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WALKER TALK

SERVING LAWN MAINTENANCE PROFESSIONALS

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WALKER TALK

Creating Jobs

The other day I saw a truck leaving our factory. The thought flashed through my mind that the truck driver's opportunity to have a job was in part due to the existence of Walker Manufacturing. A further thought was that the Walker operation creates many more jobs than just the 150 employees working under our roof. While economics is a complex subject, and I would not pretend to know all of the workings of an economic engine in creating jobs, it seems pretty clear that businesses like Walker do create jobs and opportunities that boost the economy and raise the standard of living for our citizens. At least it looks that way to me, a farm boy from Kansas.



In this season of politics, and the need for more jobs in our country, the politicians are wringing their hands to find ways to create more jobs. There are two ways to create jobs: the public-sector (government) and the private-sector (private business). Some government leaders seem to think the best way to create jobs is in the public sector. But do government-created jobs offer the same economic opportunity as private enterprise? I think not.

First of all, public-sector jobs are funded by taxpayers where money is taken from one pocket (borrowed) and given to another pocket; no real multiplication or incentives are found here. By contrast, private-sector jobs are created by offering goods and services on the "free" market where consumers are able to pick the best value and will pay a profit (not a dirty word) to the business. Profit attracts capital (capitalism) to be invested because of the incentive for growth and return on investment. Also, competition in the free market raises the proposition that offering the best products and services and working harder will present even more opportunities in private business. The bottom line is that with a relatively small investment to start a private business, with lots of hard work and with God's help, **multiplication** takes place and thousands of jobs are created. Incidentally, I believe God ordained business in the beginning when He told the first people to subdue the earth to multiply and to be the master over creation.

Talking about multiplication in private business brings up a second point. Private business creates wealth while the government enterprises do not. Wealth creation is good and is the fuel of the economic engine of private enterprise. It should be remembered that wealth creation comes from business, and that wealthy people create jobs; poor people don't. I am more than a little tired of being told by our current government leaders that wealthy people are not "paying their fair share" and "need to pay more". I believe these leaders are out of touch and do not understand the connection between wealth creation and job creation in private business. **WT**

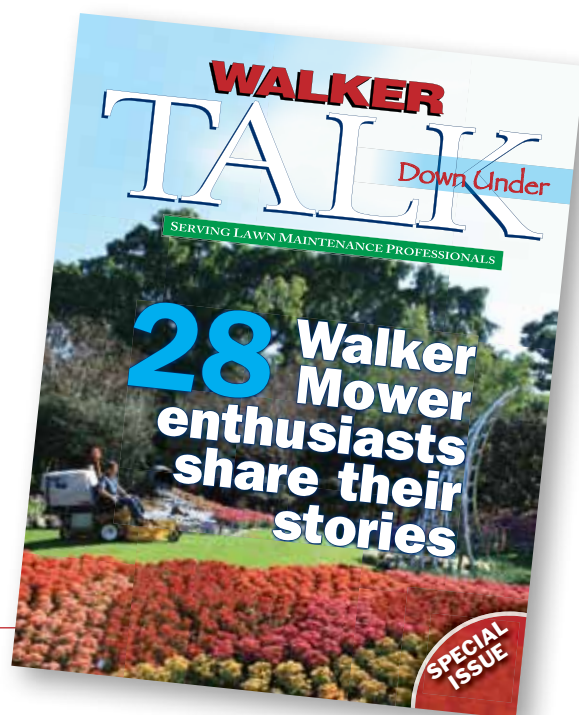
Bob Walker

Bob Walker, President

Walker Talk Goes Down Under

This past winter, *Walker Talk* visited New Zealand and Australia where 28 Walker Mower enthusiasts shared their stories. Among them were eight homeowners, 10 facility and municipality users, and 10 contractors. This was *Walker Talk's* third visit Down Under, the stories of which appear in a special *Down Under* issue.

The following two stories were excerpted from that issue, giving U.S. and Canada readers a feel for what it's like mowing Down Under.



Experience is a great teacher for Jim's Mowing contractor



"Two of the biggest challenges I see in the industry today are that so many contractors don't know how to cost or don't have the right equipment for the job," says Sydney contractor Michael Maguire. The former chef purchased a Jim's Mowing franchise and its attendant 100 customers in 2000. Twelve years later, he operates not one, but three trucks, has a staff of six, and provides a variety of services for his commercial and residential customers. "I'm a bit unusual," Maguire admits.

After 12 years of mowing, Michael Maguire still challenges himself by asking "why?"



"I'm a bit unusual," says Michael Maguire.
"Many people who buy franchises are satisfied staying small."

"Many people who buy franchises are satisfied staying small. I not only wanted to grow but also wanted to diversify into landscape installation and other maintenance services to keep my staff employed and cash flowing."

RECIPE FOR SUCCESS

"When working as an executive chef, I enjoyed what I was doing, but the hours were difficult," he relates. "There are several gardeners in my family and I enjoy being outdoors; I thought mowing lawns would be a good career move."

"When you work in a busy kitchen, how you spend your time is important and you're always looking for better and more efficient ways to get things done. That's one of the reasons I purchased a Walker Mower only six months into my new career. I saw that Councils were using them and I did some research on the internet. After seeing them operate at a field day, I

purchased a 16-hp model." Maguire still has that mower, but has since upgraded to a 28-hp Commemorative Model, one of 320 built by Walker Manufacturing.

"I love it," he says of his machine. "It features a 42-inch combo deck that can side discharge and mulch." Maguire says his small crew can mow 14 lawns a day on average. He saves the Walker Mower for mowing larger properties, like any of the 10 schools he maintains.

"Experience is a great teacher," he emphasizes, "and mowing contractors should always challenge themselves by asking 'why?' 'Why didn't I get that job I wanted?' or 'Why did I get 10 out of 10 properties I bid on?'" As Maguire points out, getting everything you bid on likely means your pricing is too low. He wouldn't disagree with the thought that not getting that plum property also might have something to do with the equipment you operate. **WT**

Subtropical setting is welcome stop for garden enthusiasts



Peter Coyle not only enjoys operating his Walker Mower, doing so gives him an opportunity to inspect the garden plants.

Unusual pots, garden art, and more than a few parrots on display (one that casually greets visitors with a “What’s up?” or “Hello”) add to the uniqueness of Totara Waters.



Owners Peter and Jocelyn Coyle began developing the subtropical garden in 1999 with extensive plantings of rare and unusual plants. Today, the Whenuapai, New Zealand, venue is a welcome stop for garden and social clubs, bus tours, and individuals who simply enjoy the beauty that nature has to offer.

“We’ve been here 12 years and we’ve owned a Walker Mower for 12 years,” says Peter. As he points out, even though the rare plants are the highlight of the garden, the turf also has to be in “mint” condition.

“We have 2-1/4 acres to mow at least every week, and our Walker Mower with its grass-handling capability, maneuverability and cut is ideal for the property,” Peter emphasizes. “I do all the mowing, as well. I enjoy it, and being on the mower gives me an opportunity to inspect the plants.”

Peter’s Walker Mower features a 42-inch GHS deck. In addition to its maneuverability and cut, he says one of his favorite features is the easy deck adjustment that allows him to quickly change mowing height to accommodate different garden settings.

This gardener isn’t blowing smoke when announcing how important the turf is to their garden’s appearance. “When a garden club or tour bus stops by, I position my Walker Mower right out front so visitors can see it,” Peter relates. “If they don’t know what a Walker Mower is, I tell them, and then explain that it’s as much a part of the garden as the rare plants they’re about to see.”

In addition to tours, Totara Waters offers Bed & Breakfast accommodations for garden visitors. Joyce and Peter also have a large selection of 6,000 bromeliads for sale. **WT**

Rare plants highlight Totara Waters, but the turf has to be in mint condition, as well.



The Sky's the Limit

21-year-old dreams of his Columbus, Georgia-based company becoming a multi-branch operation across several southern states.

Young people going into business often dream of making it big one day. Dreams are drivers, but few entrepreneurs have the drive that Garrett Faulkner had when he launched Down to Earth Landscaping right out of high school. Now, four years later, the 21-year-old owner says he would like to be one of the biggest landscape contracting companies in the country.

Garrett Faulkner (left) and brother Gregory



The Faulkner brothers love to mow, but their current focus is landscaping.

“You’ve heard of ValleyCrest and Brickman?” he asks. “I would like to be that big one day.” Garrett pauses a few beats before retracting the statement. “Well, that may be a little aggressive, but I wouldn’t mind having a few branch locations and spreading out into adjoining states.”

Garrett’s company, located in Columbus, Georgia, already does landscaping jobs in Atlanta through his brother Gregory’s satellite operation, and has just landed a big

landscaping contract in Alabama. “I love lawn maintenance, but our concentration now is primarily landscaping,” says Garrett. “If it’s outside, we will do it.”

DRUMMING UP BUSINESS

The young entrepreneur started mowing lawns long before he had a driver’s license. “I was probably 11 or 12 at the time and wanted a drum set,” Garrett recalls. “So I hung a photo of the set above my bed and

went to sleep thinking about the day when I could afford it.”

He would mow neighborhood lawns by pulling a trailer and mower behind a four-wheeler. At 16, he took a summer job at a nearby Kubota dealership assembling equipment. Throughout high school, Garrett says he didn’t have many close friends. While they were out and about having a good time, he was more interested in mowing and making money.

“After graduating, I wanted to mow two yards a day and do some landscaping,” he explains. “But two turned into four relatively quickly. When I landed a few homes in a subdivision where picking up clippings was necessary, my mower just couldn’t cut it.”

“Landscaping is picking up around Atlanta and we have potential in other areas. But we’re still going aggressively after mowing accounts.”

– Gregory Faulkner

Garrett was 17 at the time and evidently already a seasoned salesperson. He talked his father into co-signing a note for a new 23-hp Walker Mower equipped with a 42-inch GHS deck. "The price of the Walker Mower scared me at the time," he relates, "but I especially liked the way it striped naturally and collected clippings."

ATLANTA CONNECTION

Garrett's brother, Gregory, had been in the landscaping and swimming pool installation business before the economy ground new work to a halt. Two years ago, Gregory was working in Atlanta for Comcast when he received a call from his brother. Garrett had been talking to a property manager about a dozen properties in Columbus and

Atlanta. He asked Gregory if he would be interested in the Atlanta work. He was, and the young company had its first satellite location.

To get his brother up and running, Garret sent his original Walker Mower north to Atlanta and purchased a new 26-hp EFI, again equipped with a 42-inch GHS deck. Today, the brothers mow nearly 80 lawns a week, along with providing a myriad of other landscaping services including installing and repairing irrigation systems, laying sod, and constructing retaining walls and outdoor kitchens.

Garrett smiles when he says "mowing pays the bills while landscaping jobs buy the steaks." Gregory agrees, although noting quickly that maintenance can be a

bread winner, too, depending on the housing market.

"Landscaping is picking up around Atlanta and we have potential in other areas," Gregory says. "But we're still going aggressively after mowing accounts. In fact, I'm in the market for another Walker Mower this year. Once homeowners see how it stripes and how it doesn't scalp the turf, they would have nothing else on their lawns."

For wide-area mowing, Garrett employs two Exmark mowers while Gregory operates a Bush Hog. Stihl is their preferred hand-held line, and both talk up box trucks and minimize the use of trailers. "It can be scary having a crew driving around with a truck and trailer," adds Gregory.

ADDED INCENTIVE

The brothers are economically motivated. They understand what it takes to make a buck and make a profit. Garrett also credits his father for giving him a start in the business. "In addition to co-signing a couple of early notes, Dad always liked operating equipment and doing odd jobs around our property. Originally, I thought I might want to go to school and become a banker, but he encouraged me to follow my instincts and go into landscaping."

Garrett and Gregory have even more incentive today to grow the business. Gregory and his wife, Erin, have a year-old daughter, Addyson, while Garrett recently returned from a Florida honeymoon with his new bride, Ashley.

"The possibilities are endless," says Garrett. "We're spread out pretty far now, doing good work and making good money."

The drum set, once a passing fancy of Garrett's, has been replaced in real life by a boat, fifth-wheel trailer and motorcycle, among other toys—all of it earned by living a dream.

"I love to make money," Garrett admits, "but I also love to work, mow lawns and install landscaping projects. If you do good work, the money will come." **WT**



Down to Earth owner Garrett Faulkner says, "Mowing pays the bills while landscaping jobs buy the steaks."

GROWING TREES ... AND PEOPLE

Kansas-based nursery has been around for 50 years because it cares for its employees as much as its plants.

Blueville Nursery in Manhattan, Kansas, is different from most nurseries around the country. Even though 30 of the company's 45 acres are devoted to growing trees, evergreens, shrubs and sod, the nursery itself accounts for a small percentage of annual sales.

As a matter of fact, the nursery is only one of several divisions for a company that is celebrating its 50th anniversary this year. Landscape installation and maintenance bring in the lion's share of revenue, followed closely by government contract work with nearby Fort Riley, irrigation installation and maintenance, and the garden center.

"Most of the nursery stock is grown primarily for our landscaping and retail sales, with only surplus plants being marketed wholesale," explains company president and CEO Keith Westervelt. "The company's growth and diversification over the last decade has presented some tremendous opportunities, not only to the company, but to its employees, as well. We're growing people, not just trees."

VISIONARY

Westervelt attributes much of the company's success to his 77-year-old father, Darrell, who purchased the nursery in 1962, and later laid the foundation for

Jade Barta, maintenance division manager (left) with Ron Cornelison, maintenance foreman (seated) and Dustin Stoddard, general manager.





The Walker Mower's ability to stripe caught the maintenance division manager's keen eye for detail.

long-term growth by establishing it as a Subchapter S corporation. The move allowed other employees to become stockholders and true stakeholders in the company. Dustin Stoddard, general manager, is one of them.

"There's no question that the culture here and opportunities for growth have been instrumental to the company's success," says Stoddard, who started working for Blueville in 1999 while a sophomore at Kansas State University. "We have three employees who have been here more than 30 years and many others like me who started here right out of K-State to make landscaping their career. In fact, we probably have close to 20 K-State graduates on board."

The company has 40 full-time employees and another 40 to 60 seasonal workers, most of whom are also students. "We're fortunate to have the university nearby," Stoddard adds. "The students want to gain practical experience while in school, which gives us access to a motivated labor source."

"I also think that part of the attraction of working here is the value system shared by ownership," Stoddard continues.

"The company offers health insurance and matching 401k to full-time employees, and barbecues are a staple during summer months. You feel like you're working for a family, and you are, and more importantly you feel like you're part of the family."

GROWTH SPURT

Located two hours west of Kansas City, Manhattan has been insulated from the recent housing meltdown thanks to a vibrant agriculture industry, along with the presence of nearby Fort Riley and the university. In fact, much of the company's growth has occurred over the last 5 to 10 years.

The landscape division is the biggest contributor, responsible for close to 40 percent of the company's annual sales revenue. Residential construction never really slowed as homeowners continued to invest in their properties—expanding landscapes, adding water features, and installing outdoor kitchens.

The lawn care and maintenance division kept pace, fertilizing an estimated 12 million square feet of turf throughout the year while five maintenance crews mow

upwards of 5 million square feet a week among 220 accounts. The Fort Riley division, which didn't exist five years ago, has also boosted sales.

The company's equipment lineup, which includes 47 trucks, 29 trailers, eight skid-steer loaders and seven tractors, reflects the workload and what the company founder says has been the biggest change in the industry over the last 50 years: mechanization.

On the maintenance side, each of five mowing crews goes out with two 23-hp Walker Mowers equipped with either a 48-inch GHS deck or 52-inch side-discharge deck. They also operate one 48-inch side-discharge deck. Not included in the tally is Westervelt's personal Super B at home. The government division also employs several wide-area mowers.

"The maintenance division started using the Walker Mower in 2004," relates Jade Barta, maintenance division manager. "We wanted a compact mower that would accommodate both large and small properties. The Walker Mower fit the bill to a tee. Crews can use them virtually anywhere. They're not as heavy as other outfront rid-



Adam McAsey, shop manager, checks over mowers every night, refits them with sharpened blades, and schedules routine maintenance. “They’re not hard to work on,” he adds.

that include pruning, weeding, insect control, leaf cleanup and mowing—with two stipulations: Those who select mowing are also required to sign up for the company’s lawn care program, and all customers are under a nine-month contract, excluding ones who also want the company’s snow removal service. The Walker Mower plays a role there, too, clearing sidewalks with a snowblower attachment.

Despite the company’s growth, growing is not the end game for the company president, his father (who is still active in the company), or any of the company’s other stockholders. The company’s mission statement and goals emphasize being reputable and professional and doing great work. The stated end-product of these sentiments is shared by most every successful company large or small in any industry: to have a profitable business which provides satisfying employment. The two work in concert. **WT**

ers and the striping is great.”

Also a K-State graduate, Barta says he prefers the mower over those with higher ground speeds that bounce over the turf. “Speed and college-age operators aren’t a good mix either,” he adds with a knowing smile.

Stoddard estimates that crews annually log 600 to 800 hours on their mowers, which are rotated out every three years around the 2,000-hour mark. In between, they receive tender loving care by Shop Manager Adam McAsey.


“They’re not hard to work on,” says McAsey, yet another K-State graduate. “We check them over every night. The mowers all receive scheduled oil changes and go out every morning with a newly sharpened set of blades. Having the blades sharp just adds to the manicured look.”

A LA CARTE MENU

Landscape maintenance customers can select from a variety of a la carte services

Blueville Nursery wanted an outfront mower that was compact, lighter than others on the market, and would accommodate a wide variety of properties.



A man wearing a dark polo shirt, jeans, and a baseball cap is operating a white and yellow Walker out front mower. The mower is positioned on a green lawn next to a wooden fence. The mower's deck is yellow and has a white engine housing with the Walker logo. The man is sitting on the mower, looking down at the deck. The background shows a dirt path and trees.

The out front reach of the Walker deck improves productivity and reduces the amount of trimming.

The Out Front Advantage

A closer look at six key design features that make the Walker Mower a popular choice for mowing pros who need to do more than just mow and go.

As an out front mower manufacturer, Walker Manufacturing is more than a little biased about the value of owning and operating a mower equipped with a front-mount deck. Over the years, the industry has been less receptive, thanks in part to the cost advantages afforded by less-expensive mid-mount mowers.

When compared to their mid-mount counterparts, however, mowers with properly designed out front decks dramatically reduce trimming time, deliver a superior

cut, give operators a clear view of what's actually being mowed, and provide exceptional deck accessibility. The key words are "properly designed."

Yes, other mowers with out front decks share many of the above attributes, but in addition, the Walker Mower will deliver the manicured, finished look that your customers have come to appreciate.

IT ALL BEGINS WITH DECK DESIGN

"Walker Mowers are perfect for us," says Dana George, mowing manager for Tobin

D. George Lawn Care in Greensburg, Pennsylvania (*Walter Talk* #39). "We maintain mostly residential properties. The mower allows us to get into tight corners and it doesn't scalp."

A big reason for Dana's satisfaction is a true floating design that allows the deck to follow the contours of the lawn. It does this thanks to two design features: decreased weight on the front caster wheels using counterweight springs and a flexible carrier frame for the deck.

With Walker Mowers, only 7 to 16

WALKER OUT FRONT DESIGN FEATURES

1. Deck Reach
2. Operator View
3. Flexible Deck Carrier Frame
4. Deck Counterweight Springs (Float)
5. Tilt-up Deck
6. Interchangeable Decks and Other Attachments

percent of the overall weight is carried by the deck wheels, compared to the mid-mount competition's 17 to 24 percent. Working in combination with a flexible carrier frame, the reduced weight allows the deck to easily float from both side to side and front to back.

As Dana relates, this makes a world of difference in the field. "With other mowers I've operated, if you approach a drainage ditch, the edge of the mower will dig into the lawn. This doesn't happen with my Walker Mowers. We have 18 Walker Mowers and I've been using them since I started mowing lawns. Sometimes you just

take their operation for granted—until you try another mower."

Depending on the deck model Dana is using, one side will flex from 5 to 11 inches before the tire on the other side will lift off the ground. You can test a deck's lateral flexibility right in your dealer's showroom by simply lifting the deck wheel on one side and watching when the deck wheel on the other side raises.

REACH NOT, MOW NOT

Another reason for Dana's satisfaction is the deck's reach. Mid-mount machines simply cannot mow close to obstacles. Even most front-mounted machines leave too much trimming for another crew member with a string-line trimmer. The Walker Mower deck, on the other hand, has a lower profile on the front to give a reach advantage over other competitive front-mount and mid-mount models. This allows the operator to trim close—even under and around hard-to-reach areas such as low-hanging branches and fences.

Dana admits to taking a couple of other features for granted. Among them is

the tilt-up deck that affords easy and safe access to the deck and blades. "We change the blades every evening," he emphasizes. "A deck housing that is easy to clean gets cleaned more often, just as mower blades that are easy and safe to change get changed more often."

Walker Mower decks are also easily interchangeable, and the mower can be fitted with different attachments to add to the machine's year-round versatility.

Only if you've ever operated a Walker Mower or observed one in action can you appreciate how it literally floats over a lawn's surface. It's this agility that lends to the mower's overall performance, and delivers a cut that is unrivaled within the industry.

The deck's gentle footprint and floating design should not be confused with lack of durability. Deck engineering and design favors structural integrity over excess metal and weight—a design that will deliver optimum performance and a finished manicured look week after week, cut after cut. **WT**



The flex of the Walker deck allows for better travel on hills and following ground contour thanks to a torsion-flex frame and the transfer of deck weight back to the drive tires using the deck counterweight springs.

Soccer, Anyone?

This Montana orthodontist and summer camp director looks to the Walker Mower to help maintain his three soccer fields.

Two weeks out of the year, young soccer enthusiasts and college soccer coaches from around the country converge on Kalispell, Montana to attend Flathead Soccer Camp. What makes this non-residential and not-for-profit camp different from other such venues is its founder and operator, Mike Stebbins. The 66-year-old orthodontist started the camp 15 years ago primarily to give local youngsters a place to grow their soccer and life skills.

"Most families cannot afford to send their children across the country to attend a camp," Stebbins relates. "So a soccer friend convinced me to turn a portion of my 100-acre property into three soccer fields."

To borrow a famous big-screen line, the orthodontist built it, and they came. These days, during the last two weeks of July, the camp hosts roughly 200 youngsters, ages four to 18, along with eight coaches, including college coaches and former professional and college players.

"We try to make the camp fun for coaches, too," adds Stebbins. "They are attracted by the valley's natural beauty and Kalispell's spectacular location just 30 miles from Glacier National Park. During their afternoons off they can water ski, golf, ride wave runners, go whitewater rafting, hike or fly fish."

Mike Stebbins started his soccer camp 15 years ago. He spends at least one day a week mowing its three fields with his Walker Mower.





Stebbins with Glacier High School varsity soccer coach Ryan O'Rourke. In between operating his dental practice, running Flathead Soccer Camp and refereeing, Stebbins volunteers at the high school as an assistant coach.

UNLIKELY BEGINNING

The orthodontist/coach is among the seventh generation of Stebbins to call the Flathead Valley their home. He grew up on a farm (his teacher brother still operates the family farm), attended dental school at Washington University in St. Louis, and spent three years in the Navy prior to specializing in orthodontics.

"I moved back to the area, set up practice, and before I knew it I was coaching my kindergarten son how to play soccer," he recalls. "If you're a father with sons or daughters who enjoy sports, you know the story."

Stebbins admits that coaching soccer, a sport he didn't play in school, never crossed

"Playing any sport, no matter where you are, teaches teamwork, camaraderie, and the true spirit of competition; how to win and how to accept defeat."

his mind. But there he was, coaching his son and then his daughter, and he's still coaching 23 years later. In his spare time, he also enjoys being a referee at the high school.

But it's the camp that gives Stebbins the most pleasure. Billy McNicol, a friend



Even though his children have long left their nest, Stebbins (in foreground) remains committed to coaching youngsters.

and former Glasgow Rangers player and MLS (Major League Soccer) coach, was the one who urged Stebbins to build the fields. Proceeds from the camp, which costs \$155 for one week or \$280 to attend for two weeks of morning and evening sessions, help sponsor travel for local teams, and allow Stebbins to fly in coaches from around the country.

"I hired a local contractor to seed the fields, but I irrigate, fertilize and spray the field for weeds myself," Stebbins explains. This is not much different than the farming he did as a youngster. "Then, I needed something to cut the grass. Local dealer Vaughn Penrod, owner of Penco Power Products, suggested that a Walker Mower was just what the fields needed."

Stebbins has since owned two Walker Mowers, his latest model powered by a



For Stebbins, teaching soccer is also a way to teach some of life's greatest lessons.

26-hp Kohler engine, with two deck options: a 62-inch side-discharge deck and 52-inch GHS deck. "I mow the six acres of fields once a week with the larger deck when the camp isn't operating or when other groups aren't using the field," he notes. "During camp, I switch to the GHS deck to make sure the fields are in perfect playing condition." The power dump box, Stebbins adds, comes in especially handy during the two-week collection period.

CATCHING THE COACHING BUG

Even though his children have long left both their nest and the soccer field, Stebbins remains incredibly committed to being around youngsters and coaching. During soccer season—in between operating his practice, running the camp, refereeing games and operating his Walker

Mower—he's an assistant varsity coach at Glazier High School in Kalispell.

During practice, Stebbins points out several players on both the boys and girls teams who have attended his camp. "Nice stop," he yells to Sean, the goalie. "Keep it up."

You know, it's not just about soccer," says Stebbins. "It's also learning about life. When my son was 16 years old, we took two teams to Scotland. For most of the players, it was not only their first trip out of the country, but also their first ride in a plane. Playing any sport, no matter where you are, teaches teamwork, camaraderie, and the true spirit of competition; how to win and how to accept defeat."

For Stebbins, soccer is more than a ball, shin guards, uniforms and a goal. It's a way to learn some of life's greatest lessons.



For information about the camp go to flatheadsoccer.com.





The Latest in EFI Technology

In today's rapidly changing world, we are faced with the decision to embrace advancing technologies and use them to our advantage, or let them pass us by and lose our competitive edge.

This thought brings us to my main point which is the new Delphi® EFI (electronic fuel injection) system used on Kohler engines and introduced as an option in our MB/MBS line this year. It is new to Kohler's Command Pro horizontal-crankshaft engines, although it has been used on the vertical-crankshaft engines produced by Kohler since 2009.

The Delphi® system brings some new technology in comparison to the current Bosch EFI system, which continues to be a very reliable system and was introduced in the Walker Model MT in 1998. The EFI-equipped Walker Models MT26 and MTL31 make up the highest percentage of tractors currently produced in the Walker line. We have produced nearly 20,000 EFI Walkers with the Bosch system since its introduction. Today it continues to prove its reliability and value to the customer.

ADVANTAGES OF EFI

There are many advantages to the EFI-equipped engine, one of which is fuel economy. My friend and colleague, Bob T, previously addressed this with a fuel-consumption chart in *Walker Talk* volume 30 (see Walkermowers.com: Resources). With rising fuel costs, the fuel savings

alone would provide enough justification for the additional cost of the EFI system. Not only is fuel economy an advantage, but technology and competition have created more efficient, effective and compact components. Kohler has now been able to combine all of the components for the Delphi® system on the engine itself, making it a cleaner design.

DELPHI® SYSTEM INNOVATION

Without getting too technical, there are some really neat features that the Delphi® system provides.

The ECU (Electronic Control Unit), or onboard computer, has internal memory capabilities that can tell your dealer maximum engine temperature and maximum RPMs over the life of the engine. It is also equipped with load timers, which provide historical data that can be used by the dealer to determine the percentage of load on the engine for a period of time measured in hour intervals. It will even record engine speeds and how long the engine has run at a given RPM. This is important information your dealer can use to troubleshoot and repair your mower's engine.

This system also comes equipped with a MAP (manifold absolute pressure) sensor to determine engine load and to report barometric pressure in the engine. The MAP sensor is located next to an intake port and is also used to detect the correct stroke which enables the engine to run with "sequential injection", another

fuel-saving function of EFI. Another sensor measures inlet air temperature as it enters the manifold; these two sensors together are used to calculate air density, which the ECU uses to calculate fuel demand.

In closed-loop operation, the heated oxygen sensor located in the engine exhaust provides information on fuel/oxygen content in the exhaust to the computer, which is used to control the fuel mixture. The computer is constantly adjusting to provide the correct ratio of fuel and oxygen to burn cleanly and efficiently. This "environmental friendliness" is another advantage of EFI.

I've outlined just a portion of the new features and capabilities available with this new system. I encourage you to do a little research of your own and talk to your Walker Dealer.

We are offering the new Delphi® EFI engine as an option in our MB/MBS line: the MBK with 23-hp and the MBS with 29-hp. Both are performing well, and are quickly becoming a popular option in this series of tractors.

The EFI system will be equipping the majority of engines in the near future—and not just on Walker Mowers. We are excited about the advancements in this technology, the advantages, and the positive effects on our industry today. Saving fuel and cleaner air are hard to beat as reasons for moving ahead with new technology. **WT**

Ted Walker Joins Company

Ted Walker, Dean and Suzanne Walker's oldest son, came to work full-time at Walker Manufacturing on March 26, 2012. Previously, Ted had worked part-time, off-site for the company since early 2010. He joins his brother, Ryan, who started with the company last year, as a third-generation member of the Walker family working in the company.

Starting with the dreams of the founders, Max and Margaret Walker, the Walker family has had the longtime goal of keeping the company an independent, family-owned and family-managed business. Now, with



the passion and interest being shown in the business by the two third-generation Walker brothers, their entry into the company is seen as a positive step in that direction.

Ted has had some good preparation and experience before coming to Walker. He graduated in 2004 from Olivet Nazarene University in Bourbonnais, Illinois, with a degree in Mechanical Engineering. He worked two years in the Chicago area for a civil engineering firm. After that Ted went to Eagle R&D in Nampa, Idaho, a company producing the "Helicycle" one-man, turbine-powered helicopter kit,

gaining another five years of experience. While still living in Idaho, Ted began to work part-time with Walker in the area of Technical Compliance Engineering. Along the way, in Idaho, Ted met and married Nikki, and they have two children, Elle and Drew.

Neither Ted nor Ryan has started working in the Walker company in management positions. Walker has employed a consultant to help create a training program for the young men where they will spend the next two or three years working in six functional areas of the company. After completing the training, the anticipation is that they will start mentoring for leadership.

WALKER WELCOMES NEW DISTRIBUTORS ABOARD

Since the beginning of 2012, two new distributors have joined the Walker marketing program.

FGM Claymore based in Dublin, Ireland and Birmingham, England will be representing Walker in the UK. FGM Claymore is a family business managed by Mr. Paul Butterly and owned by the Butterly family.

A second distributor is Servall Inc. Mr. Lawrence Kelly is the managing director. Located in Bridgetown, Barbados, Servall will cover the islands of Barbados, and Trinidad and Tobago.

Walker Manufacturing looks forward to a long-term relationship with both of these companies.

FACTORY 'DODGE CITY' PARK COMPLETED



As introduced in the previous issue of *Walker Talk*, "Mount Walker" and the park complex on the factory grounds have been completed and will be put into use starting this fall.

The park includes an open pavilion and many landscape features including the slopes of the "mountain" to use for testing, demonstration training, and sales training operations of the Walker Mower. Planning has started for using the park for the first sales/demonstration training for distributor and dealer sales personnel in May 2013.

The park has been named "Dodge City Park" in recognition of the Dodge City Municipal Park in Dodge City, Kansas. This park was a special place enjoyed by the Max Walker family in the 1950s and 60s during the beginning years of Walker Manufacturing in southwest Kansas.

DRIVE AND WIN CONTEST UNDERWAY

Since beginning in May, the response to the “Drive and Win” contest has been enthusiastic with over 800 demonstrations of Walker Mower Models MB and MBS made through the end of June to qualify for the contest.



The contest closes December 31, 2012. Two names will be drawn to win either a Model MB or MBS Walker Mower.

Existing Walker Mower owners who own another model should be reminded that they can request a “B” demonstration and enter the contest.

See walkermowers.com for contest information and to request a “B” demonstration to enter the contest.

AUSTRALASIA REACHES 10,000 MILESTONE

The first Walker Mower made the trip to Australia 28 years ago. Now, mid-2012, more than 10,000 have made the trip “down under” to either Australia or New Zealand. In fact, New Zealand just received the 5,000th machine and Australia reached that point in 2011.

It has been a remarkable journey for the Walker Mower to find a home so far away from the factory. Bob Walker likes to say about the “down under” experience: “We’ve learned a lot and we have met a lot of wonderful people.”

By way of celebrating the Walker customers in Australia and New Zealand, a special issue of *Walker Talk Down Under* (3rd Down Under Edition) has just been printed; there are profile stories of 28 Walker Mower enthusiasts in the two countries. The Walker factory will be happy to send a copy of this special issue to regular *Walker Talk* readers upon request.



WALKER PRODUCTS

TOP SPEED INCREASED TO 7 MPH

Starting with Serial Number 12-116724, the top ground travel speed of Walker Models MC, MD and MT has been increased from factory-standard 5 mph to 7 mph.

This design change was made in conjunction with providing dampeners on the steering levers, introduced in 2011 models, to prevent overly sensitive controls at higher speeds.

For earlier units without steering dampeners, the optional speed-up kit(s) P/N 7247 (MD) or 8247 (MT) are still being offered, giving a top speed of 6.5 mph.

MODEL MBK23: LESS FUEL, MORE POWER

The Model MBK23 is now being offered with a 23-hp Kohler engine equipped with the Delphi® electronic fuel-injection system, offering more power with reduced fuel consumption.

Tests at the Walker factory (with a constant load to simulate mowing) have shown fuel consumption of the MBK23 to be 30% less than the Model MBK with an 18-hp Kohler engine equipped with a carburetor. Also, the cost to upgrade to the EFI system has been reduced with the Delphi® system—making the payback in fuel savings even quicker.

The 23-hp engine positions the MBK23 to meet the high production needs of a landscape contractor looking for a powerful, lightweight, compact riding mower.

Kohler offers a three-year, unlimited-hour, commercial warranty with the 23-hp engine.



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