

WALKER TALK

SERVING LAWN MAINTENANCE PROFESSIONALS FOR YEARS TO COME



Walker Family Reunion 2 – A Big Hit

- Young Ohio contractor builds on four pillars:
Quality, Green, Creative, Clean
- Retired Army veteran earns customer loyalty
- Life-threatening injury doesn't stop South Dakota contractor from living life to the fullest
- Age is no barrier for Illinois contractor
- Learning how to sell value



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WALKER TALK

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Hard Times

With all the financial turmoil in our country and around the world the last few months, it is natural to ask, "How is Walker Manufacturing doing financially?" and "What does it look like for the future?"

It is understandable to question the stability and survival of almost every kind of business in view of the many "rock solid" companies that have gone down in flames in recent times. A favorite pastime for the media, investors and other business observers is figuring out who to blame for the failures.



First of all, I think it is helpful to remember we have lived through hard times in the past. From this experience, we have operated Walker Manufacturing with conservative principles and built cash reserves, knowing that there would be more hard times in the future. I remember 1980-82, 1990-92 and 2000-02 as tough times for us and for lots of others. I don't know if this current hard time will be similar to the earlier times or worse, but I do know we have done our best to be prepared.

I saw a quote that is encouraging us to focus on doing our best internally and staying with the principles that have brought us this far. I believe the quote originated from business author Jim Collins and it went something like this: "Companies do not fail primarily because of what the world does to them or because of how the world changes around them; they fail first and foremost because of what they do to themselves—your life depends more on what you do to yourself than on what the world does to you."

If that is true, and I believe it is, our response to the current financial challenge is: (1) stay on course inside the company, (2) operate with the values and principles that have brought us this far, and (3) endure in a hard time by doing our best work. One of the principles my dad taught Dean and me about being in business in hard times is: The first objective is to stay in business.

Lastly, this is a good time to pray for the Lord's protection and help for our companies, for our stakeholders and for our families. It is also a good time, if you are able, to reach out and help someone else who is having a hard time. **WT**

Bob Walker

Bob Walker
President

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Young entrepreneur builds on success

Wise before his years. That's one way to describe Scott Snider, president and owner of M&S Connection Landscaping in Strongsville, Ohio. In business for less than six years, he already has

a good handle on what it takes to be successful. "Our company rests on four pillars," Snider explains. "We believe in Quality, Green, Creative and Clean."

Snider defines quality by the level of service his company delivers to its cli-

ents. Green is the result of this service—healthy, lush turfgrass, and the company's commitment to a "greener" planet. Being creative is designing and installing the right landscape for the right property—and listening to the client. Clean is having

shirts tucked in, operating clean equipment, and leaving properties with clean walks and drives, weed-free beds,

ing lawns with a friend Mike (the M in M&S) at age 16. The duo worked part-time for two years, some of the first year out of the back of a Taurus sedan. Their big break came in the second year when they landed a large nursing home. "We used a 22-inch push mower and a 32-inch walk-behind mower to cut the property," Snider recalls. "That one property took us all day to mow."

After graduating from high school, Mike chose a different career path while Snider pursued a degree in Landscape Contracting and Construction from nearby Ohio State University Agricultural Technical Institute (ATI). He kept the business going in between classes and during the summer. He also took

on two new partners: his father, Chris, who also owns a business management company, and girlfriend, Jackie Maskovyak.

Chris became the company's advisor and now manages its financial affairs, while Jackie, armed with a marketing degree, oversees new business development. She also attends law school after work.

WALKER CONNECTION

Between Jackie's marketing acumen and Chris' financial expertise, M&S Connection has grown fast and profitable over the last two years. Twenty commercial

and sharp, fresh beds and mowing lines."

This young entrepreneur is also passionate. He loves the industry of which he has been a part since mow-



Scott Snider with Jackie Maskovyak and lead foreman Jeff Gallimore (seated)

accounts include luxury apartments and condo associations, hotels, retirement villages and corporate office complexes. The company also services a couple of high-end residential properties.

Crews maintain the properties with two Wright Standers and a Walker Mower Super B. The M&S owner was first introduced to the Walker Mower line by Walker distributor Tom Emmett at the Cleveland Home and Garden Show. "I could identify with Tom," Snider recalls. "A former landscape contractor, he understood what I was trying to do. I bought my first Walker Mower, a used, 48-inch GHS model when I was 18, only to trade it in within a couple years for a new GHS model. This year I traded that mower in for a new Super B.

"With my commercial clients, I didn't have many requests for collecting clippings," Snider continues. "The new Super B doesn't have a collection system, is slightly faster than GHS models, and is maneuverable on hills."

With a 60-inch deck, the mower covers a lot of ground, and Snider says it also leaves a beautiful cut—something that adds to an all-important company image. The Wright Standers have their place, too, he emphasizes. Crew members employ them for hilly terrain and smaller turf areas.

AMBITIOUS GOALS

This owner is not your typical young mowing contractor in yet another important way. He says he wants to grow to be as big as he can possibly be. Plans are already in the works to open a second location in Columbus. "What can I say? I think big," Snider adds with a shrug. "Columbus fits our business

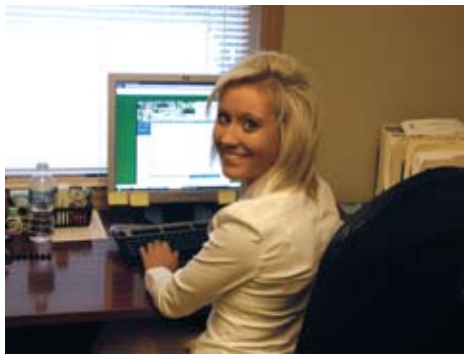
model and we already know someone down there who wants to become a part owner in our company. The area is also booming, and it is a little more condensed than the Cleveland market, which means crews can get to job sites with less travel."

As Jackie points out, though, M&S Connection will not be able to waltz into Columbus, or any other market for that matter, without having a point of difference. "Our clients like our professional approach to doing business, and we target a specific market niche: high-

end commercial properties," she notes. "We plan to use the same strategy in Columbus."

Snider agrees, adding that success in any new market rests largely on the shoulders of their team members. "They are on the front lines," he emphasizes. "When we talk about four pillars, our team members are most responsible for delivering on them." Snider notes that the company has recently added another Ohio State University ATI graduate, Jeff Gallimore, as lead foreman to provide on-site expertise and leadership.

To ensure they are tracking with company expectations, Snider and his team created a training program called M-STOP, which stands for M&S



Jackie Maskovyak oversees new business development and attends evening law school.



Walker distributor Tom Emmett introduced Scott to a Walker Mower at the Cleveland Home and Garden Show.

Training and Operations Program. The training targets three specific areas: landscape, business and entrepreneurship. Employees are taught how to maintain properties, follow correct horticultural guidelines and use equipment in a safe and appropriate manner. The program introduces team members to company operating procedures, helps them develop supervisory and management skills, and offers advice on how to communicate effectively with customers and work more efficiently.

"The final area of learning is entrepreneurship," says Snider. "Through M-STOP, our team members learn what our clients and their customers want for their properties, which gives

Equipped with a 60-inch side-discharge deck, Scott Snider says his new Walker Super B covers a lot of ground and leaves a beautiful cut.

them the information they need to offer creative solutions."

If there's one additional hurdle to penetrating a new market or landing a new customer, Snider says it's his age.

"Our company rests on four pillars. We believe in Quality, Green, Creative and Clean."

"Sometimes potential clients question my ability just because I'm young. I can understand that, but it can also be very frustrating."

Walker distributor Tom Emmett acknowledges Snider's frustration, but also encourages him to chase his dreams. "This industry has much to offer," says Emmett, who was a landscaper for 20 years prior to becoming a Walker dealer and later a distributor. "There are many, many successful people who started out mowing lawns

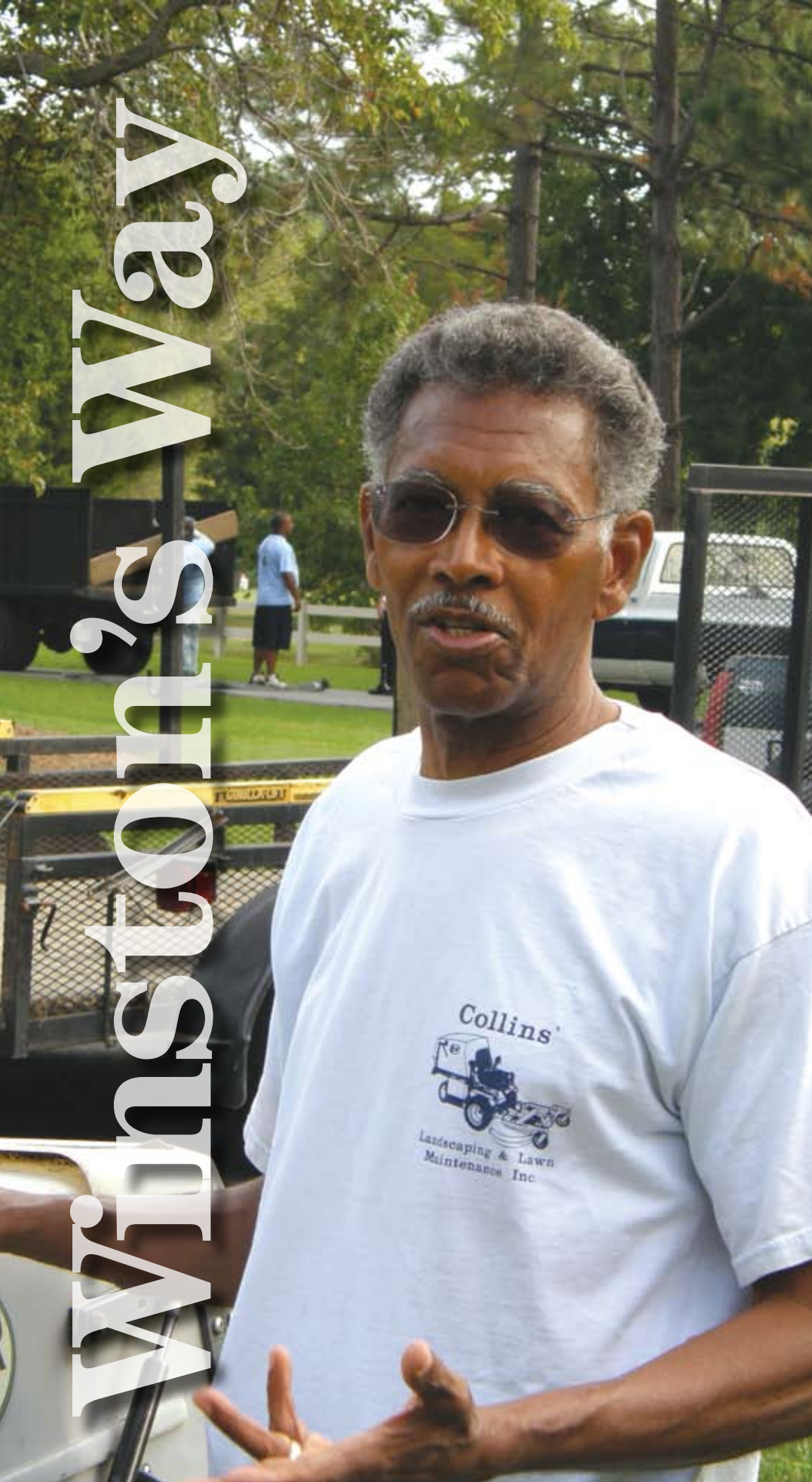
like Scott did. Some have aggressive growth plans, and others have used their business as a cash flow vehicle to leverage interests in different areas. Either way, it's a great industry—one with plenty of opportunity for growth and success."

Says Snider, "When I purchased my first Walker Mower, Tom gave me a book entitled, *How to Earn at Least Sixty Dollars Per Hour Mowing Grass*. "I knew then that he wasn't just selling me a mower. He was selling me an opportunity. With the help of my team—Jeff, Jackie and my father—we've been able to build on that opportunity." **WT**

Roy Ruebenstahl can be reached at (502) 499-9031 or (502) 743-5901. He can also be reached via e-mail at gomco@bellsouth.net. Books available for \$75 (post paid within Continental USA).



Winston's Way



“I don’t know what I would do without him,” says one customer. Another relates, “I told my wife that if Winston ever retires, we will have to sell our house.” A third customer remarks, “If you need something, call Winston.”

Who is this Winston guy? He is the owner of Collins’ Landscaping & Lawn Maintenance in Newport News, Virginia, and the above comments are typical of how his 70-plus customers feel about him and the work he does.

Collins is more than your average mowing contractor. He is a property caretaker who, in addition to maintaining yards, can be trusted to pay the bills, sort the mail, walk the dogs, oversee other contractors, and do just about anything a homeowner asks.

After 20 years in business, many with the same properties, this Trinidad native says his customers are like family. “I’m 67 years old and I’m not in business to run after money,” Collins relates. “I’m in business because I enjoy landscaping and I enjoy interacting with my clients. I think anyone can be successful in this business if they enjoy what they’re doing, are honest, and earn the trust of their customers.”

DRILLING IT HOME

When Collins speaks, people have a tendency to listen. Maybe it’s because he spent 20 years of his life in the Army, six of those as a drill instructor. “I was tough ... you bet I was,” he muses. “All my recruits were physically fit when they left me. I made sure of that.”

Collins also had two tours of duty in Vietnam, spent time in Germany and Korea, and moved around the states before retiring from the military. He then spent 11 years with Dominion Virginia Power as a security officer at a nuclear power plant.

“When I was working for Virginia

Winston Collins thinks anyone can be successful in this business if they enjoy what they’re doing, are honest, and earn the trust of their customers.



Power, I wanted to do something in my off hours,” he recalls. “I’d always enjoyed landscaping, so I decided to pick up a few jobs mowing and maintaining properties. That’s how I got started, mowing a couple of doctors’ lawns with their mowers and trimming their bushes and trees.”

“I’m not running to win my age group. I run to win the race. Where I come from, second place doesn’t really count.”

Collins’ first customer, Linda Grantham, was an interior plantscaper. Her husband was a doctor. “Linda told me, ‘If you’re going to do this, you might as well start your own business,’” Collins recalls. “So that’s what I decided to do, against the best wishes of my wife, Edwynna. I had a good-paying job, and in her mind it didn’t make sense to give that up for mowing lawns.”

Lacking the enthusiastic backing of Edwynna, Collins needed to buy the equipment without tapping into his family’s general fund. He was stymied until one evening at church when he heard a lady talk about

using a credit card to get out of debt. “Bingo, a light went off,” says Collins. “I have a credit card and I can use that to get started.”

He exercised his card and purchased a Toro walk-behind mower, a trailer, blower, string trimmer and edger, along with a few other tools. Within three months, Collins traded the Toro in for a new Walker Mower.

“The Toro wasn’t a bad mower, but the collection system threw dust in my eyes,” Collins

explains. “I liked a friend’s 20-hp Walker Mower, but I wanted something with a bigger engine. So I made the deal for a 25-hp Walker Mower with a 48-inch GHS deck.”

Collins says the dealer spent too much time explaining the mower’s operation when he delivered it. “I wanted him to just drop off the mower so I could mow. He finally left, and I cut my yard, and then my neighbors’ yards, before taking it into the field.”

EQUIPMENT MENTALITY

This Walker user has four words to describe his mowing equipment: “I love my Walkers.” And he’s not just blowing smoke. He carries the Walker Mower image proudly on his business cards and work shirts.

Collins Landscaping & Lawn Maintenance operates four Walker Mowers: three 26-hp models and one 31-hp model, each with 48-inch GHS decks. For years, this owner sold his year-old Walker Mower and purchased a new one—the lucky buyer getting a used machine that rarely felt a raindrop, was detailed like



Customer Linda Grantham encouraged Winston to start his own business. Another customer, Cecil Adcox (above), told his wife, “When Winston leaves, we’re selling our house.”



Winston's Walker Mowers are detailed and maintained like fine automobiles.

a car, and was maintained to the n^{th} degree. In fact, Collins' newest Walker, the 31-hp unit, is three years old and looks like it's brand spanking new. Several attachments—including two blowers, three dethatchers, a mulching deck and side-discharge deck—round out his Walker lineup.

But we're getting ahead of the story. With his new equipment lineup, Collins started to bring in more money and soon outstripped what he was making at the power plant. Customer lists grew and he quit his day job. Edwynna, who recently retired, started to maintain the company's books and oversee accounts payable/receivable, and she still does. In fact, says Collins, "I wouldn't be able to run this business without her. She's my right hand."

"This is what I enjoy doing," he adds, shrugging his shoulders. "You cannot ask for a better job. I'm going to work as long as my health holds out."

That should be for a long time. This landscape contractor is one of the fastest runners in Virginia, routinely winning his age group in distance runs. "I'm not running to win my age group," Collins says adamantly. "I run to win the race. Where I come from, second place doesn't really count."



More than anything, Winston is proud of the way he trims trees and bushes and overall manages a landscape.

Indeed, Collins runs whenever he gets a chance, logging 11 miles some mornings and running with friends during the evenings or on weekends. Still, he has time to serve his customers, maintain his equipment, and manage a crew of seven employees.

A quick tour of his home shows that this individual is also, as one customer said, "complicated." The house is brimming with collectables of all shapes and sizes. "As you can see, I liked to collect oil lamps," Collins says with a smile. "At one time, I believe I owned 800 lamps."

After leaving his home, Collins takes the *Walker Talk* editor for a ride around his properties, visiting with customers and pointing out highlights.

It's obvious that Collins has a way with people—and with landscapes. Every customer treats him like a friend. As for their properties, he's proud of the mowing and installations. But more than anything else, he's proud of the way he trims the trees and bushes and manages the landscape.

"I can look at a property and immediately see what would make it look more attractive," Collins relates. "Sometimes that coincides with what the customer sees, and sometimes it doesn't."

That's where his power of persuasion comes in handy, and if he can't convince the customer with words, he will do it with deeds. That's Winston's way. **WT**

INDEPENDENCE

is more than a
state of mind



Darwin Haerer Sr. demonstrates how a hinged board helps him mount his Walker Mower.

Darwin Haerer Sr. positions his wheelchair next to his Walker Mower. He places a hinged board between the mower and his chair and slides across it to the mower's seat. "There," he says. "I'm ready to mow."

The owner of DHD Construction Inc. in Wall, South Dakota, has more on his plate than mowing, though. He and his son, Darwin Jr., operate a gen-

eral contracting company that employs eight people and builds a variety of commercial and residential structures in and around Rapid City. Darwin Sr. maintains the financial end of the business from his home in nearby Wall, while his son manages the operations end from Rapid City.

When not concentrating on busi-

ness—or mowing his lawn and those of his two neighbors—Haerer can be found running errands in his van, or maybe he and his wife, Betty, will be off camping and four-wheeling across the rugged Badlands.

"It doesn't take long for life to change," Haerer relates, noting that before a serious injury in April 1996,



Of all the Walker Mower's features, it was the electric dump that "sealed the deal" for Darwin.

he operated a trucking company that hauled cattle and grain throughout a five-state area. Going further back, this South Dakota native was raised on a ranch and lived the life of a real cowboy until meeting his wife in 1973 and getting married a year later. Prior to starting his trucking company, he had worked on a 12,000-acre ranch, managed a 30,000-head sheep feedlot and drove a cattle truck.

HEART TO HEART

Haerer maneuvers his chair through the living room and points to a breathtaking view overlooking the Badlands. "I can spend hours here watching coy-

otes chasing down prey in the wintertime," he says. He then recalls the days when he and his brother would drive cattle from pasture to pasture and spend evenings camping out under the stars. With ranching in his blood, Haerer attended Western Iowa Tech to study ranch management, and later worked as a cowboy until "settling down."

"My injury was caused by a freak accident," Haerer explains. "I was hauling grain at the time. Before loading, I positioned the auger, stood up and backed into a turning power-take-off shaft. The grease fitting on the shaft caught my shirt right behind my neck, wound me up and threw me 40 feet away. The accident severed my spinal cord, and ultimately my C-five, C-six and C-seven vertebrae had to be fused."

Haerer spent the next four months in a Rapid City hospital. "The doctors told me that nine out of 10 people never survive the injury I suffered," he says. "They also said that I would never drive, walk or work again."

"Betty and I had a heart-to-heart talk shortly after I returned home and agreed that this was no way to live," Haerer continues. "We inquired about going to the Craig Institute in Denver where doctors specialize in spinal cord injuries. After an evaluation, they admitted me. I spent a month learning how to get the most out of what my body could give me. In fact, I was driving a specially designed car within the first week of my stay."

REBUILDING

For the better part of the next 12 years, the Haerer family, including Darwin Jr. and his sister, Mindy, worked together to help their dad gain as much independence as possible. They constructed a new handicapped-accessible house nine years ago and outfitted it to accommodate a wheelchair. A hoist chair allows Betty to lift her husband into a whirlpool. Since the accident, Darwin Sr. has purchased two specially designed vans.

Thanks in large part to the Craig Institute, the former cowboy, ranch manager and truck driver

The Haerer homestead is located about a mile from downtown Wall with its famous drug store and an entrance into Badlands National Park.



lives a very full life. Haerer combined grain for two summers (he helped configure a lift to get into the combine's cab) and began mowing his lawn, first with his retooled Craftsman and later in 2003 when he purchased a used Walker Mower from the Walker dealer in the area, Dale and Karen Lee, located in Gordon, Nebraska. With his wife, Betty, he also operated a 300-head cattle ranch until two years ago.

"Since the accident I've been constantly looking for ways to reduce my dependence on others," Haerer emphasizes. "Betty has been absolutely incredible, as have my son and daughter. But I have to continue to look for ways to limit what they do for me. The Walker Mower is a good example. I could mow with the Craftsman, and later with my John Deere garden tractor, but I couldn't clean the deck, nor could I dump the clippings from a lawn rake that I pulled.

"Then, a few years ago, I attended a stock show and saw a Walker Mower at one of the exhibits. The raised deck caught my eye immediately and the seat looked low enough for me to scoot across from my wheelchair. The best feature was the electric dump. I spent two hours in the booth and mulled over buying the machine for another two months."

Haerer said he couldn't justify buying a new Walker Mower, but he could buy a used one. So that's just what he did when his dealer called the following spring. Since then he has customized the machine with a longer speed control handle, support for his legs, foot rests and a winch to help raise the deck for cleaning and blade changing.

"I haven't had a bit of trouble with the mower and I enjoy driving it," Haerer relates, while noting that being independent can be troublesome. He recalls an incident when he was guiding his John Deere garden tractor out of the shop while riding his electric wheelchair.

"The wheelchair hit a muddy spot and was stuck," Haerer tells. "Before I could stop the rider, it took off on its own. Imagine, sitting in my wheel-



Darwin manages the financial end of DHD Construction in Wall while his son, Darwin Jr., runs the operations side from Rapid City.

chair and the garden tractor making tracks for who knows where. Well, I called Betty at work with my cell phone and waited ... and waited some more. While she was caught in traffic, the runaway tractor meandered around the property, first toward a neighbor's barn. Then it hit a few ruts, turned and headed for a busy highway. It hit a few

"The doctors told me that nine out of 10 people never survive the injury I suffered. They also said that I would never drive, walk or work again."

more ruts and turned again, this time coming back within 10 feet of me." Haerer says it might as well have been 10 miles for all the good it did him. Off it continued, until Betty came barreling in and corralled it.

Haerer has a dozen or more misadventures under his belt, including the

time(s) he was thrown off his four-wheeler and the incident when he fell from his van while trying to get on his garden tractor. "Betty and I usually end up laughing about how ridiculous the situation is," he says. "Listen, one has to have a sense of humor."

One has to work, too, Haerer adds. When his son graduated from college five years ago, the two formed DHD Construction. The business has grown steadily, with plenty of work and equipment to get it done. Senior is proud of his son, and enjoys talking about his many attributes, not the least of which was learning to drive a "semi" at the tender age of 10.

Daughter Mindy gets accolades, too, as does Betty. "We're a tight family," Haerer says. "We were tight before the accident and we're probably tighter now. God spared me for a reason, but I have yet to find out what that reason is." What he doesn't know, his family does. **WT**



Walker Family Reunion 2 – A Big Hit

On August 1-2, 2008, Walker Manufacturing Company hosted the Walker Family Reunion 2 at its facility in Fort Collins, Colorado, to celebrate the production of the 100,000th Walker Mower. Approximately 2,300 guests from around the world were in attendance: guests from 37 states, Canada, 13 countries in Europe, Australia, New Zealand and South Africa.

The weekend was packed with entertainment, factory tours, supplier interactions, great food, activities for the entire family, and over \$75,000 worth of giveaways from Walker suppliers and Walker—including five Walker Mowers.

The Walker World Championship Driving Competition was also held during the Reunion. Mr. Chris Ulrich of Jessup, Georgia, took top honors (his fourth consecutive Grand Champion win) and was the winner of the \$3,500 grand prize.



“We are a family,” explained Bob Walker during his opening address. “And people still like doing business with people.” Bob also laid out the vision for Walker’s future

plans of maintaining private, family ownership and staying independent—even with the pressure to compete by moving operations overseas.

Country stars Pam Tillis and Aaron Tippin were on hand for the last evening of the celebration to cap off a great weekend. **WT**

“Superb!”
– Wayne and Tammy
Cantrell, Sacramento,
California



Margaret and Max Walker with sons Bob and Dean (left)

"Great, memorable experience."

— Roger Kennedy, Elmvale, ON, Canada

"Thanks for the fantastic event!"

— Jean-Sebastian Vecten,
Maidenhead, England



**"We had two beautiful and interesting days!
We appreciate your support a lot!"**

— Andrea Selb,
Winterthur, Switzerland

"Awesome!"

— Josh, Anna, Tyler and Karlie Jensen,
Alliance, Nebraska



"Really great—keep up the good work!"

— Dale Miller, Montrose, Colorado



"Thanks for the devotion."

— Denny and Lorene Olson,
Albert Lea, Minnesota



"Love being part of the wonderful Walker family."

— John and Rena Smith,
Helena, Montana

"Always great to be here."

— Karen and Paul Penny,
Meaford, ON, Canada





“Fantastic!”
– Philip and Josie Reilly,
Cavan, Ireland



**“Thank you
for a wonderful
weekend.”**
– Joe, Bonnie, Alex,
Heather & Andrew Dawson,
Mooretown, ON, Canada



**“Thank you very much for
the great family reunion
party. All our Telsnig team
and all the dealers are
proud to be a member of
the Walker Family.”**

– Kai Telsnig and Team,
Fuldata, Germany



“Wonderfully done!”
– Wayne and Lynn Austin,
Fort Collins, Colorado





“Wow! What a party! We were here in 2000 and always will think of my friends here!”

**– Fred & Christian Kalweit,
Livingston, New Jersey**

“Great to be here and meet everyone.”

**– Grant and Jeanette Rufus,
Florida Hills, South Africa**



“Great job! This was really nice.”

– Lorenzo and Susan Coronado, Weldon, Colorado



“Thanks for the hospitality.”

**– Mark Nelson,
Florence, Alabama**



“Thanks a lot for the wonderful time we spent together.”

– Valentino Novello & FORT Team, Sossano, Italy

Age is no barrier for this mowing contractor

If only Ralph Anderson had a crystal ball in 1946. At the time this 14-year-old farm boy and his brother were pulling an old reel mower down the road behind a Model A Ford. They were mowing 20 to 40 yards a week for what today would be pocket change.

Nearly a half century and several career changes later, this spry 76-year-old maintains 75 accounts with five Walker Mowers. Three retired farmers, a couple of shift workers, and students who work in-between classes and other part-time jobs comprise his able workforce.

The Anderson Lawn Care Team (left to right): Don Hudson (retired farmer), Norm Merkely (plant supervisor), Jerad Klingenberg (logistics employee and student helper), Don Bates (retired farmer), Leon Frank (retired power plant worker, fireman), and Phil Grant (retired farmer). Kneeling are Ralph Anderson and wife, Marcella.



AGRARIAN ROOTS

The owner of Anderson Lawn Care in Wyand, Illinois, was born and raised in a Swedish farming community. He served on the front lines in Korea in 1952 and started farming two years later—with the help of his “300 dollars for mustering out” pay and a \$3,500 FHA loan. Anderson ran a grain/livestock operation for the next 15 years, after which he sold out and became an AMWAY direct distributor.

“I had a lot of ideas going at the time,” Anderson recalls. “I guess you can say I was, and still am, an entrepreneur at heart. In 1985 I purchased a lumber yard here in town and turned part of it into a retail mall. The adventure paid off for awhile, but then times got tough.

“Through AMWAY I had met my wife, Marcella, and to make up for a cash shortfall, I took on a few small lawns from her church members,” Anderson continues. “At the time I was also helping my son mow a few lawns. The work just kept on coming. In 1993 I purchased a Simplicity mower. A year later I added a John Deere garden tractor.”

Anderson saw potential in the business as his client list gradually grew. In 1995 he met a Walker Mower distributor at the Illinois Farm Progress Show. After the show the former farmer and retailer purchased a 20-hp Walker Mower and two decks: a 54-inch side-discharge deck and a 48-inch GHS deck. “I still have that mower,” Anderson muses. “Years ago, though, it fell off a trailer and the dump box was smashed. I’ve since fashioned a wood box in its place and use it mostly as a spare.”

This owner says he’s added tools as his business grew. One Walker Mower led to others, and today his crews operate four units full-time: two with 74-inch decks, one with a 56-inch deck and another with a 48-inch GHS deck. His equipment

lineup also includes a John Deere garden tractor for mowing smaller lawns, rolling, spraying and plowing snow, and an Exmark rider for mow-

heavily on retired farmers and area shift workers. Both have great work ethic. The farmers especially are very familiar with equipment.”

“I’ve brought along several different young fellows who enjoy working outdoors. I also rely heavily on retired farmers and area shift workers. Both have great work ethic.”

ing larger rough areas. In addition to a full complement of Echo handheld equipment, Anderson also employs four Walker attachments: an edger, dethatcher, broom and snowthrower.

SLOWING DOWN? NO WAY!

The watershed year for Anderson Lawn Care was 2000. Since then the company has achieved steady,

Like so many other mowing contractors, Anderson started by working out of his home, using his car port and garage for storing equipment. But a few years ago he purchased a facility right in town. Calling it a “work in progress,” the owner now has plenty of room to store and maintain equipment, keep some nursery stock on hand, and add that new Walker Super B he wants.

Anderson looks at Marcella who just shrugs her shoulders. His wife (and office manager) understands her husband’s attraction to the Walker Mower line. She glances at a yellow note pad on the table




Ralph Anderson with Jerad Klingenberg. Anderson Lawn Care relies heavily on students and retired individuals to get the work done.

annual growth. Seventy-five accounts now include 45 residential customers, 20 commercial clients, an historical society and a few cemeteries.

“When I purchased my first Walker, I hired one part-time employee to help me trim,” Anderson recalls. “Over the years I’ve brought along several different young fellows who enjoy working outdoors. I also rely

where Anderson has itemized all the reasons he prefers Walker Mowers over other brands. He begins reading: “First of all, nothing does a nicer job of mowing. My customers like the results, and my employees like to use them. Their low profile makes them easy to get on and off. Operators just sit back and relax and the mower does the work.”



“Enthusiasm is the yeast that makes the dough rise. I’m enthused about the Walker Mower.”



Ralph Anderson says life is pretty straightforward in Wyanet, Illinois. “It’s a farming area where residents still appreciate older values and do business exchanging a few words and a handshake.”

Anderson continues to read, “I do most of the maintenance myself. The mowers are compact and easy to store, and the deck lift makes cleaning the deck and changing blades a breeze. Walker Mowers are smart-looking, with an attractive color and design. They hold their resale value and are gentle on lawns if you know how to operate them.”

Crews operate four Walker Mowers, two of which have 74-inch side-discharge decks.


Anderson takes a deep breath. “I could go on but you get the idea. Yes, there are other good mowers on the market, but for my application, nothing beats these machines. Walker Manufacturing backs up its product, and I like their home-family way of doing business.”

Anderson taps on his note pad and says, “Enthusiasm is the yeast that makes the dough rise. I’m enthused about the Walker Mower. That’s why I’ve attended both of their Walker Family Reunions and am ready for the next one.”

When asked if retirement was in his future, Anderson just smiles. “Oh, I don’t have as much energy as I used to, but I enjoy doing what I do.” In addition to mowing properties approximately 26 times a year, his crews do spring cleanup work, including dethatching and rolling properties. They seed, fertilize and spray, perform some landscape installation for clients,

prune and trim trees and bushes, and remove snow.

“We’re a little more laid back and informal down here than contractors in other parts of the country are,” Anderson emphasizes. “We don’t use a lot of sophisticated spreadsheets to track costs, and we don’t have uniforms per se, although I outfit employees with two different types of caps depending on the season. From time to time, we will give customers hats, pins, pens and other small items to express our appreciation, and, in the fall, we host a dinner party for our employees.”

Life is pretty straightforward down here, Anderson adds. It’s a farming area where residents still appreciate older values and do business exchanging a few words and a handshake. 

BOB T'S TECH talk

‘Operation Safe Mowing’

My wife and I bought a new car about 18 months ago. A couple days after we took delivery I commented to a co-worker about some information I read in the Owner's Manual. You should have seen the look of surprise on his face that preceded the astonishing comment: "Who reads the manual? You're nuts." My response was: "For the amount I spent on this car, I want to take advantage of all its features, maintain it properly and operate it in a way that will keep me and the others on the road safe."

I've been involved in a number of different occupations besides outdoor power equipment, and I can honestly say I've met few people who have ever opened the Owner's Manual before operating the product. It may be a male ego or pride thing.

In the case of my wife, she has two responses when questioned about the operation of any of the numerous devices we own. She says: "You read the manual and tell me how it works or should be maintained." Maybe I've created a reputation for being the "manual geek". But I guess I've been called worse.

Have you ever wondered why manufacturers bother? Is it because by law they have to provide a manual, or is it to cover themselves in case there are problems or injury? While that's true, it is our hope and intention to give every owner the necessary information to get the most out of his Walker and do it in an efficient, effective and safe manner.

Over the past 25 years producing the Walker Mower, we have been blessed that very few operators have been involved in accidents, especially accidents that resulted in bodily injury. Over the last two years, I have been involved in the inspection of three mowers that were involved in accidents resulting in varying degrees of injury.

After the third inspection, two points became quite obvious: (1) Owners, operators and maintenance personnel are not testing the operation of the safety system regularly and keeping it operational at all times. (2) Operators are not familiar with safe operating practices (sometimes not even basic operation) and have no idea that there is a safety system in place and how that system works or should work.

This all really comes down to training, or the lack thereof. I am fully

CAUTION

A safety interlock switch system **PREVENTS CRANKING** the engine with either the Forward Speed Control or the blade clutch (PTO) out of neutral. If the engine cranks otherwise, the safety system is not working and should be repaired or adjusted before operating the mower. **DO NOT** disconnect safety switches; they are for the operator's protection.

CAUTION

A safety interlock switch (seat switch) will cause the engine to stop if the blade clutch is engaged and the operator is not in the seat. The function of this switch should be checked by the operator raising off the seat and engaging the blade clutch; the engine should stop. If the switch is not working, it should be repaired or replaced before operating the mower. **DO NOT** disconnect the safety switches; they are for the operator's protection.

convinced that most of the accident investigations I have been directly involved in or accidents I have heard about could have been avoided—or at least had better outcomes—had the operator been properly trained and/or the proper preventive maintenance been administered.

Aside from being illegal, none of us would consider sending someone who has never driven before or received any instruction out on the streets or highways. Doing so would put that person and all drivers around him at great risk. But that is exactly what has been expected of many lawn mower operators.

Some might say: "Hey, it's just a lawn mower." True ... but we're talking about a piece of equipment with spinning blades that is upwards of 13 hp and 5 mph. Consider a machine with 33 hp going 15 mph (not a Walker), with an untrained operator who encounters a situation that requires taking emergency action quickly. Add to that the possibility that the safety system designed to protect the operator is not working or has been purposely disabled. That's a prescription for disaster—and is too often the case, unfortunately.

In the Walker Owner's Manuals, we have gone to great lengths to provide the needed instructions to make sure our mowers are used in a productive and safe manner. We include with every new mower a "How to Mow" video with simple, easy-to-follow instructions in both English and Spanish.

In case you're wondering how to check the safety system for proper operation, see the **CAUTION** callout-boxes shown on this page for the instructions as called out in the Walker Mower Owner's Manual.

Test the operation of the safety system every 25 hours to ensure safe operation. We recommend that any malfunctions be brought to the attention of an authorized Walker dealer for immediate repair.

The safety of all operators is our highest priority. The best equipment is of little value if it is not safe or is being operated in an unsafe manner. We want every operator to work at a high rate of efficiency and as safely as possible. **WT**

Learn to sell value instead of price

As a Walker Mower owner, you understand the important difference between value and price. Walker Mowers are not the least expensive mowers on the market. Contractors buy them because they provide superior value. In other words, Walker Mower operators understand the old adage that “you get what you pay for.” The challenge for many mowing contractors is to get their customers to understand the same thing.

Getting the full and fair price for your service seems to be getting more difficult as days go by. The collapse of the housing market has forced many contractors to forego the design/build business in favor of mowing and maintaining landscapes. Out-of-work factory employees are picking up the income slack by buying a mower and

while your price is going down?

There are two ways to compete. You can compete on value, or you can compete on price. Unless your business model is set up to be the market's low-cost service provider, competing on price alone can be devastating to the bottom line and your business. Just how devastating is as simple as doing the math.

If you're operating on a healthy, 30-percent margin and offer a 10-percent discount to customers, you will have to generate another 50 percent in sales to make up the difference in lost profit. Giving that same discount while operating on a 20-percent margin will require you to sell twice as much business to get the return you need. Larger discounts are even that much more devastating to the bottom line.

Discounting can have other negative consequences, as well. Discounting can dilute your brand, and customers will begin to wonder just how much your service is worth.

“How can I sell in today's super-competitive marketplace without cutting my prices?” you ask. The answer is that you first have to separate yourself from the cost-cutting competition by creating value in your service offering and then selling that value to your customers.

CREATING VALUE

Even though you offer a quality service, that doesn't automatically mean it adds value for your customer. The first step to creating value is finding out what your customers value.

Your homeowner customers, for example, may want a lawn service that does an impeccable job mowing, and then intercedes by (as Winston Collins does on page 6) overseeing other contractors or checking on their homes in their absence. Commercial customers



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trailer. In addition to more competition, there's already a disturbing trend in the commercial mowing market to label mowing as a commodity service.

More competition and the failure to differentiate one service from another has put incredible pressure on price. Competing on price alone, however, is a one-way street. How low will you go to beat your competitor's price? How much are you willing to lose in profit margin to win that job? And how long can you reasonably expect to stay in business when the cost of doing business is going up

often have a choice between contracting out mowing and maintenance services or performing them in house. The latter creates year-round overhead that can be bothersome.

Talk with your customers and find out what their major “landscape” concerns are, and then present a solution that offers real value for them. The solution or service will have residual values, as well. You'll be doing the work and dealing with landscape issues, and your Walker Mower will provide a cut second to none. Being timely, easy to do business with and reliable will add a few more feathers to your value hat.

SELLING VALUE

It doesn't do anyone any good if you spend time and energy creating value, and then are unable to sell it. After finding out what's important to your customers, explain your service offering and how it lines up with their value system.



No doubt, in this competitive market, some customers will challenge the price you put on your service. If you anticipate a price rejection, raise the price issue upfront and explain why your service is valuable. This is easy to do, especially if you have confidence that your service offering is superior to the competitor's next door.

If the price complaint is coming from a current customer, chances are the catalyst for that complaint is caused by something other than price. It may be lack of performance, poor response time, failure to resolve an issue or something else. Find out what that is, fix it, and the price complaint will likely disappear.

Price rejection can be countered in several different ways. Property managers, for example, may be working with a tight budget. Your job, then, is to help them sell your valuable service to the property owner. It's important, as well, to always remind

price-sensitive customers that there are no "free lunches"—that mowing or otherwise maintaining their lawns, even if they do it, is already

If you anticipate a price rejection, raise the price issue upfront and explain why your service is valuable.

costing them time and money. And don't end the conversation without driving home the point that no one ever regrets buying quality—that you

always, always get what you pay for.

There's no question that it can be difficult to persuade your customers to pay more for your service than a less-expensive service, and frankly it's very easy to draw a line through a number and write down a smaller number to match, or beat, the competitor's price. In fact, the only reason people often sell on price is because that's the only way they know how to sell.

To be a successful lawn maintenance contractor, you will need profit-



Find out what "value" really is in the minds of your customers. For many, especially on the residential side, value means impeccable mowing.

able customers who will stay with you for a long time. You can have these customers by finding out what they truly value, create that value, and then learn to sell it effectively. The truth is, all companies and the services they deliver are not created equally. It's your job to sell customers on that point and not on price. **WT**

Some of the ideas in this article were excerpted from "Persuade Your Customers To Pay More", a training DVD published by TrainingPoint.net.

WALKER FAMILY GRIEVES LOSS OF DAN WALKER



On July 23, 2008, the Walker family was shocked with the news that Daniel Max Walker had died unexpectedly in his sleep of a ruptured aortic aneurysm. At age 22, the third oldest son of Dean (head of Walker engineering and manufacturing) and

Suzanne, Dan had just a few months earlier graduated with a degree in mechanical engineering from Olivet Nazarene University in Bourbonnais, Illinois. Even with the Walker Mower Family Reunion a few days later, as the family grieved the loss, they were able to celebrate the life Dan lived so well in such a few years (see back cover).

A memorial project in Dan's name has been established. The Walker family, in cooperation with the Colorado District of the Church of the Nazarene, is planning to build the Daniel Walker Memorial Chapel at Golden Bell Camp and Conference Center in Divide, Colorado. Contributions to this project may be sent to: Daniel Max Walker Memorial Fund, Church of the Nazarene Foundation, 13795 S. Mur-Len Road, Suite 101, Olathe, KS 66062. The project may be viewed at www.danwalkermemorial.org.

THIRD LASER METAL CUTTING MACHINE ADDED



The Walker factory's capacity to cut metal parts out of sheet metal has been increased by adding a third machine to the laser cutting cell in the fabrication area of the factory.

The Amada laser cutters are joined to an automatic material-handling system which loads blank sheets of metal into the laser cutters and retrieves and stacks the sheets after the cutting operation is finished.

As the Walker Mower product design has evolved in recent years, especially with the Model B series, more and more of the parts are produced with laser cutting which has created an increased demand.

Now, with the new machine, cutting capacity is 15,000 pounds per day and an average of 6,750 parts per day. Amada has informed Walker this "state of the art" laser cell, three machines with the automated material-handling system configuration, is one of four that has been installed worldwide.



STEERING ACTUATOR RECALL BULLETIN ISSUED

Recall Bulletin #08213—affecting Models MS, MC, MT, MD, S/N 09-99109 thru 09-100743—was issued in February 2009. The bulletin calls for replacement of steering lever actuators which were in a group of parts that were identified with a possible defect that could cause breakage during operation of the machine.

Due to the critical function of this part in the steering control system, an urgent recall has been issued by the Walker factory; immediate compliance with the bulletin, before any further operation of the affected units, is strongly recommended.

All owners of affected units are encouraged to have their machines updated free of charge by contacting their local dealer (contact the factory if there is difficulty finding your Walker Dealer).

FACTORY SLOWS DOWN

After planning to increase production of Walker Mowers in 2008, the factory reversed course and reduced production when it became apparent early in the spring that production was ahead of the market. Currently, another decrease of 10% is planned for 2009.

While some industry observers might ask about the slowdown, the Walker company's conservative approach in keeping production close to market demand can be viewed as a positive. Reflecting this philosophy, Walker President Bob Walker has often said: "We want to build all of the machines that can be sold—not more, not less".

The production decreases have been made without employee layoffs; a hiring freeze in the spring of 2008 and normal attrition have reduced employment to about 160. In a time of slowdown like this, Walker touts its year-round level manufacturing operation, where a fairly small adjustment to daily production can result in a sizeable adjustment in yearly output.

COMMEMORATIVE MODEL PRODUCED

In mid-November, the Walker factory completed production of 320 commemorative units, Model MTGHS28C. This limited edition model was pre-sold to Walker Distributors with a distinctive package to celebrate production of 100,000 Walker Mowers.

The package included a 28-hp Kohler EFI engine, chromed accent parts, metallic yellow finish, and special markings and identification. The serial number plate identifies where each unit is in the series of 320.

While some of these units will be "collected", some owners are saying their "commemorative" will be put to work mowing with their other Walker Mowers.



10.0 BUSHEL GRASS CATCHER

Starting with production of the commemorative models (MTGHS28C, S/N 09-100643), a new 10.0 bushel grass catcher replaces the 9.5 catcher as standard equipment on Models MC, MT, MD. The new molded design includes a door with a molded-in exhaust deflector, the catcher shell tapered larger to the rear for better dumping action, and a molded compartment to enclose the Powerfil™ actuator motor. The 10.0



catcher assembly will fit on earlier units for upgrading; a retrofit kit will be made available at a later date.

ROPS KIT FOR MODEL MBS

Available as an optional kit, a certified roll over protection structure (ROPS) is available for the Super B (MBS). The dealer-installed kit includes a foldable roll bar, mounting brackets and a seat belt. Note: Seat belt must be worn with the ROPS-equipped machine. The ROPS kit fits all MBS units but some earlier units will require an upgraded seat that is compatible with the seat belt and a new two-hook body latch. Will meet the requirements of agencies and municipalities that require ROPS for their application.



SUPER B WITH FUEL INJECTION ENGINE

Walker is introducing a version of the Super B, Model MBS26, equipped with a Kohler 26-hp fuel injection engine. This is the same basic engine that has been used very successfully in the Model MT26 for over 10 years. It offers the same benefits of fuel economy, easy starting, great throttle response and built-in engine diagnostics. Production begins February 2009.

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In Loving Memory
Daniel Max Walker
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