

WALKER TALK

SERVING LAWN MAINTENANCE PROFESSIONALS FOR YEARS TO COME



Issues

VOL. 25

WALKER TALK

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THE WALKER TALK SONG

One of my enjoyments is music and songs. I find that great music and words go deep inside me and send profound messages and pleasures that go beyond mere communication and the mechanics of sound and rhythm. I enjoy the great classics (not too much long-hair), country, gospel, hymns, Dixieland, German-Swiss folk music, Hawaiian to name a few styles and sounds. Although maybe not the perfect analogy, I believe we have been singing a “song” with the publication of 25 issues of Walker Talk. The skeptical observer might say, “A song about Walker Mowers?” Yes, because our vision with the magazine has been to go beyond selling a machine to inspiring, encouraging and uplifting our customers and potential customers.

My song analogy with Walker Talk is based on three components of great music and songs:

THE MUSIC



Great music is more than a bunch of random sounds. When the sounds work together there is a melody, harmony and the foundation of bass (I play the tuba). Everything is in tune. In Walker Talk, the music is the people. Admittedly the Walker Mower is part of the “sound” of the publication, but the real music is the teamwork of Walker Manufacturing and our employ-

ees, our suppliers, Walker distributors and dealers, and Walker Mower customers and users coming together to make beautiful music. We are a family.

THE RHYTHM

The rhythm or beat is what keeps the song moving along. Walker Talk “rhythm” is publishing two issues per year, January and July, on a regular schedule. We did not just publish a few issues when we could get around to it, then get tired and quit. We have seen many other publications come and go during the last 25 years in our industry.

THE WORDS

The memorable words of the Walker Talk “song” are the stories of our customers. Real stories about real people stay fresh and hold interest for our readers; many of the words are remembered and quoted back to us as we meet some of our customers. If the magazine was just about promoting the product, it would have gone stale a long time ago.

I look back with satisfaction that the publication of Walker Talk has been worthwhile and has accomplished even more than we dreamed when we started. Readers' comments tell us that we are connecting and they like our “song”. As we look to the future, there is more to be written and more stories to be told. We plan to keep singing.

Bob Walker

Bob Walker
President

THE WALKER TALK BEGINNING

About ten years after starting the Walker Mower marketing program, I had been thinking about publishing a newsletter or some other customer communication piece. There was advice from marketers from several directions that pointed to the effectiveness of staying in touch with customers and prospective customers. One day in the middle of 1992, a magazine came in the mail called *Beechcraft Business* (incidentally, I look at all the mail that comes to the company, including junk mail; no screening just so no opportunity is missed as in this case). As a company owner and private pilot, I had never flown or owned a Beechcraft, but apparently I was on a mailing list of prospective customers.

Looking at *Beechcraft Business* there were three things that caught my attention. First, it was the mechanics; a high quality presentation with beautiful graphics and printing on fine paper stock. Second, the format was not hard-selling the airplane but simply focusing on people, their business and how they used the Beechcraft to improve their business and quality of life (telling a story). Lastly, I noticed a stamp for the magazine publisher "Johnson Hill Press, Fort Atkinson, WI". I knew these people because they published two trade publications in our industry, *Yard &*

Garden and Pro magazines.

I made a phone call to Pat Nadler at Johnson Hill (whom I had known for several years) telling him I wanted to create a magazine like *Beechcraft Business* for Walker Mowers. He visited my office a few days later on July 1, 1992 with a proposal, and then with a handshake, Walker Talk was born. It happened fast. The Johnson Hill folks were experienced in producing company-sponsored publications, and by late September 1992, the first Walker Talk was in the mail.

Today, Johnson Hill Press is part of Cygnus Business Media but the people behind the publication have stayed true to the mission and vision we had in the beginning while refining and improving as we go. It is remarkable to think that over 1,000,000 copies of Walker Talk have been printed and

distributed in twenty-five volumes, plus three special editions. That is quite a ways from my original newsletter idea. I want to say thanks to the folks at Cygnus for making it happen; to Rod Dickens and Tim Cromley, our editors; and most of all to our readers for your encouragement and support of Walker Talk.

Sincerely,

Bob



Pat Nadler

Walker Talk Timeline





After logging a couple of hundred thousand miles in the air and on the ground and visiting with nearly a hundred Walker operators, I have a confession to make. I have not been writing about a mower. Instead, I have been writing about the people who do the mowing. But if you've been a Walker Talk reader over the years, you know that.

For my money (and speaking for the Walker family, too), this magazine has never been about mowers; it has been about the people who operate them. Mowers can't talk. People can, and they're the ones who make for interesting reading. To complete the thought, I have met some interesting people over the years.

If there is one common denominator in the stories, it is simply that Walker operators represent a cross section of the industry. Stories have been about large companies, small companies, minority-owned businesses, institutions, corporations, cities and just about any property

where there is grass to be cut. There is no doubt Walker Mowers have their niche, but at the same time, people in all walks of life have found very agreeable applications for the “little yellow machine.” Not to say every interview was conducted in agreeable weather. Contractors have talked with me about their mowers and their businesses in the middle of snowstorms and downpours. Other interviews have been conducted in the middle of the desert. One contractor, I recall, talked about recently moving to Phoenix from Bermuda. He said it took him months to adjust to the “dry” heat. In fact, he spent the first few weeks running between buildings because he couldn’t take the sun and heat.

BEWARE THE WEATHER

No matter where I traveled, weather was always a concern. Images are always more colorful when the sun is shining, and I wanted to capture people in action. As the saying goes, be careful what you wish for. After

shooting who knows how many rolls of film, or more recently, digital images, I never adapted to how fast operators mow. I would walk one way around a house or property, only to find the lawn already mowed there and by the time I retraced my steps... You guessed it, the lawn was cut there, as well.

I always faced a similar challenge when it came to taking photos of operators handling clippings or picking up leaves. After giving instructions on what I wanted an operator to do, he or she would do it, instantaneously, and I would be left standing there looking foolish and looking for another photo opportunity.

Animals provided a recurring theme on Walker trips. I have toured a koala bear park and touched a kangaroo's nose in Australia, and tip-toed around alligators in Florida. During one interview, a Walker user was giving me a driving tour of his properties



Bob Walker and Tim Cromley (Walker Marketing Manager) work together to establish content ideas for each issue, and Tim is also a contributing writer and has worked with Walker Talk since 1994.

A man with short dark hair, wearing a blue and white plaid button-down shirt, is seated at a wooden desk. He is looking down at a large map or document spread out on the desk. To his left is a black computer monitor on a stand. The background wall is light-colored and has several papers and a map pinned to it. A water bottle is visible on the desk behind him.

when I casually asked if any of his employees had ever been bitten by a snake. “Never,” he responded. Never, that is, until 10 minutes later when he answered a call to take a crew member to the emergency room. Snake bite, of course.

When you cover stories about maneuverable, compact mowers, chances are you will see your share of cemeteries. I don't recollect off-hand how many cemeteries I have visited, but a dozen would be a good estimate. One visit was accompanied by a ghost story. Three apparitions dressed in Civil War garb, I was told, made their way around the headstones presumably checking on friends and relatives. Rest assured I never saw them. If I had, someone else would be composing this article. My wife was treated to an unexpected tour of a crematorium in New Zealand. The cemetery manager's office was adjacent to the crematorium and he had a window that overlooked the facility. Just as we walked in, a body was being ... well, you can guess, and Ann may never accompany me on another Walker story.

Walker Talk stories were always full of surprises, and lots of food. Sharing a meal is always a good way to relax and talk about business. One dinner meeting in a restaurant was interrupted when a contractor's

competitor approached and quietly handed me a note. It read, "If you want the real story, come and talk with me." Supping another evening at a popular tourist attraction in Texas, a contractor's family and I observed a slight-built German visitor attempt to down a 72-ounce steak in an hour. Success meant the meal would be free, a \$50 value. He never made it, but a documented rumor told of a major league baseball pitcher who consumed a similarly huge steak in only 9 minutes. Another rather stout patron had won two meals by devouring two steaks in the allotted time.

More than a few contractors have invited me into their homes for breakfast. I have flipped pancakes in Washington state and “flipped out” when a kind couple in Australia offered an “Aussie” version of scrambled eggs. Trust me, they are not what we are accustomed to. My wife and I have tasted wine in a vineyard, consumed cookies and milk in a church, and eaten for “half price” at restaurants where the grounds were maintained by a Walker Mower. Bet you didn’t know your mowers had that kind of pull!!

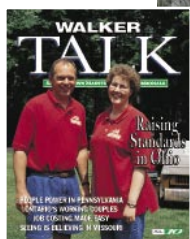
By the way, after traveling the equivalent of several times around the world looking for Walker Mowers, I have never been taken seriously ill on a trip. Oh yes, I have been air sick,

car sick, sea sick and only once...
food sick, and that had nothing to
do with eggs.

Among traits many Walker users share is their industrious nature and love for their equipment. Some of the story subjects were tinkerers, too. Here is an excerpt several years back, and this is typical of so many Walker users. Referring to a couple in Kansas, the story reads, "They custom-design and build their own trailers. And they have made several attachments for their Walker Mowers including an aerator, a sprayer and a fertilizer spreader. They have also tailored an enormous leaf-handling system for their trailers, customized software for their business operation, built their own operating and storage facility, and designed and built a couple of jacks to facilitate servicing their Walkers." This would be equivalent to a lifetime of accomplishments for me. For them, it appeared to be a proverbial walk in the park.

In reality, that is what Walker Manufacturing, Walker Mowers and Walker Talk were and still are all about. The mower is only a means to an end, and that end is to help owners and operators make a better life for themselves and their families. ■

Walker Talk revisited



**GRASSHOPPER PROPERTY MAINTENANCE,
MILLERSBURG, OHIO (COVER STORY, WALKER
TALK NO. 10)**

When Walker Talk visited Kim and Char Kellogg in 1997, their company brought in \$350,000 annually, providing landscape services to 87 full-service accounts and 200 chemical application accounts. The company also provided janitorial services for four commercial accounts. At the time, the business was split nearly 50/50 commercial and residential and the owners operated two 20-hp Walker mowers.

What a difference eight years makes. Today, Grasshopper Property Maintenance has more than doubled its annual revenue figure. The company no longer provides janitorial services and the owners have changed their focus slightly by providing more hardscape and landscape installation services. "Maintenance is still very important to us," Char adds quickly. "In fact, we have more than 100 maintenance accounts and five

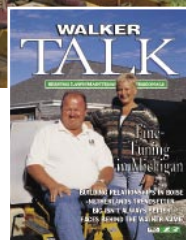
Walker mowers to maintain them, including one that is dedicated to chemical application. We also have the first Walker mower we ever purchased."

Over the past seven years, Kim and Char have purchased additional land, built a stand-alone shop, and added a holding nursery and tree farm. Both say they have learned to delegate more responsibility. The couple is still actively involved with community service, including working on Habitat for Humanity projects in Holmes County. Char has since become a Master Gardener, too.

"Today, with all the competition, it is all about being efficient," says Kim. "We actually produce more dollars today with fewer people. We have smaller mowing crews and we take advantage of technology, as well. For example, a new mulch delivery system saves us incredible amounts of time just installing mulch."

The Kelloggs have experienced other changes, too. Their business mix has gone from 50/50 commercial/residential to 75/25 commercial/residential. The company is a Uni-Lock paver dealer, and Kim and the crew spend more of their time than ever installing low-voltage lighting and water features.

With all the changes, though, don't expect the Kelloggs to give up the "maintenance" in Grasshopper Property Maintenance. As Char explains, maintenance provides good cash flow and the service is the perfect entrée into installation and plant health care. ■

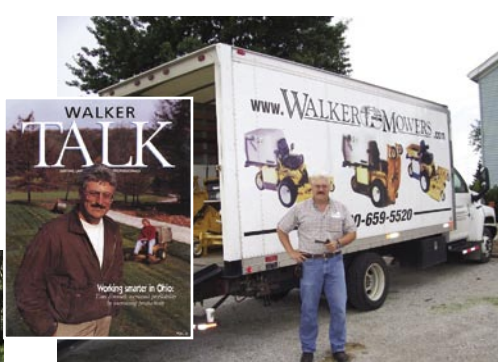


**LONGUE VUE HOUSE
AND GARDENS IN NEW
ORLEANS (WALKER TALK
NO. 13)**

Since WT visited this beautiful historic city estate in New Orleans six years ago, it has gone through a complete historic restoration. The buildings and the gardens have been returned to what they looked like in the late 1930s and '40s. The restoration is "period" in every way, unless visitors happen to spy a Walker Mower maintaining the turf. This beautiful facility in the heart of New Orleans still uses its Walker Mower to help keep the ground in perfect shape.

Head Gardener Marcela Lineiro says the Walker continues to be used year-round and mows the grounds twice a week during peak growing summer months. Adds Troy Chambers, head of maintenance, there have only been two significant changes in their Walker Mower over the last six years. They have a newer model and the local dealer, instead of Longue Vue, provides service and maintenance.

Longue Vue House and Gardens is located on 8 acres. The grounds have been open to the public since 1968. ■



TOM EMMETT GOES FROM USING TO SELLING WALKER MOWERS (COVER STORY, WALKER TALK NO. 3)

When WT visited Tom Emmett Landscaping in Richfield, Ohio, 12 years ago, the company was providing high-end commercial and estate mowing services. At about the same time, because there was not a Walker dealer in the area, owner Tom Emmett also established a new company to sell and service Walker Mowers.

The move was a good one, he relates, but it also made him uncomfortable competing against the same mowing contractors who were fast becoming his equipment customers. So, he decided to transition out of the mowing business. By 1999, Emmett had referred away all of his mowing accounts, effectively dissolving Tom Emmett Landscaping.

Today, this one-time Walker user is a Walker Mower dealer who sells an average of 75 new Walker Mowers a year. Since becoming a dealer, Emmett says he has sold about 1,500 Walker mowers, and each year he takes in between 35 and 40 units on trade. He refurbishes the mowers and sells them complete with a warranty.

In 2002, he also became a distributor for Walker Mowers and today his company, Emmett Equipment, supports dealers throughout Ohio and Indiana. Does he miss landscaping? Absolutely, says Emmett. "I wanted to be a landscaper because I enjoyed it, and I still enjoy it, in a different way. I believe my knowledge of the industry helped me grow my customers when I first became a dealer. Now, I look for my knowledge as a dealer to help grow other Walker dealers." ■



SCOTT EVANS IS STILL BENCHMARKING IN TEXAS (COVER STORY, WALKER TALK NO. 7)

Scott Evans and wife, Pam, sold their landscaping business four years ago. That doesn't stop them, though, from taking a drive around the Walker factory every year on their way from Bay City, Texas, to a rodeo in Cheyenne, Wyoming. "We take the Fort Collins exit and just pass by the factory," says Scott. "That tells you how much we enjoyed working with Walker Mowers." Today, Scott is president of the Federation of Employers & Workers of America, a nonprofit organization that, among other things, provides H2B consulting services for landscaping companies. Currently, the organization works with 500 companies that collectively employ 6,500 H2B workers.

At the time Scott sold his landscaping company, the business was generating \$1.2 million in revenue and had a healthy net of 16%. He gives Walker Mowers much of the credit for his success thanks, in his words, "to their ability to reduce trim mowing time and the versatility offered by interchangeable decks." Says Scott, "We used to take a wide-area and GHS deck to the field. After crews finished with the trim mowing, we interchanged decks and used the bigger deck for open areas."

The couple may not be mowing lawns anymore, but they are still close to their roots. They own a ranch seven miles from their Bay City location, and the tree farm that was part of their landscaping operation remains in their hands.

"I'm not sure that the new owner of our old landscaping company is using Walkers, but I think he is," Scott relates. If the Evanses still owned the company, there would no doubt about it. Walkers would be their mainstay. ■



MOWIN' RANGER IS ON THE MOVE (WALKER TALK NO. 3)

When WT visited Craig and Natalie Corbett, owners of Mowin' Ranger in Tremonton, Utah, the couple had a growing landscape maintenance business and they had recently become a Walker dealer. Thirteen years later, the landscape has changed considerably. Craig and Natalie have since opened Mowin' Ranger branches in Wyoming and Idaho, expanded their Walker Mower sales and service business to Wyoming and Idaho, and sold Mowin' Ranger in Utah. As if that were not enough, Craig has become an inventor and has one patent and six pending patents on an innovative sprinkler spacer that helps contractors install sprinkler heads a uniform distance from sidewalks, curbing, homes and landscape barriers.

Craig runs the landscape maintenance business and makes sure there is always a Walker on every crew. Natalie manages the Walker dealership, called Desert Knight Enterprises, and the sprinkler spacer company, Star Sight Innovations. She says she can't do it alone and is very grateful for the help of employees who are committed to excellence in all areas of their business through positive service and teamwork. All three businesses are located in a rural community in Mountain View, Wyoming.

"Since we have become a Walker dealer, we have sold over 150 Walker Mowers," relates Natalie. "Each year, we sell new and used Walker Mowers to people who are look-



ing for a quality cut with the ease of changing attachments and decks to increase the productivity of their crews.” More importantly, she adds, when a customer buys a Walker Mower from Desert Knight, they get Craig’s 40 years of experience in lawn maintenance, Natalie’s 25 years of experience, and an experienced customer service team that wants to help people succeed in the green industry. In fact, Natalie estimates that Desert Knight Enterprises has helped 35 lawn mowing companies earn their wings over the years.

“It’s our way of giving back,” says Natalie. “Two of our children had been diagnosed with a rare syndrome and medical bills were mounting in a hurry. In 1986, just before we purchased our first Walker Mower, our accountant and banker told us that we needed to declare bankruptcy. Instead of going that route, we purchased a Walker Mower, and another, and another. When you face difficult situations, you can’t do it alone. With the Walker products, loyal employees, and a lot of faith, we have been able to succeed beyond our dreams and we continue to look forward to an exciting future. Walker mowers made the difference in our business, and we tell our customers today, that if they want to succeed at mowing, they need to buy a Walker.” ■



**STEVE COFFEY,
COVER WALKER
TALK NO. 1**

When WT visited Atlanta-based Scapes owner, Steve Coffey, he was just nicely growing his business. And grow it, he did. When he sold the business five years ago, his company was generating \$8.3 million in revenue and projections for the coming year were for it to hit the \$10 million mark.

At its peak, Steve’s company employed 125 people who operated several Walker mowers. “Don’t ask me how many,” he says, “but we had a lot of them.” Steve remains involved in the industry, working primarily as a consultant to landscape maintenance companies.

Today, he splits his time evenly between homes in British Columbia and in Atlanta. “After 25 years in the industry, I thought it was time to take a break,” he recalls. “I remembered all those mornings rushing to get to work. I thought it would be nice to take it easy for awhile. It doesn’t work like that. I still get up early and I still want to be challenged.” ■



CALGARY COMPANY STILL BREEZING ALONG (WALKER TALK NO. 12)

“Nothing much has changed over the last six or so years,” says Laura Breeze, who with husband Rex and son Fred, operates Breeze Landscaping in Okotoks, Alberta, Canada. Well, that’s not entirely accurate, she admits. Their company has moved out of Calgary, son Fred is now the proud father of triplets, and they have added an additional mowing crew. Gone, too, is the old way of collecting grass, i.e., filling large bags and then throwing them on a truck. The company now operates two dump trailers; one is a custom-made enclosed unit, the other is a traditional dump model. Operators simply back up on the trailers and dump the grass.

Breeze Landscaping continues to use Walker Mowers. They own four, each with a 48-inch GHS deck. “Of course, we try out different products,” says Laura, “but we always come back to the Walkers. They are extremely versatile and their small size allows us to move deftly around some of our more heavily landscaped properties. In a few words, they do a heck of a job for the type of properties we maintain.” ■





IT'S STP FOR GREEN ACRES LANDSCAPING (WALKER TALK NO. 18)

During the last five years, the market has become even more competitive for South Carolina-based Green Acres Landscaping. Area contractors are making it tough on margins and the post 9-11 business climate has tightened client purse strings. Still, the company continues to grow, says owner George Moore, Jr., but not without changes. Customers are given incentives to pay within 15 days and installation jobs may soon require 60% down when the plant material reaches the site. In addition, George and company are slightly more selective about their customers. "We want customers who appreciate our work and are willing to pay their bills promptly," he relates. "To retain them, we use the STP approach – we **See The People.**" This continues to be a relationship business, and to be successful you have to nurture long-term loyal customers."

About his Walker Mowers, George says he still uses them, especially for lush lawns and leaf pickup in the fall. For wider areas, his company relies on wide-area Toro mowers. As he explains, when a market becomes as competitive as the Charleston area, contractors have to be especially keen about matching equipment to the application. Each mower has its application and the smart contractor brings the right two together. ■



FIVE GENERATIONS AND COUNTING (COVER WALKER TALK NO. 16)

When you've been in business since 1876, there are bound to be a few changes. In fact, change, being able to keep pace with the market, is one of the reasons Akehurst Landscape Service, Inc., in Joppa, Maryland, has such a long history of success. Since WT visited five years ago, the Akehurst business has further evolved. The interior landscaping business has increased three-fold, there has been a 100% increase in snow and ice management accounts, and there is more emphasis than ever on residential landscaping/installation.

According to company vice president Brian Akehurst, the company continues to use its Walker Mowers for high-end maintenance accounts and when grass or leaf collection is required. A couple of the older models that no longer cut grass are used on snow removal crews. In the meantime, a fleet of mid-size walk-behind mowers has been replaced by Wright Standers. "We really don't want any of our employees to have to walk behind a mower anymore," adds Brian. "With the increase in competition over the years, companies have to continue to find ways to become more productive and reduce operating costs."

Brian notes that an increasingly competitive market is probably the biggest change over the past few years. "Fuel and other operating costs are going up and clients are reluctant to pay higher prices for our services. We have to work both harder and smarter to be successful."

In support of that statement, the Akehurst family recently launched a new company, Clear Path Products, which distributes a non-corrosive salt and sells and rents snowplows. They are also building a new 3,600-sq.-ft. office addition to accommodate a growing management team, a product of the family's attempt to delegate more responsibility.

As Brian points out, contractors can always work smarter, but working harder is more difficult; there is a limit to how many hours anyone can work, including his father, who is still active in the business, his two brothers and cousin. Especially when you have a young family, you have to be able to spend some quality time at home. After all, there is a sixth generation to be raised. ■

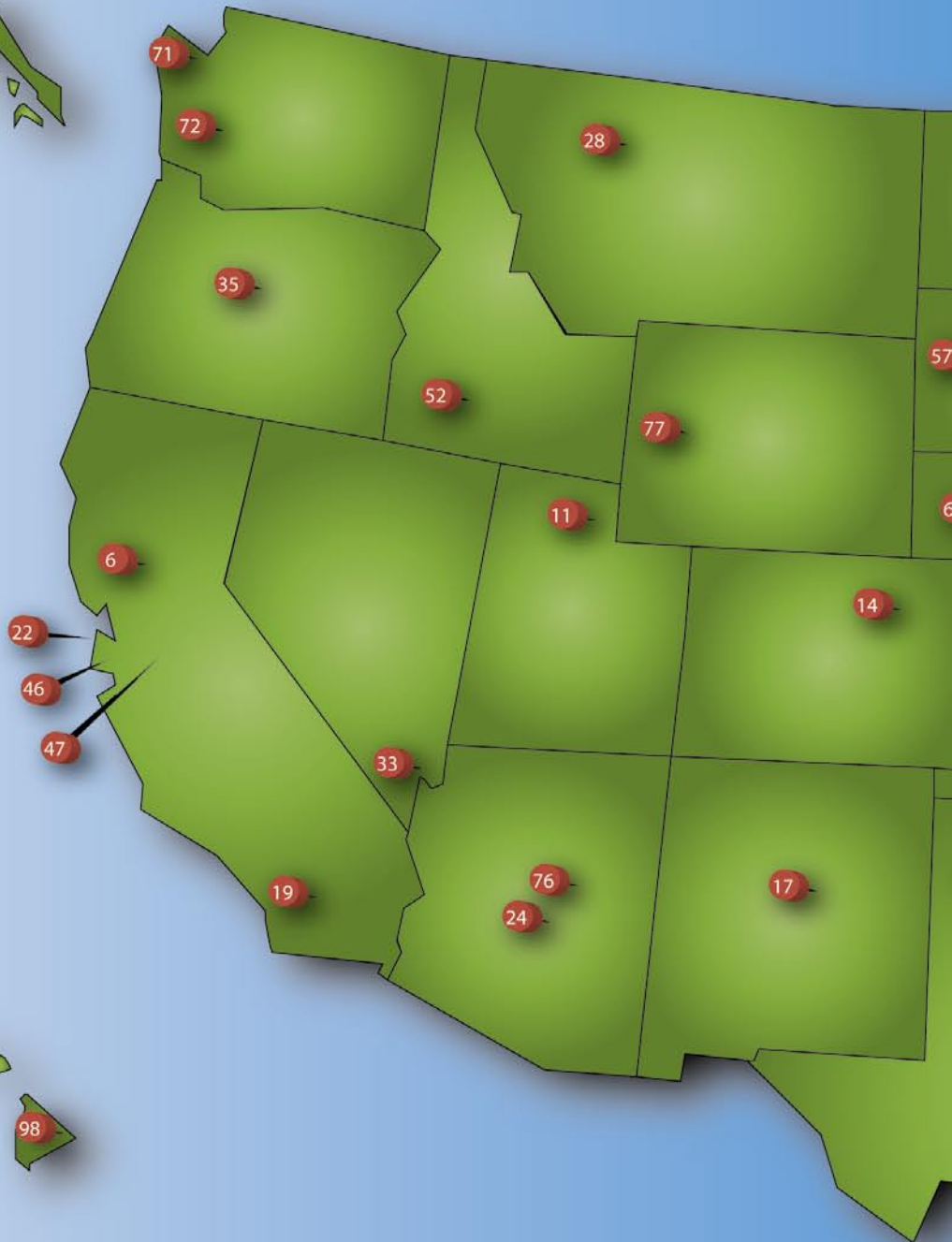
Walker Talk Feature Story



Seeing is Believing

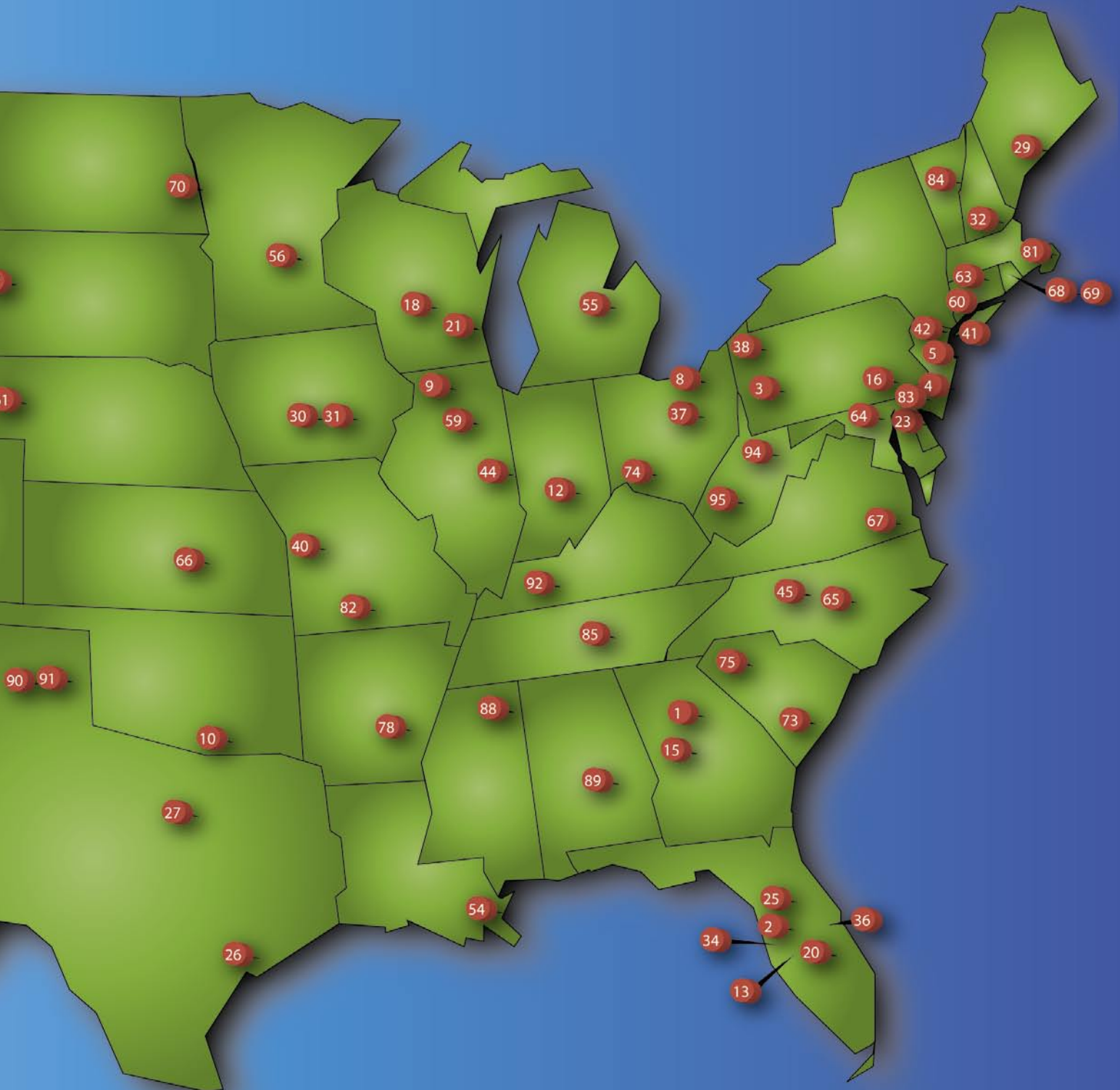
As a commitment to the highest quality of stories and photography, Walker Talk editors have been on location for every story published in Walker Talk and personally interviewed the customer and taken photographs. This requires a high level of commitment and some serious airplane and car time. Following is look at those miles:

Total Number of Profiles for all Walker Talks	173
Total Continental Miles for Walker Talk Vol. 1-24	121,356
Total Miles Outside US/Canada for Walker Talk Vol. 1-24	39,008
Total Miles for Walker Talk Down Under	40,000
Total Miles for Walker Talk Europe	24,620
Total Miles for All Walker Talk Travel	224,984
Total Miles Accumulated by Rod Dickens ..	182,050
Total Miles Accumulated by Tim Cromley ...	42,934



224,984 miles ÷ 173 Stories =
1300 miles
traveled per Walker Talk Story

Coverage - United States





WHAT'S NEW IN QUEBEC? (WALKER TALK NO. 19)

When WT asked Albert Lauze, president of A&V Paysagistes, in Lemoyne, Quebec, what's been happening over the last three years, he came up with his top 10 (really 11) list. Heading it up is downsizing the business. Other changes in the top five include replacing old equipment with new, getting completely out of the snow pushing business, replacing one Walker with a diesel unit, and hiring a new team of employees. His new team, he says, includes two moms, one with seven children and the other with two. "They're great," says Lauze.



In the near term, this Walker user is looking for a better way to pick up leaves, and he is taking a serious look at the Super Truck from Georgia. If he buys one, he says it will be the first one in Canada.

Other changes? His sideline coffee business has changed from vending to all sales; he had to put down Panda, a 15-year-old sheep dog; and he has a new two-year-old sheep dog that he affectionately calls a pack-of-fun. Lauze still networks with customers and suppliers on the ice playing hockey. ■

THE NAME "SHOESTRING" STILL FITS IN ARIZONA (WALKER TALK NO. 18)

Joe and Tracy Martoccia still operate Top Job Landscaping in Arizona, and the name "Shoestring" still fits Joe. "Old Nellie keeps on going," says Joe, referring to an old GMC dump truck that had hundreds of thousands of miles on it four years ago. His 16-hp Walker (with original hydros and engine) just completed scalping 65 lawns, and the hour meter on his 25-hp Walker recently "turned over."

Since WT visited, Joe has completed a 30 x 40 sq.-ft. repair shop. Employees also have a new look with updated uniforms. Top Job has many of its same clients, including its largest commercial property, a 150-home residential development.

"We keep on chipping away," says Joe. "This is my niche. I love it and it works for me." ■

WALKERS CONTINUE TO BE MONEY-MAKERS FOR JONNY HEINZ LANDSCAPING (COVER WALKER TALK NO. 13)

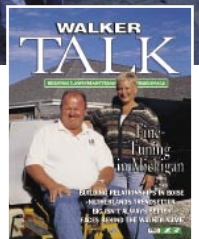
Some things don't change. For Jonny Heinz and wife Cindy, owners of Jonny Heinz Landscaping in Saginaw, Michigan, Walker Mowers are still money-makers. "We are still a full-service landscaping company, we use the same type of ramping system on our dump trucks, and our local dealer, H & B Equipment, continues to give us excellent services," relates Jonny. The only thing that has really changed over the last six years since his story appeared in WT is the Walker market itself, he adds. "It seems that nearly every serious oper-

ator, today, has a Walker Mower."

This Walker user continues to buy new Walkers every four years. He currently operates two 26-hp fuel injection models with 48-inch GHS decks. Jonny's customer mix has not changed all that much, although he admits to having a few more commercial accounts than he used to have, including a shopping center. His company has maintained modest growth over the years, and it remains a family affair.

"When we talk about change, don't forget about some of the innovations on the Walker Mower," says Jonny. "Because my daughter has a bad back (she helps out in the business), the mower she operates is equipped with the optional seat and a power dump box. The "add-ons" make her life easier and allow her to be more productive on the job."

That is still the name of the game for Walker Mowers, Jonny adds. "We continue to receive compliments from our customers and we continue to make money with the mowers." ■



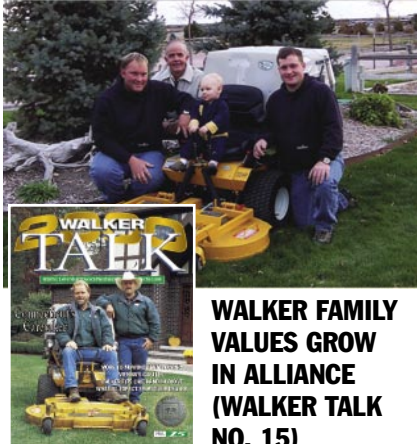


PRESCRIPTION STILL A SUCCESS FOR DICK HEIM (WALKER TALK NO. 1)

Dick Heim was the subject of one of the first WT stories. He was maintaining lawns at a retirement community in Florida, 11 miles from his home in Zephyrhills. At the time he was mowing 150 yards a week and he had one Walker Mower. How times do and don't change. Dick still lives in Zephyrhills, he still has that same Walker Mower and another one he purchased two years later, and he still mows that same retirement community. Now, though, he has a full time helper and he mows 250 yards a week.

"My schedule hasn't changed all that much over the years," Dick explains. "We get to the retirement community by about 8:20 a.m. and get back home no later than 2:30 p.m. I work five days a week and mow 45 to 50 yards a day with my two Walkers. You can't beat it, and you can't beat the Walkers, either. I think that first Walker of mine has more than 8,500 hours on it and has made me a couple of million dollars over the years. Both my machines are equipped with Kubota diesel engines and they are nearly indestructible as far as I'm concerned. Of course, I take care of them."

He takes care of his customers, too, to the extent he has a waiting list of retirees who want to retain his services. In the meantime, it's business as usual for Dick Heim and his Walkers. ■

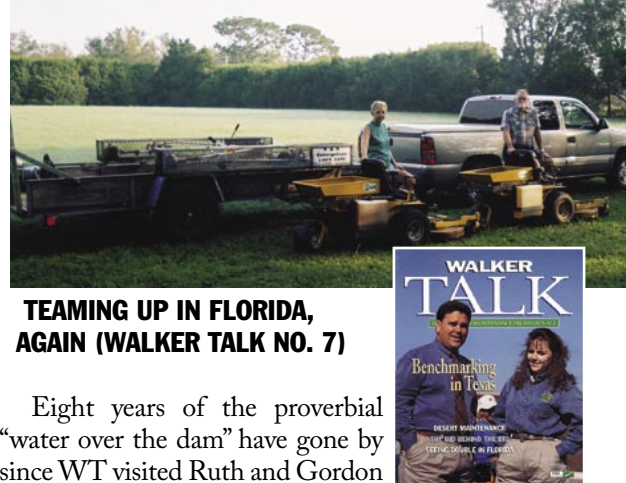


WALKER FAMILY VALUES GROW IN ALLIANCE (WALKER TALK NO. 15)

WT visited with Howard Jensen, owner of J&C Lawn Service in Alliance, Nebraska, five years ago. At that time he said, "My number one challenge in the lawn maintenance business is to get it to the point where my sons would be able to raise a family working in the business." He is halfway there. Oldest son Josh has since married and is the proud father of a little boy. He also runs the maintenance business. Brother Chad has an apprenticeship in industrial electronics and hopes to one day go into business with Josh.

In the meantime, Howard still works for the railroad as an engineer, operates a Walker dealership, and runs an RV park with the help of wife Susan. "The property maintenance business has not changed much over the years," Howard explains. "We continue to do business with a handshake and our Walker Mowers get the job done. We run three 26-hp fuel-injected Walkers with GHS decks. We also have a 74-inch side discharge deck, and this year we purchased the Perfaerator™ that simply does a phenomenal job aerating properties."

He continues, "We're doing well. The one challenge we have in Western Nebraska is the dry weather, and it has been getting dryer seemingly every year. If we don't get rain soon, our agricultural-based economy will suffer even more." As Howard emphasizes, no matter what side of the lawn maintenance business you are on – in sales and service or in property maintenance – having good weather and a strong economy can make all the difference in the world. ■



TEAMING UP IN FLORIDA, AGAIN (WALKER TALK NO. 7)

Eight years of the proverbial "water over the dam" have gone by since WT visited Ruth and Gordon Ewerks in Lady Lake, Florida. Guess what? The couple, according to Gordon, is still a mom and pop operation. Instead of mowing 18 lawns a day, though, they mow 20. Some other changes are in the works. KK Enterprises is looking for work closer to home and the company has sold its oldest Walker to another landscape contractor who works for the Ewerks one day a week.

"I wouldn't have anything but a Walker," says Gordon. "We operate with two; one is a 1996 model and we purchased the other one last year." Both, he adds, are equipped with 20-hp Kohler engines and 42-inch mulching decks. ■

LAS VEGAS CONTRACTOR HAS 30 GREENHOUSES (COVER STORY, WALKER TALK NO. 9)

Since this story appeared in Walker Talk 9, a severe drought and water shortage has hit Las Vegas. Mike Lake, owner of Ocean Front Landscape, still has his maintenance business and has eight Walker mowers, but maintenance is smaller, now. Taking its place are 30 greenhouses, in which he grows \$2 million worth of annual flowers a year and sells to other landscapers and hotels in the city.

"I'm pretty good at changing," says Lake. "The greenhouses were completed five years ago. Grass is the biggest water waster in the city. In fact, the city is paying homeowners and commercial properties to remove grass at \$1 per sq. ft. Hotels and other tourist attractions, though, are immune to the new regulations."

The flower business has been a real boost to Lake's operation. "It all started with the Walker mower," he adds. ■





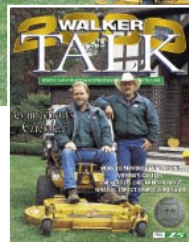
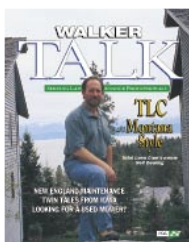
**JOHN ALLIN, OWNER
OF ALLIN COMPANIES,
ERIE, PENNSYLVANIA
(WALKER TALK NO. 10)**

John Allin's maintenance business hasn't changed much since his story appeared in Volume 10. He is still doing around \$400,000 in maintenance and operates the same two Walker mowers. His installation business has grown from \$1 million to \$3 million in sales. But what has changed most dramatically is his snowplowing and ice removal business. It grew from \$600,000 at the time of the original story to \$55 million. Allin's snow removal business, under the name Snow Management Group, recently merged with the Symbiot Business Group.

Says Allin, "I believe that anyone can do anything they want as long as they put their mind to it." Why stay in the maintenance and installation business? That's easy, he adds. "It's still profitable." ■

**PELLA, IOWA
STILL MOWING
WITH WALKERS
(WALKER TALK
NO. 8)**

Since WT visited Precision Inc. several years ago, the company has a new grounds superintendent and a new Walker. "We recently purchased a MT 20 with a GHS deck," says Marty DeYoung. "We also have the old Walker. They do a good job for us and I recommend them to anyone looking for a mower." ■



**RICH MCCLURE &
SON LANDSCAPE
SERVICES,
BETHEL,**

**CONNECTICUT (COVER STORY,
WALKER TALK NO. 15)**

If you want to visit Rich McClure at work now, you will have to go to Pure Country, a 17,000-sq.-ft. country bar near Bethel, CT. McClure opened the bar/restaurant on June 1. Son Richie still operates the landscape business, focusing on turf management and irrigation repair. "The business around here was getting too competitive," McClure relates. "I owned a bar 20 years ago, and when this property became available, I decided to try it again." Actually, McClure had made the decision to get out of the maintenance business this past year and was contemplating getting into real estate instead. While looking at real estate, he happened upon his new business opportunity. How about his Walker? "I still have it to mow my lawn," he says. "I wouldn't mow with anything else." ■



**MEADOWS
APARTMENTS,
BEND, OREGON
(WALKER TALK 9)**

Property managers Dan and Allison Fogerty left the property 5 years ago, but the apartment complex still uses the same Walker mower featured in the article. The engine was rebuilt about 1 ½ years ago, and the mower spends most of its time blowing snow, says current property manager Mark Chambers. ■



**STEVE'S
LAWN &
GARDEN,
SCARBOROUGH,
MAINE (WALKER
TALK 8)**

This contractor just ordered Walker Mower number 6, a 26-hp unit to complement two other 26-hp Walkers and two 20-hp and one 16-hp Walker. Since appearing in Walker Talk No. 8, Steve's Lawn & Garden has doubled in size. The company now employs 13 people and has 102 customers. In addition to mowing and maintenance, Steve and son Nate provide landscaping and snowplowing services. For three years now, a relationship with a landscape designer has generated more work in the high-end residential market.

"There is more competition now than when our story first appeared in Walker Talk," says Steve. "There is more downward pressure on prices, too, but we have not been playing that game. Instead, we have become even more selective with new customers and continue to provide high-quality services." ■



**NEIL DEERING,
TOTAL LAWN
CARE, KALISPELL,
MONTANA (COVER
STORY, WALKER
TALK 8)**

"Since I appeared in Walker Talk eight years ago, Walker Mowers have become my worst enemy," says Neil Deering. "Don't get me wrong, they are still a great mower, but everyone, and I mean everyone in the mowing business here has a Walker Mower. Having a Walker is not having a competitive advantage if your competition is using the mowers as well."

So, Deering, who operates seven Walkers, is providing other services

to supplement his mowing. Over the years, he has added landscape installation, irrigation and weed control, and his facility maintains the company's equipment, including a fleet of 24 trucks. Crews also provide rough mowing (not with Walkers, Deering adds quickly).

To accommodate growth, this contractor expanded his original facility, only to outgrow it a few years later. He has since moved to a new location and already is looking to expand there. He projects he will generate \$1.5 million in sales with 40 employees in 2004. Compare that to a projected \$500,000 in sales and 13 employees eight years ago.

Deering explains that his mowing business has not increased significantly over the years, yet he attributes his overall business growth to his Walker Mowers. "I have leveraged my mowing to augment my service offering," he relates. "Can you believe I still operate my first Walker? It has more than 15,000 hours on it. Yes, I've rebuilt the engine a few times, but the mower continues to mow, and mow well."

One of the biggest challenges this contractor has faced since his story appeared in WT was caused by growth. As Deering explains, the more he grew, the more headaches he incurred. When his business reached the \$1 million mark, he restructured it and installed managers in each of his divisions. Now, two years later, Deering has more time for himself and is able to concentrate working "on" and not "in" the business. There's even some time left over in the day to operate one of his Walker Mowers. ■

WALKER'S BIGGEST FAN (COVER WALKER TALK 2)

To say that Sam Russo helped pioneer the Walker Mower on the East Coast would be an understatement. When he was profiled in WT twelve years ago, his mowing company had been in business since 1982 and, at its peak, was mowing between 14,000 and 16,000 yards weekly. Says Russo, "Back then, mowing contractors did not think Walker Mowers were going to do the job and many preferred to continue to use their walk-behind mowers. We proved them wrong when the Walker more than doubled our mowing efficiency."

This entrepreneur also proved area power equipment dealers wrong when he joined their ranks and took on the Walker Mower line. He adds, "The dealers in the area were as skeptical about Walker Mowers as the contractors were. So I jumped in and had virtually no competition. For several years running I was the top Walker Mower dealer in New Jersey and one of the top dealers in the country."

Russo still attributes his success to having an overall passion for what he does and a strong work ethic to go along with it. He says his success also hinged in large part on the relationships he developed with suppliers and customers.

What is this one-time Walker user and dealer doing today? He sold his lawn maintenance business seven years ago to two of his general foremen. A year ago, Dixie Chopper purchased his two remaining dealerships (at one time, Russo operated out of three locations). An avid automobile racer, he retired from the sport four years ago and put the money he would have spent on racing into a 54-ft yacht, which he cruises off the Florida and New Jersey coasts.

To keep occupied, Russo owns a 200-acre farm on which he operates



a successful excavating, demolition, and disposal business. Anyone who knows Sam, though, knows that he needs something else to fill his days. In his words, he is marking time until, "The right opportunity comes along." In the meantime and not too far down the road, he plans to help his 16-year-old son launch a lawn maintenance business. "I had a great ride in this industry," he recalls. "I met some great people, I enjoyed what I was doing, and I made a good living. I want my son to have the same opportunity." If the son has his father's go get'em attitude and subscribes to his business philosophy, "Do one thing until you do it right," then he, too, will be a success and possibly become another Walker fan. ■

THE WALKER IS STILL MY WAY OF LIFE (WALKER TALK NO. 4)

Jeff Vining puts it succinctly when asked how he has been since his story appeared in Walker No. 4. "When you are in my situation, you really cannot expect to do much more than maintain," he emphasizes. Jeff was injured 15 years ago in an accident that left him paralyzed from his chest down.

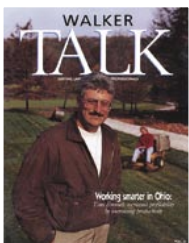


A year after the accident he started mowing lawns with a Walker, and he's still mowing. "My Walker is my world," says Jeff. "It never gets old riding one, and for me, it is always an adventure." Jeff notes that he can mow any place any other operator can mow, and when not mowing, he uses his mower like an ATV to go hunting, fishing and for overall transportation to wherever he wants to go.

Since the WT visit, Jeff has moved to Barnesville, Georgia, about 20 miles south of where he used to live. He makes his home on 70 acres of land where, when not mowing, he is excavating a stone quarry for mate-

rials to be used in water features, retaining walls, and other hardscape applications. If you've read about Jeff before, you know he does more than oversee the operation. He runs the excavator. As he explains, "I can run nearly any piece of equipment with a joy stick."

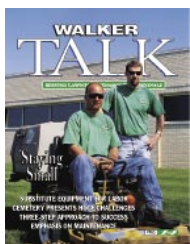
Jeff says the only thing that has stopped his mowing business from growing is a labor shortage. He has decided to keep his business small and rely on two employees – and two Walkers. ■



NOW RETIRED, FORMER SIXTH-GRADE TEACHER MOWS FULL TIME (WALKER TALK NO. 3)

When WT visited Dennis Sloan 11 years ago, he was teaching sixth grade and mowing lawns part-time. Dennis retired from teaching two years ago, and now mows full time. He says his business has not changed all that much over the years, in part because growing a lawn maintenance business in Ardmore, Oklahoma, is difficult when you have "200 people mowing lawns for a population of 35,000."

He still uses his Walkers, though. In fact, he has five mowers, four 20-hp models with 48-inch GHS decks and one 25-hp model. In addition, he operates with two 56-inch side-discharge decks, and one 52-inch mulching deck. "The mulching deck is awesome on leaves," he adds. ■



ILLINOIS CONTRACTOR STILL "TOP NOTCH" (WALKER TALK NO. 14)

"Things haven't changed much for our company over the last five years," says Burdette Mills, owner of Top Notch Services located in Granville, Illinois. "We're still loyal Walker customers. In fact, we purchased two new Walkers this spring. Our customer base remains the same as well, with 65% of our work com-

ing from residences and 35% from commercial properties."

While his business hasn't changed, Burdette says the business climate seems a bit more challenging. Competition is getting tougher with more low-bidders in the market and tight labor. "This spring, I went through 12 people to find two reliable employees. Because of that, we operate with a few less people."

Next year will be Top Notch's 20th year in business. This owner doesn't plan on slowing down. After all, he has his health, his son is with him full-time and he has his Walkers. ■



SHIFTING GEARS IN WALKERTOWN (WALKER TALK NO. 11)



A year after WT visited LandCrafters in Walkertown, North Carolina, the lawn maintenance company started shifting gears. The large corporate account that owned most of the properties LandCrafters maintained was sold. As explained by Gerry Peddycord, the son of company founder Gerald Peddycord, the new client had several locations in the region and wanted one company to maintain all of them. "Being relatively small, we didn't have the necessary resources to compete," recalls Gerry. "Instead, we slimmed down our maintenance operation to one crew and focused more on commercial grading."

Today, Gerald and son-in-law Mike May operate the grading busi-

ness, and Gerry handles the crew that mows and maintains 10 accounts. Among them is a church, a Little League baseball complex and several residential properties. "Really, the only thing that has changed over the years is the nature of our business," Gerry adds. "Our revenue has stayed even, and we still have a Walker mower on our trailer." ■

PELLA RETIREES HAVE ALL DAY TO MOW (WALKER TALK NO. 8)



Arie and Joyce Vink no longer work at nearby Central College. Now both retired, they have all day to mow, says Joyce, and mow they do – with their two Walkers and two Grasshoppers. If they're not using the equipment, their son, who owns Pella Lawn Care, is putting the mowers through their paces.

In the meantime, Vink Lawn Care is doing well, says Joyce. The company continues to serve the residential market in Pella, and the Walkers equipped with side discharge decks continue to do a nice job mowing. One change Joyce nearly forgot to mention. At least one of her Walkers has the "fancy seat" that makes operating the Walkers that much more fun. ■

LAWN MASTERS IS HURRICANE WEARY BUT STILL MOWING (WALKER TALK NO. 6)



It has been 9 years since WT visited Jim Dubberly in Sebring, Florida. Since then, Jim says his business has grown, has downsized and then grown again. More recently, he and his crews have been spending time cleaning up properties from three hurricanes, the eyes of which passed directly overhead.

There have been a couple of changes over the years, says the owner of

Lawn Masters. He mulches most of his properties, now, and he is almost completely out of the single-family environment where competition is stronger than ever. His mainstay continues to be the country club and retirement developments.

"This is my 17th year in business," Jim emphasizes. "I still love my Walkers and they've done very well by me. I have six of them now, and none of them has less than 3,000 hours." ■

GOING STRONG IN ILLINOIS (WALKER TALK NO. 3)

Roland Wenig is 63 years old, but you wouldn't know it. He still operates D & R Groundskeeping in Rockford, Illinois, by himself, and he has just as many customers as he did when WT did the story on him more than 10 years ago.

Every week during the growing season, Wenig makes 32 stops providing customers with full-service maintenance. One of his customers, a bank, he has maintained for 21 years.

Something else has stayed the same, too. He continues to put his mowing faith in Walker Mowers. In fact, he just purchased his fifth Walker mower this past year. The fuel-injected, 26-hp model is outfitted with a 48-inch GHS deck, but Wenig also has a 54-inch side discharge deck and 42-inch mulching deck for special occasions.

"I've had an excellent year," says Wenig, "and much of the credit goes to my Walker Mower. I get so many compliments about the way it mows from all my customers." Doing a good job mowing is even more critical today, he adds, because of the growing number of contractors competing for his business. "There are hundreds of guys mowing, now, which puts pressure on quality and price. You have to do a good job mowing and you have to be com-

petitive with price. I've found that one of the keys to being successful is to keep as many customers as you can in the same neighborhood. That's important, along with using a Walker Mower." ■



"EVERYTHING IS THE SAME... JUST A LITTLE LARGER" (WALKER TALK NO. 17)

When WT first visited Ryan Such in Fargo, North Dakota, he had just purchased his lawn maintenance business. At the time, he was using two, maybe three Walker Mowers. Four years later, his maintenance business – All Terrain Grounds Maintenance – operates seven Walkers, and he plans to purchase another unit this year. If that isn't enough to keep him busy, Ryan became a Walker and Shindaiwa dealer last year.

On the lawn maintenance side of his business, not much has changed, he reports. "We've just become a little larger. During the busy season, we employ 15 people and when it snows we have maybe 12 people on our payroll. Throughout the year, we have five salaried employees."

Ryan plans to grow his maintenance and dealer operations at a consistent pace – adding a couple of maintenance accounts this year, and as the mowers grow in popularity, so will his sales. He adds, "It's kind of cool to see the number of Walker Mowers growing. There must be 15 or 20 Walkers in the area now, and everyone who has one loves it." ■



SANDY WEAVER CARRIES A PASSION FOR THE INDUSTRY (WALKER TALK NO. 5)

Life has changed dramatically for Sandy Weaver since she appeared in Walker Talk. At the time, her company, Albuquerque Grounds Maintenance, had been in business 10 years and generated \$1.5 million annually providing exterior and interior maintenance services. Four years later, she had grown the company to a \$3 million operation. In the meantime, though, her husband became ill and her business became an attractive buy to LandCare, USA. She sold her business in 1998 and three months later lost her husband. Still, she continued to work for the new owners who had merged with ServiceMaster and eventually became known as TruGreen LandCare.

Sandy worked for her new employer for nearly four years, but never truly adapted to the corporate life style. Two years ago, Sandy left the company, sold her home in Albuquerque, and moved to San Antonio where her family is located. She has no plans to start another lawn maintenance company, although if she did, Walker Mowers would be part of her equipment lineup. "Purchasing my first Walker Mowers was a turning point in my business," says Sandy. ■



TWENTIETH DISTRIBUTOR MEETING HELD

Twenty Six of Walker Manufacturing's 29 North American distributors traveled to Steamboat Springs, Colorado, on September 9-10, 2004 to attend the 20th annual Walker Mower Distributor Meeting. The picturesque setting and beautiful autumn weather set the stage for celebrating 20 years, unveiling new products, discussing sales strategies and reviewing each distributor's progress and sales goals for 2005.

Special guests attending the meeting and touring the factory in Fort Collins were two "down under" Walker distributors. Brian Johnston and family from Stevens Products in Auckland, New Zealand, and John Stead and family from Specialised Mowing Equipment in Wagga Wagga, NSW, Australia, participated in the meeting by sharing their experience in developing the Walker program in their countries. Both of these companies are credited

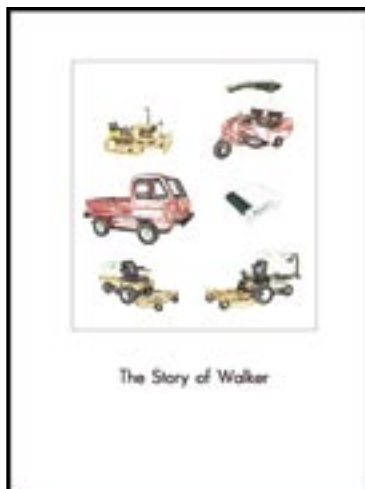
with introducing the Walker to the Australasia region where over 5,000 Walkers have been sold since 1984.

Another point of celebration during the meeting was honoring four distributors on their 20th anniversary with the Walker distributor program. This makes a total of 11 distributors who have reached the 20 year anniversary; the marketing program was started in 1982. Walker has made a point to focus on long-term relationships in the marketing program and it was fitting to recognize these "long timers" during the meeting. The twenty year distributors honored were: Cantrell Turf Equipment, Sacramento, CA; Lawn Equipment Enterprises, Waycross, GA; Specialised Mowing Equipment, Australia; Walker Mid America, Harrisonville, MO.



Ten Walker dealers and their families from Idaho and Western Wyoming joined their distributor, Blair and Dan Coates, Coates Landscape Supply and Bob and Barbara Walker from Walker Manufacturing on a 7-day Western Caribbean cruise aboard Costa Atlantica. The cruise was organized by Coates in recognition of achieving sales goals and also celebrating 16 years in the program and selling 1000 Walker Mowers in the territory since the beginning.

WALKER PRODUCTS



ABOUT THE COMPANY

Three new communication products are available for Walker customers, enthusiasts and prospective customers to learn more about the company behind the Walker Mower. First is the "Story of Walker" booklet (P/N 6895-51) that tells the company beginnings and history to date. Then a CD (P/N 6895-56) or DVD (P/N 6895-57) offers two programs narrated by Bob Walker, President of Walker Manufacturing; a virtual factory tour and a presentation of the company history and museum. These products are available on request from Walker Dealers or by contacting the factory.



MODEL MTL OFFERS 7 MPH

Top ground speed for the 2005 Model MTL has been increased from 5 MPH to 7 MPH. Starting with serial number 05-73270, the transmission drive pulley ratio was changed to increase drive speed and steering lever dampeners were added to reduce sensitivity of control response at the higher transmission operating speeds. Walker anticipates this change will be phased into other models based on field experience and customer acceptance of the "high speed" Model MTL.



HI-DUMP OPTION

Walker introduces an optional Hi-Dump lifting and dumping system for the 9.5 bushel grass catcher on Model(s) MD and MT. The option may be ordered factory-installed or as a kit for dealer or customer installation. Hi-Dump mounts as a complete assembly on the back of the Walker tractor utilizing a few bolts and one electrical connection, making it easy to install.

This new labor-saving mechanism raises the grass catcher up and back (67" above the ground) for clean dumping into a trailer or truck, using a 20-second dump and go cycle. Powered by a 12-volt electric/hydraulic system, operating two hydraulic cylinders, the lifting and dumping functions work independently and are controlled by two toggle switches from the operator seat. The system only adds 3" (7.5 cm) and 150 lbs. (56 kg) to the overall tractor height and weight.

METAL FABRICATION BOOSTED AT FACTORY

In keeping with Walker Manufacturing's philosophy of producing as much as possible of the Walker Mower in-house, four new metal fabricating machines were brought into the factory during 2004 to boost production capacity and increase efficiency. Two flying optic laser cutting machines for cutting sheet metal parts up to 1/2" thick will produce all the parts needed for Walker Mower production in 2005 and offer some extra capacity for the future. A 175-ton x 12-foot press brake increases metal bending capacity while a horizontal turret lathe will turn tubing and bar stock into machined parts (such as bearing housings). Walker projects 3.5 million pounds of steel will be fabricated by the factory to produce the 2005 model Walker Mowers.

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