



WALKER TALK

SERVING LAWN MAINTENANCE PROFESSIONALS

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WALKER TALK

Step Out, Move Out



Some of the best and most exciting stories are from people stepping out for the dream of a better opportunity. “Stepping out” has been a part of many of the stories we have told in *Walker Talk* and that is one way we have been able to keep *Walker Talk* an interesting read. What is it about some people’s makeup that causes them to step out while others choose to stay home?

There are stories that go back hundreds and thousands of years about people stepping out that gives us some clues to their makeup. The stories in the Bible of Abraham leaving his home country to go to another place based on the promise of the Lord, and of Moses leading one million men of Israel out of Egypt and slavery, mark people who stepped out and moved out to a better place. I remember visiting the Mayflower replica in Plymouth, Massachusetts. I could not imagine how in the world a little over 100 people got on this little ship and crammed into the small hold of the ship for a 10-week journey across the Atlantic. These were special people.

It is clear to me that people “who step out, move out,” have faith, courage and risk-taking in their blood. Faith can be defined as believing something exists that cannot be seen or for which there is no evidence. There is also the humility to recognize that our abilities, resources and control of outcomes are limited, but there is the courage to step out and trust in Almighty God for a favorable outcome. It is reported that Moses only had a staff in his hand when he stepped out. The old saying, “work as if everything depends on you and pray as if everything depends on the Lord,” applies here.

The constitution of many of the people we profile in *Walker Talk* and many of the Walker Mower owners we meet is that they are the “step out, move out” kind who have worked to start businesses and create opportunities for themselves, their families, their employees and their customers. They dreamed of their own business and now it has come true. We celebrate and honor your achievement and will keep telling these stories in *Walker Talk*. We are pleased that the Walker Mower has been a helpful tool and has played a part in these stories.

I am so glad my Dad and Mom “stepped out” from farming to manufacturing in 1957. **WT**

Bob Walker

Bob Walker, President



The Cutzgras family—Mark, Pat and Dennis—has been maintaining properties in Port Charlotte for 28 years.



Second career a charm for family members

Attention to Detail Helps Define Florida Company

Dennis Jontos, owner of Cutzgras, Inc., in Port Charlotte, Florida, says: “Our philosophy is relatively simple. We’re dedicated to providing quality work, period.”

His 60 residential customers would have no argument there. The small family-run company provides a full array of services, everything from lawn mowing, trimming and edging to fertilizing, weed and insect control, and pruning. A three-man crew comprised of Dennis, his son Mark and five-year employee Eddie Carrio also installs landscapes, and wife, Pat, operates a customized home watch service.

“Every customer’s landscape receives the same treatment,” says Dennis. “When our crew leaves a property, we know our effort is more than ‘good enough.’ It also-

lutely has to be our best effort, because our goal is to leave it as the best-looking landscape in the neighborhood.”

FLORIDA BOUND

Even though Cutzgras has been working in Charlotte County since 1986, this isn’t Dennis’ first career. Before then, the family lived in Connecticut where he taught junior high English for 20 years. “After Pat took a bad spill on the ice, we decided to move somewhere warmer,” Dennis recalls. “I retired from teaching with the intent that we could turn our part-time summer job mowing lawns in Connecticut into a full-time business in Florida. We purchased a small lawn maintenance company in Port Charlotte and here we are, 28 years later.”

Throughout, every family member has worked in the business at some time.

That includes son Douglas and daughter Laura, who now have other occupations. Mark joined the family business full time in 1995.

Says Dennis, “What more can one ask from a career? I get to work every day with my wife and son. We feel that Eddie is part of our family, too. This is a lifetime business in paradise, and, as an added bonus, you just happen to be the boss.”

RIDE ON

For eight years, Cutzgras mower operators, primarily Dennis and Pat, walked behind a mid-size mower. “If you’ve ever walked on Floratam grass, you know how long days can be,” Dennis relates. “It’s very spongy, which makes walking difficult. So after a couple of years researching riding mowers and trying virtually everything on the market, we purchased our first Walker



"Eddie Carrio is part of the family, too," says Mark. Carrio has been with the company for five years.

Mower from A-1 Mower here in Port Charlotte. It was a diesel with a 42-inch side-discharge deck."

Cutzgras has since purchased two more, one in 1998 with a 52-inch side-discharge deck and another in 2004, equipped with a 42-inch side-discharge deck. Both are diesels.

"Our first Walker has more than 11,000 hours on it," Dennis says proudly. "We just replaced the engine last year. It has been, and continues to be, a real workhorse for us. In fact, we also use it to fertilize lawns by attaching a spreader to the deck. Adapting the mower's light switch allows us to easily turn the spreader on and off."

The Jontoses have also designed and installed deck plates that fit over the discharge chute. With a flick of a foot, side-discharge decks become mulching decks. Being mechanically-minded runs

in the family. Mark was a jet engine mechanic on a Navy carrier for four and a half years. His father was a helicopter mechanic in Vietnam. The training and discipline they received in the military also contributes to the company's attention to detail on and off the job.

SETTING A WATCH

Being detail-minded displays itself in many ways for the Cutzgras crew. On garbage pickup day, for example, Dennis, Mark or Eddie will carry empty cans from the curb to their customer's house. There's never a speck of grass left on the walk or drive, and before leaving a property, the crew turns around just to make sure everything is in order.

"Customers can also set their watch by us," Mark adds. "In fact, one day we were an hour late for some reason and a worried customer called to see if we had had a mishap along the way."

This discipline translates into how the company maintains its equipment. In addition to being vigilant about preventive maintenance, Cutzgras puts each of its mowers, as well as its enclosed trailer, through an aggressive end-of-year maintenance regimen.

Mark explains, "We literally take apart our Walker Mowers, pressure wash them, and replace virtually every wear part, including bearings, bushings, pulleys and belts. Then we repaint them and apply new decals. Our trailer gets stripped, too, and pressure washed. After allowing the wood to dry out for a couple of days, we repaint the inside and wax the outside."

They also rotate the trailer's tires every two months, and to avoid excessive wear, alternate directions driving around the many culs-de-sac in nearby Punta Gorda Isles where the majority of their customers live.

"When it comes to details, good enough is never good enough," Dennis re-emphasizes. Pat agrees, but shakes her head in frustration with her husband. "Even at 73, it's very difficult getting him to slow down," she remarks. "The only way is to get him away. That's why we're

taking a short vacation in Orlando this winter."

In the meantime, Pat's work ethic is nothing to dismiss. A nurse for 35 years, Pat has worked in the field with Dennis and currently maintains the company's books. Eight years ago, she also launched a home watch service. Twelve customers who spend summers elsewhere give her their house keys and alarm codes. At least once a week, Pat makes the rounds to ensure that air conditioners are running and water isn't. The effort generates additional revenue for Cutzgras while easing a customer's mind.

FRIDAY THE 13TH

Few states suffered more through the recent economic downturn than Florida. The housing market took a free fall and landscape contractors either changed the way they conducted business or disappeared. Now, water and nutrient restrictions add to the challenges.

None of the above, however, compares to what Port Charlotte residents suffered through in August 2004 on Friday the 13th. Traveling up the Gulf Coast, Hurricane Charley made an unexpected right turn in the warm waters off Port Charlotte and cut an 8-mile swath from the city all the way to Orlando.

"Winds were clocked at 150 mph, with gusts nearing 180 mph," Dennis recalls. "The storm was fast. It only lasted three hours. But in that time it destroyed homes, parts of the city, and left us without power for days."

Pat and Dennis held up at home, at times bracing their bodies against the front door to keep the wind out. Their roof was severely damaged when two huge trees toppled over in their yard, and the house itself suffered serious structural damage. Their business was not left unscathed either, as grass cutting was halted for five to six weeks.

"We spent weeks cleaning up," says Mark, who was living in nearby Fort Myers at the time and dodged the brunt of the storm. "Our Walker Mowers were lifesavers for us. We used them to drag



Above: The typical Cutzgras property features plenty of obstacles and water.


At right: Attention to detail doesn't escape the Walker Mowers and their conveyance. Both receive year-end refurbishing.

palm trees, pool cages and debris to the curb, and to haul countless loads of broken ceramic roof tiles from lawns.”

The Walker Mowers proved their worth again after the cleanup, adds Dennis. “When returning to a mowing schedule, we just raised the decks as high as we could and the diesels allowed us to cut right through the grass.”

The area made a quick recovery, though, as neighbors pitched in to help each other. In fact, four years later, in 2008, one of Cutzgras’ customers even made the Walker Mowers “Beautiful Places Calendar.” Mark and Dennis like to think that their Walker Mowers contributed to the look of the property, and they did. But without their attention to detail, the property would not have been good enough for the calendar—or more importantly, for the Jontos family. **WT**





John Munk's second mower, a used Model MT with a 48-inch GHS deck, is better suited for large, gated-community properties.

'It's Better Than Fishing'

Retired Nevada Deputy Sheriff is enjoying retirement on his Walker Mowers.

When newly retired Deputy Sheriff John Munk took off his badge, he didn't have plans to replace it with a fishing pole—not by a long shot. Instead, he jumped on his Walker Mower and took what he's been doing in his spare time to a different level.

"I have six to eight high-end residential accounts," says this Gardnerville, Nevada, resident. "I don't pretend to be

a landscape contractor; I just trim, edge, mow and blow, and do some aerating in the spring. My customers love the work I do, and having the Walker Mowers (he actually owns two) supplements my pension and allows me to meet my financial needs."

In between mowing, John has time to ski a couple of hours a day four days a week, keep his shooting eye sharp at a nearby range, and spend more time with Kerry, his wife of 28 years.

CHANGE OF PACE

Located about 20 minutes south of Carson City in the Carson Valley, Gardnerville is a virtual paradise for outdoor enthusiasts. In addition to numerous hiking and biking trails, along with dozens of ski runs in the nearby Sierras adjacent to Lake Tahoe, there's plenty of fishing, soaring and horseback riding to be done, along with plain old sightseeing.

Raising a family, John and Kerry didn't have time to enjoy all the benefits

the valley afforded. Kerry continues to waitress at a downtown family restaurant, something she has done for the past 20 years. Her husband spent the last 23 of his 27 years with the sheriff's department working in the county jail.

"Inmates in a county jail are usually at the lowest point of their lives," John relates. "I had lots of interaction with them and spent most of my time trying to help them improve their lives."

Although gratifying in many ways, the job was very stressful, likely contributing to a couple of heart stents John received. "I purchased my first Walker Mower in 2004 because I wanted to get outside, earn a little extra money, and spend some quality time away from people issues," he says. "I starting looking around, researching mowers and discovered that nearly every landscape contractor in our community operated a Walker Mower."

His first machine was a Model MC with a 36-inch GHS deck, and last year, preparing for his eventual retirement, he purchased a used MT with a 48-inch GHS deck. His plan was to move into bigger homes with bigger yards that required a slightly bigger mower.

Now, most of his properties are located in a gated HOA community where customers have known the Munks for years. Mowing only two days a week from April to the end of November, John operates out of an enclosed trailer that keeps his equipment contained and secure. The trailer also has room to store barrels, which he fills with clippings. Finding a place to dump the clippings is no problem. Dairy farms will take them, as will friends, to supplement their compost piles..

KEEPING IT SIMPLE

The retired deputy is only 50 years old, but doesn't want to complicate his life by taking on more properties and hiring employees. As he puts it, "less is more," and the Walker Mower will allow him to generate enough revenue without doing either of the above.

"They're fantastic, amazing machines and I can fix most anything that breaks on them," John emphasizes. "Yes, I take care of all my equipment. As the saying goes, 'If you take care of your equipment, it will take care of you.'"

The same holds true, he adds, about taking care of your customers. "At least half of my business is about the relationships I've built with my customers. I'm meticulous and the mower does a great job. But I don't just mow, go and treat every property as a number. My customers are my friends and they appreciate the work I do, and that's pretty simple, as well."

John plans to keep mowing and talking with friends for a long time. In fact, he says his mowers will give him an opportunity to work for another 20 years. There's a precedent in his family for working a long time. Kerry's grandfather owned the second oldest bar in Nevada and, at age 98, received the distinction from the President of being the oldest worker in the state. He lived until he was 101.

Still, John doesn't think Kerry or their two daughters, Nichole and Danielle, would want him to set a similar record—not that he couldn't try, of course. Fishing just isn't something he wants to do. He would rather mow lawns. **W.T.**

Married 28 years and long-time residents of Gardnerville, John and Kerry are well-known around town. John's customers are more than customers, they're friends, too.



Texas Campus Sports **Big Challenges** for Grounds Crew



West Texas A&M's grounds department maintains the 176-acre campus. Mowing, trimming, removing snow and keeping the grounds neat are among its responsibilities. The university has a landscape architect on board, but most of the new installations are subcontracted out.

Follow Route 27 south out of Amarillo, Texas for 20 miles and you will pass through Canyon, home of West Texas A&M. Situated on a beautiful 176-acre residential campus, the university has nearly 8,000 students, 252 full-time faculty, and 569 full-time staff members. Working behind the scenes to keep the campus in top shape are Grounds Manager, Larry Bedwell, and Transportation Manager, Bruce Bassett.

"Readying the campus for special events is one of our biggest challenges," relates Bedwell, whose 17-member department maintains the landscape, clears the snow, and constantly polices the grounds. "The other is just keeping the turf mowed. We start in early March and go straight through until the end of November. Picking up leaves keeps us busy through Christmas."

In the meantime, Bassett's three-technician staff maintains the grounds equip-

ment and keeps the school's 119 vehicles in top running order. "All the vehicles and equipment are on a maintenance schedule," Bassett explains. "We bring them in when they're ready for oil and filter changes, tire rotation or other preventive maintenance."

Bassett's department couldn't do this efficiently without computers, what he calls one of the biggest changes he's seen over a near 30-year career with the university. Not surprisingly, the other two

involve campus growth and the equipment used to maintain the grounds.

The university was established in 1910 as a teacher's college. Today it offers 62 undergraduate degrees, 41 master's degrees and one doctorate. The campus has 45 buildings, with 205 adjacent acres set aside for future expansion.

"Our newest addition is a sports complex that features baseball and softball fields, tennis courts and a walk-around track, among other amenities," says Bassett. "Because it is designed with artificial turf, the complex creates minimal work for Larry's department.

"When I started working here, we didn't need a huge contingent of mowers to maintain the turf," Bassett continues. "In fact, all we used were two Cub Cadet mowers, a couple of reel mowers, and a Woods three-point hitch mower. The Woods mower is the only piece we still have."

Ten Walker Mowers and five Grasshoppers now do the bulk of the mowing. Maintaining the turf around the classrooms and the main part of campus is the responsibility of the Walker Mowers equipped with GHS decks. Three of the 10 are fitted with side-discharge decks that do the wider-area mowing along with their Grasshopper counterparts. The Grounds Department still operates its first Walker Mower purchased from Amarillo Outdoor Power Equipment 14 years ago.

Bassett says the school selected Walker Mowers because they are very maneuverable and compact, something needed for mowing around the natural and man-made obstacles on campus. "Their debris-handling capability helps to keep the campus looking neat and comes in very handy for the fall leaf season. Eight of the 10 Walker Mowers feature Kubota diesel engines because of their longevity, and maintenance on them is very easy."

EXTREME CONDITIONS

Bedwell and Bassett make no bones about West Texas weather. "You can get all the weather here in one day," they remark.

"Readying the campus for special events is one of our biggest challenges. The other is just keeping the turf mowed. We start in early March and go straight through until the end of November."

- Grounds Manager Larry Bedwell

Unfortunately, moisture hasn't been part of that equation. All last year, the area received only 2.5 inches of rain, and during June the thermometer hit the 100-degree mark every day.

The high temps and lack of moisture taxed landscapes, to the extent that the transportation manager lost seven big trees on his property at home. The extreme weather didn't have the same

effect on campus plant life or the grounds department's twice-weekly mowing schedule. The turf, a combination of fescue and Bermuda grass, is irrigated.

Even though drought-plagued winters have been the norm in recent years, big snows have stormed through the area, unfettered by the flat landscape. "Working at a university where many students live in campus dorms means



Transportation Manager Bruce Bassett with Grounds Manager Larry Bedwell (seated).



Buffalo fountain near “Old Main” puts the university’s nickname in stone—36,000 pounds of granite stone to be precise.

you’re on call 24/7,” Bedwell emphasizes. “In the winter, if we have a serious snow or ice storm, sidewalks and drives have to be cleared to ensure they’re passable. Typically, though, we get more ice storms than a lot of snow, although each year is different.”

A 1995 West Texas A&M graduate, Bedwell anticipates that heated sidewalks for new dorms will minimize ice concerns, at least there. For snow-covered sidewalks, he says rotary brooms are most effective since they don’t tear up the concrete.

With the sound of Walker Mowers doing some last-minute mowing and leaf pick up, Bassett and Bedwell stroll over to the center of campus. They pull up in front of a fountain near the “Old Main” administrative building. A huge “buffalo” (the university’s nickname) sculpture stands in the center of the fountain. “The statue was carved out of a 76,000-pound slab of granite,” Bassett exclaims. “It only weighs 36,000 pounds now.” Just goes to show you that even in the Texas panhandle, big is beautiful. **WT**



Mark Huber, owner of Amarillo Outdoor Power Equipment, purchased the dealership 14 years ago and has since developed a close working relationship with the West Texas A&M grounds department.



C&D Landscape owner Cal Kearns says:
 “We keep our machines as long as we can,
 and rebuild them when we can.”

Repair or Replace?

What Works for Your Operation?

Whether they operate one mower or a fleet of 20, lawn maintenance contractors will eventually have to answer these questions: Should I buy a replacement mower and, if so, when is the best time to do so? Or, would it make more sense to repair my old one?

The answer depends on many variables, not the least of which is money. The recent economic downturn forced many mowing contractors to postpone upgrading their equipment when other

factors such as mower age and operating hours may have otherwise dictated their decision.

Whether to repair or replace a mower hinges on other considerations as well, including how well a machine has been maintained over the years. In this issue, for example (pages 3-5), the owners of Cutzgras essentially replace every wear part on their Walker Mowers prior to the start of the mowing season. For Dennis Jontos, being a former helicopter mechanic, and Mark Jontos, a former jet engine

mechanic, this discipline, not to mention the accompanying skills, is second nature. Many Walker Mower dealers offer a similar service that can extend mower life and reduce headaches later in the year.

Location, too, can be an issue. Having to trailer a piece of equipment a couple of hours every time it needs repairs becomes an expensive proposition in travel and downtime. In this instance, replacing a mower every few years might be the better choice.

NUTS AND BOLTS

The costliest repair item on most types of equipment is the engine. For quality mowers such as the Walker Mower, the tractor and deck will far outlast the engine depending on the engine type and overall upkeep of the equipment.

“We don’t replace the mower, we replace the engine,” says George Shrum, senior mechanic at Sposato Landscape Management. He’s referring to a fleet of 63 Walker Mowers (*Walker Talk* volume 31). The Milton, Delaware, company purchased its first Walker Mower in 1994, and still operates unit No. 5.

Sposato’s Walker Mowers are all powered by Kohler gasoline engines. Shrum notes that on average the company replaces engines between the 2,200- and 2,500-hour mark. They either rebuild the old engines for around \$500 or install a new one for around \$3,000.

Shrum’s engine replacement schedule shadows the advice given by Ohio Walker Mower dealer/distributor and for-

mer landscape contractor Tom Emmett. To determine approximate engine life for air-cooled engines, he simply multiplies the horsepower rating by 100. For liquid-cooled engines, he uses 150 as the multiplier.

Says Emmett, “If your Walker Mower is powered by 23-hp engine, it should go approximately 2,300 hours before the engine needs replacing. This is long before the machine’s lifecycle is up. Liquid-cooled engines may not outlast the lifecycle of a quality mower such as the Walker Mower, but they will bring the engine’s longevity and that of the mower’s closer together.

“Many of our customers rotate their air-cooled equipment every three years.

The recent economic downturn forced many mowing contractors to postpone upgrading their equipment when other factors such as mower age and operating hours may have otherwise dictated their decision.

Assuming they mow an average of 600 hours a year means they will be replacing the mower before the first large engine repair bill.”

When Yard Perfect’s owner Harry Stokes, Jr. (*Walker Talk* volume 35) recently downsized his business, he sold his diesel-powered Walker Mower in favor of keeping an older one with a smaller deck. “I hated to get rid of one of my Walkers, but couldn’t justify keeping both of them,” the Alabama owner/operator recalls. “I kept the smaller one because it would go through backyard gates.

“If I still owned the diesel and the engine needed replacing, I would replace it, just like I’ve replaced the engine on my

Even diesel engines eventually wear out, so it’s important, says Harry Stokes, to put money aside to replace either the engine or the mower.



other Walker Mower,” he adds. Would Stokes rather buy a new mower? “Yes,” he replies, “if I had the money. The key, though, would be to trade the mower while the engine still has life.”

REPAIR LOGIC

Using Emmett’s rule of thumb gives operators like Stokes some insight into when it’s time to trade in their mowers or otherwise replace an engine before experiencing performance and downtime issues.

No matter what approach is best for your operation, purchasing quality equipment and keeping it on a preventive maintenance schedule contains repair costs, optimizes equipment longevity, and helps retain trade-in value.

“Every day we grease our Walker Mowers and install a sharp set of blades,” relates Shrum. “Twice a week we blow out the engine compartment. The key for our Walker Mower longevity—and that of our Exmark, Toro and Wright mowers—is preventive maintenance.”

Cal Kearns, owner of Oregon-based C&D Landscape Company (*Walker Talk* volume 35) agrees, noting that the strategy applies to equipment and vehicles, alike. “A big board in our repair shop displays the maintenance schedule for our vehicles and mowers. Making sure schedules are not missed is the responsibility of both our mechanic and the operator.

“On Hood Monday, for example, our foremen open their truck’s engine compartment and double check all the fluid levels and overall give the engine a good once over. Our nine Walker Mowers receive similar attention, and operators are required to check their fluid levels every morning.”

Kearns says his technician has replaced a few Kohler engines on his Walker



Tom Emmett’s rule of thumb may help operators determine when it’s time to trade in their mowers.

Mowers and will continue to do so as long as everything else is functional and in good shape. The owner’s strategy could be described as the “can” approach. As Kearns says, “We keep our machines as long as we can, and rebuild them when we can.”

Not to say he wouldn’t like to rotate his mowers every couple of years. He would, but economics often dictate, and replacing an engine is more cost-effective for him right now than buying a new mower. It is for Harry Stokes, too, who emphasizes how important it is to prepare for the inevitable. “One big mistake I made in business was not putting money aside to help buy a replacement machine. Even the best-maintained mowers will eventually need to be replaced.”

Company owners have options when it comes to replacing or repairing their equipment. One is to replace equipment before the warranty runs out. This saves money on repairs, but would be impractical for operators who log minimal hours on a machine or who just couldn’t afford the expense. Another is to rotate mowers every three or four years. This strategy reduces the likelihood of a big-ticket repair bill, minimizes downtime, and helps ensure top performance in the field.

Then again, the most attractive approach may be to keep a mower for the duration of its lifecycle and replace engines instead. What works best for your operation depends on your business model. No matter what course you take, the balancing act is to maintain top performance while minimizing equipment repair and operating costs. **WT**

“Every day we grease our Walker Mowers and install a sharp set of blades. Twice a week we blow out the engine compartment.”

– George Shrum, Sposato Landscape Management

Neighbors Share Common Bonds



What do Vida, Oregon, neighbors John Farkus, Biff Owen, Ted West, Gene Jones, Jim Goodpasture, Kameron Maxwell and David Cousineau have in common? For one thing, on any given Saturday they can be found using Walker Mowers to manicure their landscapes.

It's unusual for so many neighbors to use the same brand. But they say it's pragmatic to the bone since their mowers are both versatile and deliver a great cut.

Retired radiologist John Farkus and well-and-pump service provider Ted West became the neighborhood's first Walker Mower user more than 12 years ago. Since then, a strip of land along the scenic MacKenzie River has seemingly sprouted the yellow machines.

"I purchased mine after my lawn guy gave me a tip," relates Farkus. "It takes me 45 minutes to mow my yard, the cuttings of which I dump along a fence line."

West, who co-owns his machine with Jones, mows four acres of turf every week and employs a second deck to mulch between Christmas trees on his property. "Gene (Jones) and I share capital costs and maintenance," he remarks. "Gene changes the oil and I shuttle the mower back and forth between us."

Neighbors share other common bonds beyond mower preference and taking pride in their properties. "We have a tremendous camaraderie," explains Elizabeth Cousineau who, with husband, David,

Elizabeth and David Cousineau started their landscape maintenance business in 2004 after moving to Vida from Seattle.

Owning a Walker Mower is only one bond these neighbors share. From left to right: Elizabeth Cousineau, Ted West, Jim Goodpasture, John Farkus, Biff Owen, Kameron Maxwell and David Cousineau.



operates Gardens by Elizabeth. “We love the outdoors. Most of us like to hunt and fish, and we all enjoy each other’s company. It’s just a great place to live.”

The Cousineaus are the only ones in the neighborhood who use their mowers commercially. They moved to Vida from Seattle in 2004 where David managed a nonprofit group, something he had been doing for years. “It seems that I was spending 90 percent of my time raising funds and 10 percent working with the people,” he recalls. “So we moved here

and purchased a small lawn maintenance business. Lawns don’t talk back and then ask you to raise money. All they want is a little fertilizer.”

The Cousineaus immediately took a cue from Farkus and West and started to build their business around Walker Mowers. “We purchased one almost immediately and soon realized it wasn’t a mistake,” David relates. “I had just finished a property and was pulling into a parking lot when a passerby made a u-turn behind me. He pulled up next to

me and asked if I was the contractor who mowed the yard down the street. The mowing job sold him and soon sold most every customer we now have.”

In fact, the Cousineaus say the Walker Mower’s cut has become their signature. The company provides a turnkey program to primarily residential customers, one that includes landscape installation, tree care, fertilization and dethatching, among other services. It’s the well-manicured lawns, however, that frame the picture and are what customers most remember.



Retired radiologist John Farkus, a proud Walker Mower owner for 12 years, mows 1 to 1.5 acres of turf weekly. He's the only neighbor with a power dump.



Ted West co-owns his Walker Mower with neighbor Gene Jones. They share capital cost and maintenance on the mower and two decks, a GHS and a mulching deck. Ted uses the mulching deck to mow between Christmas trees.



One of the first things Biff Owen did when he retired six years ago and moved to Vida was buy a Walker Mower. He mows two acres of turf with it, and is especially happy with how it picks up large maple leaves in the fall.

CARING CATALYST

Little things add up and not everything has to relate to plant life. David explains, "My dad once told me that 'people don't care what you know, unless they know that you care.' In other words, the equipment you use and the knowledge you have will only get you so far."

The right combination of caring and executing is unbeatable. Gardens by Elizabeth maintains 40 properties with two Walker Mowers, a 26-hp gas model and a diesel which the company purchased four years ago. "The diesel gives us a little more torque to help cut through tall, wet grass in the spring, and to maneuver over the many hills we have around here," says David. The husband-and-wife team overcome other challenges, as well, including a high water table and natural springs that will suddenly pop to the surface.

"Sometimes wild animals can be a nuisance, too," adds Elizabeth. "This year, three deer actually jumped right over me while I was mowing." David has experienced wild turkeys and nutria (river rats) blocking his mowing path. Neighbors share stories of elk herds roaming the countryside. There's even a cougar or two to keep operators attentive.

While the owners mow around flora and fauna obstacles, their two employ-

ees, Sam and Master Gardener Sabena, take care of details. The company name reflects Elizabeth's love of gardening, something she has done almost her entire life. She and David emphasize that having the business has been a perfect fit for the two of them, adding that their immediate goal is to consolidate their routes and maintain more properties right along the MacKenzie River.



Jim Goodpasture's 240-acre farm features more than 11,000 hazelnut trees. He mows a large turf area weekly, which takes him 2 to 2.5 hours, and uses his Walker Mower to pick up hazelnut tree leaves in the fall.



Kameron Maxwell purchased his 26-hp Walker Mower three years ago after observing the job it did on next door neighbor David Cousineau's lawn. It takes Kameron about two hours to mow his expansive yard with the machine's 48-inch GHS deck.



Maximizing Versatility

Recently I had the privilege of having lunch with one of our area Walker dealers and his customer, who is a commercial landscaper. After ordering our lunch, the landscaper began to tell me about his Walkers and how he uses them to meet his business needs. He told me that for him the value of the Walker goes beyond just mowing.

His fleet is in service year-round. After his crews complete fall cleanups, the mowers are put into winter service. As he shared his use and passion for Walker, I began thinking about the many opportunities the Walker can provide for both commercial landscapers and the homeowner.

By design the Walker can be easily adapted with accessories and implements that will complement your existing mower for use after the mowing season ends. Here in Colorado that can include anything from snow removal and de-icing to sweeping parking lots and sidewalks. In other places around the world, winter means dry, dusty conditions, or maybe rain, cold and damp.

WINTER USE REQUIRES ADJUSTMENT TO MAINTENANCE PRACTICES

In cold-weather regions, take care to grease PTO joints as cold temperatures and warming of the equipment can cause condensation that needs to be purged from the bearings. The shaft of the PTO, deck arms and any unpainted surfaces represent areas where rust can form quickly; grease provides a film to prevent it.

Winter weather also reveals weak batteries and can cause starting issues. Take time to inspect and clean your mower's battery connections. Whenever possible, do not jump start a dead battery. Rather, remove it, charge it and re-install it into the mower. If you find that you must use jumper cables, please take care to follow procedures outlined in the owner's manual, especially for EFI-equipped mowers.

With any electrical connection, take care to keep them clean, dry and free of corrosion. It is always a good practice to apply dielectric grease to electrical connections, as it will help repel moisture and prevent corrosion.

TIPS FOR COLD-WEATHER STARTING

If your mower is not equipped with a cold-start kit, you can remove the ground drive belt, as this removes any excess load that can cause hard starting.

If you are using the PTO for an attachment and your mower is equipped with a GHS blower, you can remove the blower drive belt and install a plug in the intake of the blower. (NOTE: There is a blower lockout kit available through your local dealer if you don't want to remove the belt every time.)

Finally, if you encounter salt or any de-icing chemicals, always be sure to wash your mower and attachments afterward as thoroughly as you can. De-icing materials can be extremely corrosive.

TIPS FOR DRY, DUSTY CONDITIONS

While the end of mowing operations may not mean snow, ice or extreme

cold, it can mean dusty, dry conditions. Sweeping, dethatching, scalping and leaf pickup become the primary focus of this season. A change in maintenance requirements to meet these conditions is needed.

One focus will be engine intake air filtration. The Walker system is equipped with an air filter restriction gauge that signals when the filter requires maintenance. It is not necessary to remove the primary filter and visually inspect it daily. Over-servicing the air filter creates the risk of dirt ingestion that can shorten the life of the engine.

When it is time to service the air filter, wipe down the canister and the area around it. Repair or replace the canister if it is broken, cracked or missing parts. When cleaning the machine, always use compressed air to blow it off instead of a pressure washer (especially the engine compartment), as using water will change the dust and dirt to mud that can fill the cooling fins of the engine. This will cause overheating and shorten the life of the engine. The same can be said for the cooling system on water-cooled engines. Use compressed air when cleaning the radiator, and always blow in the opposite direction of the cooling fan airflow. This will prevent dirt from being driven deeper into the radiator, which restricts airflow.

By following these simple maintenance practices as you use your mower year-round, you will increase its life. That in turn gives you the value you expect from your investment. **WT**

'Drive and Win' Contest Winners

Morgan Dolly, of Fort Plain, New York, and Roberta Jacobson, of Gordon, Nebraska, were both recently surprised with a brand new Walker Mower as part of the Walker Mowers B Difference Drive & Win Contest.

Walker Manufacturing representatives were on hand to present the mower, including company president Bob Walker,

who personally handed off the keys to both winners.

The worldwide contest included 2,505 entries from 49 states, four Canadian provinces, Australia, New Zealand, Ireland, Spain and South Africa.

Each entrant received a demonstration of one of the Walker B models. Dolly received a demonstration in

September 2012 from Keith Barry, a representative from Precision Work in Port Washington, New York (Walker's Northeast distributor). Jacobson was entered into the competition by receiving a mower demonstration from local dealer Hansen Walker Mowers.

Visit walkermowers.com/contest/index.php to watch the contest video.



Roberta Jacobson (seated) and her husband, Merlin (to her right), are presented with a new Walker MBS mower. Bob Walker, president of Walker Manufacturing, was present for the surprise presentation. Jacobson received her demonstration in July from local Walker dealer Jay Hansen (far left) and his wife, Phyllis (to Roberta's left).



Morgan Dolly (seated) and his wife, Barbara, are presented with a new Walker MBK mower. Jeff Plotka of Precision Work (distributor) and Bob Walker were on hand for the surprise presentation.

PRECISION WORK, INC. CELEBRATES 30 YEARS

Precision Work, Inc., Port Washington, New York, is celebrating their 30th anniversary as a Walker Mower distributor in the northeastern U.S. They also recently reached their goal of selling 20,000 Walker mowers.

Bob and Annette Oestreich (Bob passed away in 2002) pioneered the Walker Mower into their market. Today Annette and son-in-law, Jeffrey Plotka, and their network of dealers from Pennsylvania to Maine, continue to build Walker sales and service throughout the Northeast. Many of the Walker dealers that work with Precision also share in the long-term relationship.

Precision and Walker both enjoy celebrating reaching goals and long-lasting relationships. A special time of celebration is planned at the Sagamore Resort at Lake George, New York, July 14 through 17. Both the Walker factory and Precision management teams will be joined by Precision's dealers for the celebration.

In thinking about the achievement of 30 years work with Precision and their dealers, Bob Walker, president of Walker, is quoted as saying, "Most important of all is the wonderful people that we have had the pleasure of working with, the good times we have had, and for what was accomplished, we did it together. This was



Bob and Annette Oestreich circa 1995, founders of Precision Work.

not the work of a few. We should also remember two great pioneers who got us started: Max Walker and Bob Oestreich."

40 PERCENT OF CUSTOMERS CHOOSE EFI

In 2012, to the tune of 40 percent, the trend continues for an increasing number of customers to choose Walker Mower models equipped with an electronic fuel injection (EFI) engine.

While some of the competitive manufacturers have been slow to embrace the EFI technology, Walker, in collaboration with Kohler Engine Co., began to install EFI engines in their machines 15 years ago. With well over 20,000 EFI-equipped Walker Mowers in the field, the technology is well-proven and customers are appreciating the benefits; benefits such as 15 to 30 percent better fuel economy, reduced exhaust emissions, easy starting, and quick power response to load.

The fuel savings will typically pay for the extra cost of EFI in a little over one season's use in commercial mowing—with a nice pay-back in subsequent years.

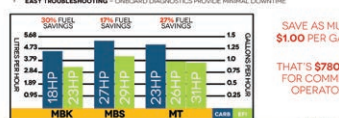
Currently, four Walker models are powered by Kohler EFI engines: MT26, MTL31, MBK23, MBS29.

For more information, see "Why Choose EFI?" and "EFI Versus Carburetor Demonstration Video" at walkermowers.com, or order DVD P/N 6895-80.



WHY CHOOSE EFI?

SINCE 1998, WALKER MOWERS AND KOHLER ENGINES HAVE BEEN PIONEERING AND ADVANCING SMALL ENGINE EFI TECHNOLOGY. WITH OVER 20,000 WALKER MOWERS IN THE FIELD WITH KOHLER EFI ENGINES, THE RESULTS INCLUDE MANY HAPPY CUSTOMERS AND THE BENEFITS ARE UNDENIABLE.



walkermowers.com

KOHLER

46-INCH DOZER BLADE WITH INTEGRAL HITCH

A more economical version of the 46-inch dozer blade is available. The dozer blade is the same basic unit as currently offered (DB6660) except the hitch and foot rest is integral to the design and the blade lift is lever-operated.

Fits all GHS models and MB, but does not fit MBS.

An optional power lift can be fitted by ordering kit P/N 6622-1.



IMPROVEMENTS FOR DSD60/DRD52 DECKS

Two improvements have been made to the DSD60/DRD52 decks for the Model MBS.

A non-slip metal tread has been added to the foot pedal of the deck lift mechanism. Use kit P/N 2349-11 to upgrade earlier decks.

In addition, the tilt-up locking arm (used to lock and release the deck tilt-up hinge) can now be released using the tilt-up lift bar. The new locking arms, P/N 2723-5 and -6, are direct replacement parts and will fit earlier units.

SUPER B HITCH REDESIGNED

The power-lift implement hitch for the Model MBS has been redesigned to increase ground clearance and ramp angle with the attachment in the raised/transport position.

The hitch now includes an optional locking pin feature to eliminate implement float and to apply down pressure.

Also, the footrest is improved to give more traction and eliminate material buildup.

Order P/N IH6622 (replaces earlier hitch IH6621).



RECALL BULLETIN ISSUED

Recall Bulletin #12239—affecting Model MC, S/N 10-107330 thru 12-118473—was issued December 2012.

The bulletin calls for remounting the air filter restriction gauge on the engine air cleaner to prevent inadvertent damage to the gauge when lowering the tilt-up body to the normal operating position. Compliance with this bulletin is strongly recommended to avoid possible engine damage from dust ingestion.

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).

Please send to:
P.O. Box 47
Fort Atkinson, WI 53538-0047

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DIFFERENT for the *RIGHT REASONS*

These rugged machines are built for the rigors of daily commercial operation and designed to mow virtually any property – places with rolling contours, tight corners, and open spaces. Walker Mowers are not just assembled – they're engineered. Every detail has been proven in the field. Every design element has been tested and refined. As a result, each mower is reliable, tuned to perfection and manufactured to give top performance.



WALKER  **MOWERS**

REASON #5: *Reliable*