencil on both ends of the pricing spectrum.

You have to know how much it costs to operate your business, and you have to know how long it will take to complete a job. Paulton knows from experience that it takes him nine minutes to maintain 1,000 square feet of property. That includes the time it takes to mow, edge, trim, blow and clean flower beds. He doesn’t guess on square footage, either. He measures all of his properties with a “wheel” and includes the driveway, flower beds, and parking lots as well as the turf area.

Virtually, the only thing he leaves out are the buildings.

With his measurement complete, he simply multiplies the time it will take to do the job by his hourly rate. If both are on the money, he will make money.

TIME IS MONEY

Paulton admits there are some intangibles that have to be accounted for when pricing a property, not the least of which are the numbers of obstacles on a property and, if those

obstacles are trees, how many leaves they will be dropping in the fall. Canadian contractor Phil Dyck, co-owner of Lawnmaster Services LTD in Alberta, uses a customized computer program to take even that guesswork out of pricing a job.

Dyck simply inputs property data into the computer, and within 45 seconds has the answer to how much time it will take to maintain the property. “We’ve timed everything we do,” Dyck explains. “The program takes into account the equipment we will be using on the property, square footage and obstacles. It even takes into account drive time, as well as loading and unloading time.


“We know how much revenue per hour per person we need to generate,

and we simply multiply that figure by the computer-generated time.” Dyck says the program is beneficial from several vantage points. If a customer wants him to use a walk-behind mower instead of a rider, he simply plugs in the change and the computer generates a revised time schedule.

He tells the customer that the change will cost an extra two hours worth of labor, and he can actually show the customer the computer printout. The program gives inexperienced estimators an opportunity to accurately bid a property.

For more information, contact Dyck at (403) 320-5296.


Successfully pricing a property, then, requires two accurate projections: 1) how much you need to make per hour (or square foot) to cover your direct operating costs plus overhead and make a profit, and 2) how long you think it will take to complete the job. The survey indicated that, on average, Walker users needed \$37.75/hr to cover costs and make a profit maintaining properties. Presumably, they have tossed all their costs for the year into a basket, and divided them by how many hours they project to mow in a year. The final hourly rate is dictated by how much profit they want to or can make, depending on the market, customer and competition.

Of course, this sounds easier than it is. As Rummings points out, “things” can happen in a year to change projections. Mother Nature can toss a curve ball, there may be unexpected breakdowns, and your biggest customer may decide to go across the street. But no matter what surprises your competition, customers, or equipment spring on you, when you know and cover your overhead, your pricing will keep your doors open and allow you to be competitive in a healthy way. 

A copy of the survey results is available upon request to Walker Mfg.

Hourly mowing/maintenance rate by years in business

Years in business	Average Rate
Less than 1 year	\$38.75
1-3 years	\$38.60
4-6 years	\$36.87
7-10 years	\$37.01
11-15 years	\$37.41
More than 15	\$37.91



Luc Rehaume maneuvers his Walker through a tight garden spot.

Luc Réhaume manœuvre son Walker dans un espace restreint d'un jardin.

Montreal Botanical Garden

Machines and people work in harmony to maintain beautiful setting.

With 18 different theme gardens, the Montreal Botanical Garden is surely a wonder for the eye. Yet, this Quebec showcase, established in 1939, has become more than a public exhibition of beautiful flowers, trees and plants. It is also a center for botanical research and education, and a place to gain new social and cultural experiences.

For 80 people who work in the horticulture grounds maintenance department, the beautiful 75-acre setting also poses a daily challenge, relates grounds supervisor Robert Malo. "Our biggest challenge, especially during high-season from May 1 to October 31, is to keep everything in perfect harmony, to keep all the gardens looking their very best. We

Jardin Botanique de Montréal

Machines et ouvriers travaillent ensemble pour entretenir les lieux.

Avec des jardins portant sur 18 thèmes différents, le jardin botanique de Montréal est certes un délice pour la vue. Pourtant cette exposition Québécoise établie en 1939 est devenue plus qu'un spectacle de jolies fleurs, d'arbres et de plantes. C'est aussi un centre de recherche et d'éducation en botanique ainsi qu'un endroit où vivre de nouvelles expériences sociales et culturelles.

Pour les 80 personnes qui travaillent dans le département d'entretien paysagiste, les 75 acres représentent un défi quotidien, dit Robert Malo, le superviseur des terrains. «Notre plus gros défi, particulièrement durant la saison forte, qui dure du 1er mai au 31 octobre, est de maintenir l'harmonie dans

do this, in part, by assigning our people exclusively to individual gardens, allowing them the luxury of developing and practicing the most effective maintenance practices for their areas.”

This approach holds true for mowing, as well. Montreal Botanical Garden operates two Walker Mowers. Equipped with 20- and 26-hp engines, the mowers each run approximately 35 hours a week. During that time, one can see any of 10 operators at the controls, maneuvering in and out of tight garden spots.

“The biggest advantage I could see in the beginning was the zero-turn maneuverability.”


“The operators are very familiar with their sections and can mow there in the most efficient way,” explains Malo. They’ve all been trained on the mower’s operation and understand how to take advantage of their many features, he adds.

Luc Rehaume was one of the first staff members to operate the Walker in 1995 when the grounds department rented its first machine on a trial basis.

“It was a little difficult to learn to drive at first,” Rehaume relates, “but I caught on pretty quickly. The biggest advantage I could see in the beginning was the zero-turn maneuverability. But I soon discovered that the machine’s ability to pick up debris would save us countless hours cleaning flower beds.”

The Walkers have since more than earned their keep, and they’ve even become part of the Garden’s attraction, says Rehaume.

“Visitors are intrigued by these mowers, by their small size and their ability to maneuver so effortlessly around the gardens. Just last week I was literally swarmed by visitors who may have thought the mower was an integral part of the Garden tour.”

It wasn’t, of course, but as far as Rehaume and the other operators are concerned, the gardens wouldn’t look the same without the Walkers and the mowing job they do. 

le jardin, pour que tout soit à son meilleur. Ceci est accompli en déléguant un seul jardin à chaque individu, leur permettant ainsi de développer et de pratiquer les techniques d’entretien les plus efficaces pour leur jardin. »


Cette approche s’applique aussi pour tondre les pelouses. Le Jardin Botanique de Montréal possède deux Walkers équipés d’engins de 20 et 26cv et ils fonctionnent chacun environ 35 heures par semaine. N’importe lequel des 10 opérateurs disponibles peut accomplir le travail avec facilité, même dans les coins plus resserrés.

«Les opérateurs sont familiers avec leurs sections et y sont à leur plus efficace, » explique M. Malo. Les ouvriers ont reçu une formation sur l’équipement leur permettant de tirer le maximum d’avantage de leurs fonctions. Luc Rhéaume fut un des premiers employés à utiliser le Walker en 1995 lorsque le département a loué sa première machine à titre d’essai.

«L’appareil était un peu difficile à manoeuvrer au début, » raconte M. Rhéaume, «mais je m’y suis habitué rapidement. L’avantage que j’ai remarqué en premier c’est sa manoeuvrabilité. Je me suis bien vite rendu compte que la capacité de ramasser les débris que possède le Walker nous ferait gagner des heures au niveau du nettoyage des jardins. »

Les Walker se sont dès lors taillés une place importante dans notre équipe, même à titre d’attraction, dit M. Rhéaume.

«L’avantage que j’ai remarqué en premier c’est sa manoeuvrabilité.»

«Les visiteurs sont intrigués par les tondeuses, notamment par leur petite taille et leur manoeuvre efficace alors qu’on les observe au travail. La semaine passée j’ai été envahi par un groupe de visiteurs qui pensaient que la tondeuse faisait partie de la visite guidée. » Elle n’en faisait pas partie, on le sait bien, mais en ce qui nous concerne, les jardins ne seraient pas les mêmes sans le travail exceptionnel des Walker. 

The Montreal Botanical Garden operates two Walker Mowers. The mowers each run approximately 35 hours a week.

Le Jardin Botanique de Montréal possède deux Walkers, ils fonctionnent chacun environ 35 heures par semaine.

ABOUT MONTREAL BOTANICAL GARDEN

The gardens are open every day from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. during the summer. Guided tours are available and, from May to October, a mini-train (free of charge) runs through the site, making a number of stops. In addition to 18 theme gardens, including the Rose Garden, Japanese Garden, Chinese Garden and the First Nations Garden, which opened in 2001, the grounds house spectacular greenhouses with more than 36,000 plants. There's also The Insectarium, with an extraordinary collection of 160,000 insects and arthropods.

A restaurant, gift shops and a Reception Centre are located on the grounds. For more information about the Montreal Botanical Garden telephone (514) 872-1400 or visit its website at www.ville.montreal.qc.ca/jardin.

AU SUJET DU JARDIN BOTANIQUE DE MONTRÉAL

Le Jardin Botanique de Montréal est ouvert tous les jours de 9h00 à 17h00 l'été. Des visites guidées sont disponibles et du mois de mai au mois d'octobre, un tour de mini-train gratuit vous fait découvrir le jardin avec des arrêts stratégiques. En plus des 18 jardins incluant le jardin de roses, le jardin japonais, le jardin chinois et le jardin des premières nations, qui se sont ouverts en 2001, le site possède des serres spectaculaires qui contiennent plus de 36 000 plantes. Il y a aussi l'insectarium, avec sa collection extraordinaire de 160 000 insectes et (arthropodes). Vous y trouverez aussi un restaurant, des boutiques de souvenirs et un centre de réception. Pour plus d'information sur le Jardin Botanique de Montréal, téléphonez au (514) 872-1400 ou visitez le site Internet au www.ville.montreal.qc.ca/jardin.

Robert Malo, le superviseur des terrains avec Luc Rhéaume, un des opérateurs. «Notre plus gros défi, particulièrement durant la saison forte, qui dure du 1er mai au 31 octobre, est de maintenir l'harmonie dans le jardin, pour que tout soit à son meilleur.» dit M. Malo.

Grounds supervisor Robert Malo with operator Luc Rehaume. "Our biggest challenge, especially during the high-season, is to keep everything in perfect harmony," says Malo.





The Lawn Stylists' team (L to R): Leah Jones, Kris Hay, Joey Daigle (seated on Walker), Courtney Ramdel, David Huska, Mike Thorwesten (seated on Walker), Travis Bender and Lisa Friesen. Joey Daigle says he has great rapport with his team and they help him stay young.

Winnipeg contractor cuts lawns in style

Joey Daigle has never cut a head of hair in his life, yet he still considers himself a barber. “You don’t want just anyone cutting your lawn,” says the owner of Lawn Stylists, located in Winnipeg, Manitoba. “No, you want someone to style it, and that’s what we do. We consider ourselves to be the barbers of lawn care.”

The barbers have their hands full today, styling lawns for 60 commercial accounts, six residential accounts and one large estate. To each customer, they bring a full service repertoire that, in addition to cutting and trimming grass, includes aeration, fertilization, sprinkler system repairs, and installing and maintaining landscape and flower beds. In fact, each

year the company will typically install 20,000 flowers.

Lawn Stylists gets the job done with eight full-time and three part-time employees, a full complement of top-of-the-line commercial equipment, and a detail-oriented management approach that brings order to what can be a less than orderly business.

DETAILS, DETAILS, DETAILS

If you’re not an orderly person, then the word “detail” can bring the hair up on the back of your neck. For Joey Daigle, however, details and order grease the wheels that drive his business and his barber shears. “I’m very organized,” Daigle admits. “I think I got part of this from working

several years as a head manager at a McDonald’s restaurant and as a supervisor for Kentucky Fried Chicken. I recall one day when an employee asked me where those 16-ounce cups were in the storeroom. After finding them in a different location for who knows how many times, I built a special rack for them, and for the other restaurant supplies. I was never asked that question again.

“Getting organized may slow you down at first, but it speeds up any operation in the long run. We have a schedule for cleaning and maintaining all of our equipment, every tool has a place in our enclosed trailer, and I’m fastidious about checking weekly, monthly and yearly operational reports. Our company has less

**Details, details, details:
Every tool has a place on
The Lawn Stylists' trailer.**

downtime than most because we are organized, and our customers win out in the long run, again because we are organized. In my mind, taking care of the little details makes the difference between doing a good job or doing a very good job. It's all part of our friendly, caring and thorough service package."

Speed and details seem to be especially important in Winnipeg where the season is short and competition is intense. Lawn Stylists begins its season on April 15 and closes up shop on October 31. In between, crews split the work week in half, working part of the week as one team, mowing and maintaining large commercial accounts, and working the other part as two teams maintaining smaller commercial and residential accounts. Crew members, comprised of highly motivated college-aged workers, cut grass on Monday through Friday. Daigle devotes Friday afternoons and Saturdays to designing and installing landscape beds. Sunday is for equipment maintenance, he adds.

FROM BURGERS TO MOWERS

Lawn Stylists hung its proverbial barbers pole in 1989. "At the time, I was working seven days a week, 12 to 14 hours a day in the restaurant business, so I decided to go into business for myself," Daigle explains. "Knowing that Winnipeg residents like coupons and other promotions, I developed a coupon in the spring that offered a free yard mowing to anyone who retained me to clean their yards. I placed the coupons under the windshield wipers of more than a few cars — and I was in business."

Daigle moved his new business along with one push mower and one weed trimmer, and for the first two years, supplemented his income by



repairing photo copiers. At the end of his second year, he had enough customers to go into business full-time. Having outgrown his push mowers, Daigle purchased a \$3,000 Honda rider on his wife's credit card, and transported it from site to site in the back of their conversion van. He later added a Simplicity rider to his lineup.

"I took a pretty good pay cut in those first few years," Daigle remembers, "but it has been worth it. I work just as hard, if not harder, now. But I truly enjoy what I'm doing and I like being outside." His job became a little easier in the fall of 1993 when he bumped into a Walker distributor at a shopping center parking lot. The distributor asked him to try a Walker Mower for a week. "I didn't like it at first," remembers Daigle. "I was accustomed to operating a steering wheel rider and had never even been on a zero-turn mower. But the more I drove it, the more I liked it."

Daigle liked the mower enough to buy a new 20-hp model the following spring, and he purchased a second one three years later. He has operated two Walker Mowers ever since then. Today, he operates two 26-hp models with 48-inch GHS decks.

"With my Walkers, I get a lot more done in a lot less time," says Daigle. "In addition to giving me the kind of cut I want, the mowers are

dependable and very versatile. I think the only trouble I've had over the years was a couple of broken belts. We broke a deck gearbox once, but that was our fault, not the mower's."

Lawn Stylists also employs the rotary broom attachment, which, Daigle says, is ideal for sweeping snow off drives and removing sand from boulevards. It can also be used as a power rake. Crews also operate two Walker dethatchers in the spring.

The Walker Mowers save so much time that Daigle has offered a couple of customers a \$20-per-month maintenance discount if they would widen their gates so he could use his Walkers. As he explains, time is money in the competitive Winnipeg market. The trick is to do it faster ... and better than the competition. The Walkers help on both fronts.

Daigle's crews put anywhere between 50 and 75 hours a month on their Walkers, and the company trades them in every 2.5 years. As "the barber" says, "By trading in my mowers I get updated machines, and I'm a stickler on image. I want my equipment to look nice, if not new. From my trucks, trailer and mowers to my stationery, I believe in casting a good shadow. The truth is: People will pay a little more for image."

Efficiency is the name of the game in the tough Winnipeg market. The trick, says Daigle, is “to do it faster... and better than the competition.” Here, his crew makes leaf removal as easy as 1-2-3.



TOUGH MARKET

There's not much room for error in the Winnipeg market. Lawn Stylists tries to get \$25 per man-hour for maintaining properties, and pays its employees a starting wage of \$9 per hour. To make ends meet, the owner has to be as efficient and competitive as he possibly can be all the time, and make his money when and where he can. That's one reason his target market over the years has shifted from residential to commercial accounts.

“I started with all residential accounts, but gradually made my way into the commercial sector,” Daigle relates. “It was a slow process, at first. A few of my homeowner customers asked me to maintain their commercial properties. Once people see you on a property, the word spreads.

“Commercial properties are easier for me than residential, in part because of my restaurant background. I know what managers expect from a contractor because I've been there. Residential accounts, on the other hand, are more time-consuming with less return. In fact, I believe residential accounts take up 90% of my cell time today, and account for less than 10% of our revenue.”

Of its commercial accounts, Lawn Stylists maintains 70% of the McDonald's restaurants in Winnipeg and all the KFC restaurants. Roughly 95% of its properties are irrigated and all are on seven-month service contracts. The company gave up snow removal last year. Now, Daigle spends his winters maintaining equipment and designing flower beds.

“Landscape design has been a good profit center for us,” says Daigle, “and it has helped set us apart from other contractors in the area.”




WALKER USER TIP: TIME IS MONEY

“If you don't think deck size makes a difference, consider this. Joey Daigle recently went from 42- to 48-inch decks on his two Walkers. “Going to 48-inch decks saves me from 10 to 15 minutes on a property,” says Daigle. “That time adds up over the course of the day, over the course of a week. If nothing else, it allows me to maintain another property or two. As they say, time is money.”

Also setting the company apart is a team of enthusiastic young people. “I have a great rapport with my employees,” Daigle adds. “They are responsible, hard workers, and I simply enjoy being around them. I think they help me stay young, too.”

“Little details make the difference between doing a good job and doing a very good job.”

To show his appreciation for their hard work, Daigle throws a year-end party across the border in North Dakota. He rents a limo and off they go to celebrate the day away. Afterward, a few of his employees will begin collecting unemployment; others will continue with their education. Another, Mike Thorwesten, has been with Daigle for six years and recently took over his snow accounts. For him, the second season begins in November, if not before.

As for Daigle, what's a barber to do when the hair stops growing? Just sharpen the shears, adjust the chair, and wait for the growing season to begin again. 



BOB T'S

Tech Talk

'Operation - Safety'

At Walker Mfg. Co., we want everyone that uses our products to have an enjoyable and positive experience. A lot of effort has gone into the design of our product to try and make that happen.

Function is our primary concern. If our product has no useful purpose or does not function well, what good is it? Of equal importance is safety. If the product does a fabulous job, but puts the operator or anyone close to it at risk, we haven't gained a thing. Safety definitely has a lot of influence on the design. There are industry standards and guidelines that we always try to adhere to. It's a fact that most, if not all, equipment that moves or has moving parts poses some degree of risk to the operator. Bottom line: A lawn mower can be a dangerous piece of equipment.

Shields, guards and safety switches are there for protection. Will they prevent any and all injury and/or damage? No! Just ask someone in the automotive or farm equipment industries if they will ever be able to eliminate the possibility of injury or damage. There are varying degrees of risks and danger in our everyday activities such as crossing the street, driving to work or church, grilling burgers, doing laundry and mowing grass. The point is not so much about the design of the product as is the manner in which it is used. We have gone to great lengths to provide an Owner's Manual and video that carefully address proper operation and safety instructions.


We've all heard the adage, "Real men don't read manuals". To anyone that would take that approach to a piece of equipment they spent \$8,000 or more on I'd like to ask, "Why wouldn't you want to read the manual and operate it in the most efficient and safest way possible?" I would encourage any contractor that has crews or multiple operators to set up and require all operators to participate in a "Safety and Operation Training Class". Watch our "How to Operate" video as part of the training class (also available in Spanish). In addition, attendance at ongoing "Safety Training" should be a part of the job description.

There are numerous areas of safety that could be addressed here. I would like to focus in on one area — **Safety When Working On Slopes**. Preparedness and alertness cannot be overstressed. Situations can occur that will require a split second response. Example: while working on a slope when the belt driving the hydrostatic transmissions breaks and the mower starts freewheeling down

the slope. Panic reactions might be: (1) Jerk the steering levers into reverse. It will continue to freewheel while picking up speed. (2) Pull the parking brake lever. The locking pins, being spring loaded, will not engage. It will continue to freewheel while picking up speed. (3) Jump off and hope for the best. It will continue to freewheel while picking up speed. The amount of damage to the mower and property, not to mention injury to the operator, does not paint a pretty picture.

The proper response to this situation is called out in the Owner's Manual under Safety Instructions — Operation: "Remember, for an emergency stop, the forward motion of the tractor can always be stopped by pulling the Forward Speed Control (FSC) into the Neutral-Park position." This action will cause the drive wheels to stop. No one knows for sure how we would react in this situation. But if the proper training has taken place with occasional reminders, the chances of taking the correct action is greatly increased.

I'd like to quote a portion of a letter Bob Walker received from a customer in Australia. He was preparing to dump grass from the top of a steep embankment (as he had done many times before). He backed up slightly closer to the edge than normal. The bank gave way and down the slope he went. He was thrown off and the mower rolled over him.

He writes, "I spent the rest of the day in the hospital having X-Rays and ECG's as apparently heavy blows like that can throw your heart rhythms out and kill you. The results were some cracked ribs, numerous cuts and abrasions, some A grade bruises, no income for a couple of weeks, BUT one very valuable lesson learned, and that's why I am writing you, Bob. It doesn't matter how many years you have used a machine or how good an operator you think you are, it only takes one little mistake and something like this can happen. I often hear stories of farmers who roll their tractors and get injured or killed. I used to think how stupid they must have been, but not any more, people get complacent — you may be daydreaming and anything can happen!" I don't think much more needs to be said. Read the manual, watch the video, stay alert and be safe. 

Career change suits former grocer

Jeff Gardner says his two Walkers not only do a quality job mowing, like his dealer friend said they would, they also excel with cleanup.

Jeff Gardner spends most of his time designing and maintaining landscapes for Corinth's antebellum homes.



After being in the family grocery business for more than 20 years, Jeff Gardner awoke one morning and said to his wife Tracy, "I want to maintain lawns." Just like that, he turned in his apron and started down a new career path. Jeff made that decision three years ago.

Today, the owner of Gardner's Irrigation and Landscaping Co. located in Corinth, Mississippi, delivers maintenance and installation services to 20 customers, many of whom reside in spectacular antebellum homes.

How does one go from selling groceries one day to maintaining high-profile properties the next? Jeff took his cue from his father-in-law who maintained a couple of large properties in town. One was an 80-plus-acre contract, the other a 12-acre hospital. After spending a summer working on these properties and gaining both experience and exposure, Gardner launched his business the following spring. "I put a sign on the side of my truck that first summer," says Gardner, noting how that effort was, and still is, the extent of his advertising. "People in town saw the sign and my work, and service requests followed."

DAD, IT'S NOT A TOY!

Gardner says his motto has always been to have the right tool for the job. So when he decided to get into lawn maintenance, one of the first things he did was drive to his friend's outdoor power equipment store. "If you were going to mow for a living,

what kind of mower would you buy?" he asked Brian Ferrell, owner of Ferrell's Home & Outdoor in Corinth. "That depends on the application," his friend replied. "But if you want your lawns to look good, I would suggest that you buy a Walker Mower." Gardner took Ferrell's advice to heart, and took a demonstration unit home. Within 15 minutes he had mowed his entire yard. Shortly thereafter, he purchased a 20-hp model with two decks, a 62-inch side-discharge deck and a 48-inch GHS deck.

"My Walker time is my quiet time when I get an opportunity to relax and think about designs."

"I brought the new Walker to the hospital property around lunch time and my father-in-law thought it was a toy," remembers Gardner. "He went to lunch and by the time he returned I had completed the mowing. All he could say was, 'It's not a toy, after all.'" Gardner admits that was an understatement. "He soon discovered I could mow the entire 12-acre facility in five hours with the Walker. In the process, I cut string trimming time to a fraction of what it was previously."

The following year was Gardner's first official year in business. He purchased another Walker, this one a 26-hp fuel-injected model that he

fitted with his large deck. With two mowers and part-time help, he was able to expand his maintenance business and, at the same time, develop his penchant for design and installation. "I've always had a knack for design," says Gardner, who with Auto CAD on his home computer enjoys the challenges associated with designing exterior landscapes befitting the town's antebellum and Victorian architecture.

Several of these properties participate in the town's annual Christmas Walk tour. Gardner spends four weeks prior to the event just keeping the lawns looking nice. "That's where the Walkers are truly handy," he adds. "My two Walkers not only do a quality job mowing like my dealer friend said, they also excel with the cleanup."

Gardner demonstrates by giving a leaf-matted property a "once-over" with his GHS deck. He vacuums the leaves into the mower's large 9.5-bushel catcher, and then dumps them into disposable plastic bags that are left street-side for the city to pick up.

On larger properties, he saves time by employing a leaf blower attachment for his Walker. The attachment blows leaves several mower widths away, significantly reducing the number of passes required to clear leaves. When the leaves are "lined up," Gardner simply vacuums them with his GHS deck.

Going back to his "right-tool" motto, Gardner employs the side-discharge deck on large properties where a groomed look isn't a requisite. He also makes optimum use of a Walker sprayer attachment for spot spraying. Instead of taking the sprayer on and off the mower deck, Gardner has it permanently mounted on a Walker carrier frame. When he wants to spray, he simply removes the deck and installs the carrier frame. A foot-activated switch on the frame engages the sprayer.

QUIET TIME

Gardner's Irrigation and Landscaping properties range anywhere in size from a half acre to 15 acres. Depending on the properties, Gardner mows them every week during the growing season and maintains them through the last week in November. Generally, mild Mississippi winters allow him to stay busy during the off-season installing sod and plants.

Company revenue is divided equally between maintenance and installation. Employee rolls include a volunteer fireman and college students who work throughout the summer. The grocer-turned-landscaper tries to divide his time equally between the two disciplines.

Gardner tells, "I may have an installation project that will monopolize my time for a couple of weeks. Then, I will spend a few days on one of my Walkers. My Walker time is my quiet time when I get an opportunity to relax and think about other designs."

Does Gardner regret leaving the grocery business behind? "Operating a grocery is a seven-day-a-week business," he emphasizes. "My two brothers employ 120 people between two stores, and communicate with 15,000 to 20,000 customers every week." Gardner, on the other hand, sees 20 customers a week, and can count his people on one hand during the busy season. Selling groceries is a high-volume, low-margin business, he adds. Worse yet, groceries are sold indoors where quiet time on his Walker would not be viewed as quiet time at all.

The answer to the question is no. This entrepreneur doesn't regret the career change. Tracy, he says, never gave it a second thought, either. Gardner says, "She knew I wouldn't make the change unless I was confident that I could be successful at it." Good thing she didn't know what Gardner didn't know at the time. He made his decision before being introduced to Walker Mowers.



On large properties, Jeff rounds up the leaves with a Selbro blower attachment, and then he vacuums them with a GHS deck (contact Selbro at 800-973-5276).



WALKER PRECISION OBSTACLE COURSE A SUCCESS

The Walker Precision Obstacle Course drew 170 participants during the qualifying round on Friday of the International Lawn, Garden and Power Equipment Expo this past July in Louisville, Kentucky. The top 75 operators were called back for the Saturday morning semi-finals. The capacity crowd at the finals was treated to an excellent show by the top 10 finalists.

Chris Ulrich of Bristol, Georgia, took home the top prize. Tommy Cecil of Louisville and Ryan Stutzman of Montrose, Colorado, were second and third respectively.

Chris Ulrich of Bristol, Georgia, (seated) won the event and Tommy Cecil (left) placed second while Ryan Stutzman took third.



Walker employees talk with Jeff Vining after a plant meeting.

JEFF VINING MAKES FACTORY VISIT

Long-time Walker user Jeff Vining and his wife Kathy made a visit to the Walker factory in early October. Jeff was left a quadriplegic with limited use

of his hands and arms after a surfing accident in the early 1990s.

In spite of his injuries, Vining has developed a successful lawn care business using Walker Mowers. He was the subject of the video "Jeff" produced by Walker in 1995, and also was featured in *Walker Talk* Vol. 4.

During their visit to the plant, Jeff was the guest speaker at the monthly plant meeting where he encouraged employees to look at how their work

has helped him and many people like him live out their dreams.

"I went on a two-week family vacation with a pocket full of money, and four hours into it my life was changed," he told employees. "Now I look at life in a completely different way, and the Walker is a big part of that ... I use it to do everything, even fishing and hunting."

Jeff also demonstrated for the employees how effectively he can move from his wheelchair to the seat of a Walker.

The Vinings also enjoyed a trip to the Rocky Mountains and a tour through Colorado during their five-day trip.

POWDER COAT SYSTEM OPERATING

It's official. Starting in December 2002, Walker Mowers now have a tough, durable, powder coat finish thanks to a new coating system installed at the factory. Metal parts are hung on a 935-foot conveyor line and take a 2.5-hour ride through the washer, dry-off oven, and either the yellow or gray powder coat spray booth, then through the cure oven at 400° F for 20 minutes.

The powder coat process is environmentally friendly, eliminating all liquid paint, solvents and overspray air exhaust. And no material is wasted since the excess powder is reclaimed and recycled in the spray booth.

Walker is proud to advance in "state of the art" manufacturing technology, improving both manufacturing efficiency and product quality.

Curtis (left) and Cameron Kenagy watch Walker Mower production.



FACTORY GRANTS WISH

On August 13, 2002, in cooperation with the Make-a-Wish Foundation®, the Walker factory offered a special tour and visit to the Curtis Kenagy family from Broomfield, Iowa. It was an honor to have 12-year old Cameron, who is battling cancer, choose to see “how Walker Mowers are made” as his special wish. In addition to the factory tour, Cameron drove a brand new Walker from the production line to the Shipping Department, took an airplane ride over the factory and ate lunch with Bob and Dean Walker.

Cameron’s parents, Curtis and Barbara Kenagy, have been using Walker Mowers in their family lawn maintenance business since 1995.

Since 1980, the Make-a-Wish Foundation® has enriched the lives of children with life-threatening illnesses through its wish-granting work. More than 97,000 children worldwide have been touched. Walker Mfg. was delighted to participate in this program.

WALKER PRODUCTS

MODEL C NOW 18-HP

Performance of the 2003 Model MC has been boosted by installing an 18-hp Kohler Command engine. This engine is a derated version of the 20-hp engine used in Model MT. Over 10 years experience in the MT has proven the reliability and durability of this engine in the Walker application.

A retrofit kit is available for earlier Model MC units with the TH16 engine installed (starting with serial number 98-33662):

Kit P/N	Tractor Configuration
6010-20	GHS with 6.7 Catcher
6010-21	GHS with 9.5 Catcher
6010-22	Side Discharge

MTL29 OFFERS LIQUID COOLING AND EFI

The Walker Model MT26 is now available in a liquid-cooled package — the Model MTL29. Fuel injection combined with liquid cooling offers the ultimate technology package for small engines. With Kohler’s 29-hp, fuel-injected Aegis™ engine, increased engine life, power and better fuel economy are advantages over the comparable air-cooled engines.

Operators can expect easy starting, consistent running temperatures and user-friendly maintenance from this top-of-the-line package. The pulling power of the most powerful engine ever offered in a Walker will boost performance when using wide-area mowing decks. Available in Spring 2003.



NEW MUFFLER DESIGNS

Models MC and MT have a new muffler design for 2003. The muffler body has been changed from the oval shape to cylindrical for better heat distribution and to reduce the tendency to

“after bang” when stopping the engine. The muffler heat shield is made of heavier material for extra durability.

Another design improvement is mounting the muffler and exhaust pipe assembly directly to the engine instead of the chassis frame, eliminating slip joints and potential exhaust leaks. Also, the muffler is positioned higher, increasing ground clearance, giving extra separation of hot parts from dry material on the ground for preventing fires.

A muffler retrofit kit is available to upgrade earlier Model MT units, while the new muffler is included in the 18-hp upgrade kit for the Model MC.

Curtis (left) and Cameron Kenagy watch Walker Mower production.



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Robert "Bob" Oestreich
(June 3, 1937 - November 21, 2002)

This past fall, the Walker Mower Family lost a friend and a faithful and dear member of our distribution network: Robert "Bob" Oestreich of Precision Work (New York).

As a company, we recognize Bob and his wife Annette as true pioneers of the Walker Mower in the Northeast. For the last 20 years, his dedication to the program and desire to see others succeed with the Walker Mower was unmatched in our program.

Bob is recognized by colleagues in the Northeast for his mechanical expertise, genuine sense of humor, dedication to the industry, generosity and professionalism.

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