

WALKER TALK

TOWN MAINTENANCE PROFESSIONALS FOR YEARS TO COME

Chilliwack's man in motion

- Nitro's field of dreams
- The only Walker in Morgantown
- Layoff sparks change in Regina



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WALKER TALK

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CREATING IS EXCITING

I have been thrilled to stand many places and look at buildings that have been built in part as a result of the Walker Mower. I am referring to buildings built by Walker distributors, dealers and commercial mowing contractors. It is not the building itself that excites me, but it is what the building represents. Here is a business that came "right up out of the ground", and the Walker Mower has had a part in creating a new business opportunity.

There is something wonderful and exciting about creating. I like to think that when our Heavenly Father created us, He put a spark

within us to create (we were made in His image). One of my favorite questions is, "How did you get started?" Or, ask a married couple (intact), "How did you meet and form a family?" There is usually an exciting story to creating. We also find tremendous energy that comes when we hear the stories of creation



that have happened in the lives of our employees, distributors, dealers and customers.

We think the longevity and interest in *Walker Talk* (26 issues since 1992) is found in telling our customers' stories and emphasizing business creation and development. The publication would quickly lose interest for our readers if it was primarily a product promotion.

The comments we often receive about *Walker Talk* and the requests for subscriptions tell us that our readers are energized and encouraged by the stories that are told. Many of our readers tell us they are creating businesses, and they are being helped by *Walker Talk* stories. I know it keeps us energized here at the factory when we think of business creation, and we remember the real people, real places and businesses that exist today, because in some way Walker Manufacturing and the Walker Mower has helped them create.

Bob Walker

Bob Walker
President

Man in motion



John and his father Tony maintain nine apartment blocks and 40 smaller commercial properties and residences.

It must have been an unusual afternoon for John Welch. He was spending the better part of it under a canopy between his workshop and enclosed trailer. The sun in Chilliwack, British Columbia was blazing hot and the covering afforded a bit of relief. “Do you think my wife would notice if I buy a new trailer every year, one that is only two feet longer than the previous one?” he asks. “In three or four years, I could have a tremendous trailer, and she wouldn’t wonder if I have lost my mind.”

This is the owner of Cut It Lawn Care Services. If he is not moving around tinkering with something, he is thinking and talking about it. The trailer he is referring to is a four-year-old, 20-foot enclosed model, and inside is nearly every tool of his trade, including two Walker Mowers.

“I don’t sit down much,” admits this 40-year-old entrepreneur. “If I’m not working on a property, I’m in my workshop sharpening blades, maintaining equipment, or fashioning a way to make my trailer and operation more efficient.” After all, he adds, there is always something to do for a “one-man band” with a young family.

The next morning John cranks up his 25-year-old truck. Together with Tony,



Cut It gets an early start on a Chilliwack apartment block.

his father and part-time helper, in tow, he heads out to maintain a few properties. Located two hours west of Vancouver, Chilliwack is a bustling community with a mix of retirement condominiums, vacation homes and new housing to accommodate young industries moving into the city. Among its customers, Cut It maintains nine apartment blocks and approximately 40 smaller commercial properties and residences. All of them fall within a 10-kilometer radius of the Welch home, which is located less than two kilometers from city center.

“If I’m not working on a property, I’m in my workshop sharpening blades, maintaining equipment, or fashioning a way to make my trailer and operation more efficient.”

For most of their customers, Cut It provides a full array of maintenance services from mowing and aer-

ating to fertilizing and pruning. Although John is a licensed pesticide applicator, recent regulations have made it difficult for smaller operators to apply chemicals. Instead, he sub-contracts that work to a local Weed-Man franchise.

This morning he will stop at four apartment blocks. Tony, now retired, has 42 years of government service under his belt, and helps his son a couple of half days a week. He unloads one of the two Walkers while John opens the trailer’s side door and grabs a protective helmet and string trimmer. Tony settles in

on the Walker and then lifts his ear protection to ask his son, “How do I do this, now?” He gives him a wink and tears off.

Tony doesn’t get far, though. As luck would have it, his Walker has a flat rear tire. John shrugs his shoulders. “That is why we have nearly two of everything in the trailer,” he rea-

sons. “We will just switch decks and use the other Walker.” The exchange only takes a few minutes and the morning is officially underway.

FAST START

John started his business in 1986 after a stint working for a janitorial company and mowing lawns on the

side. He grew his young business offering car detailing, janitorial and lawn maintenance services. For the next six years, he gained experience and customers, working primarily for town homes and apartment blocks. At the peak, he employed three people, but always struggled with human relationship challenges. John claims that employees were never reliable enough for him. Tony says, on the side, that those employees could never meet his son’s high expectations. Either way, in 1992, Cut It’s owner decided to restructure his business so he could operate by himself. He dropped janitorial and car detailing, concentrating entirely on lawn maintenance.

Four years later, his small company landed a big government contract to mow an Armed Forces base. As he puts it, he could mow his properties with a push mower until this point. The new contract forced him to change his ways. He had seen a Walker Mower brochure three years earlier and had kept the mower in the back of his mind. “I thought it would be the perfect mower for me, especially in my position as an owner-operator,” John recalls. “When we won the government contract, I drove to my dealer and demonstrated one at his shop. He delivered it the following day. And before the year was out, I had leased my second Walker.”

Cut It obtained three decks for their two mowers — a 42- and 48-inch GHS deck and a 54-inch side-discharge deck. Not being familiar with the Walker, John also purchased a “How to Mow” video. It wasn’t long before the mowers allowed the company to maintain 173 properties



John takes care of each property like it is his own.



Using a Walker minimizes John's time behind a trim mower.

on the Armed Forces base in 2-1/2 days. John and his father retained the airbase for four years, eventually giving it up to a lower bidder. The bright side? They still have their Walkers.

"Yes," says John, "I knew the Walkers were productive, but I did not know how productive until this year when our truck was laid up for restoration. For a six-week period, we mowed all our accounts with push mowers. I lost 20 pounds and could hardly wait to get our truck and Walkers back online."

SIMPLE FORMULA

The Chilliwack mowing season extends from April 1 to the end of

"I thought it (Walker) would be the perfect mower for me, especially in my position as an owner-operator."

October. Going by the saying "Cut & Trimmed, Neat & Tidy," John takes care of each property like it is his own. And he complains vigorously, for example, when condominium residents "muck up" his handy work. "They mean well," John notes, referring to customers who take it upon themselves to do some trimming. "But the end product just isn't up to my standards."

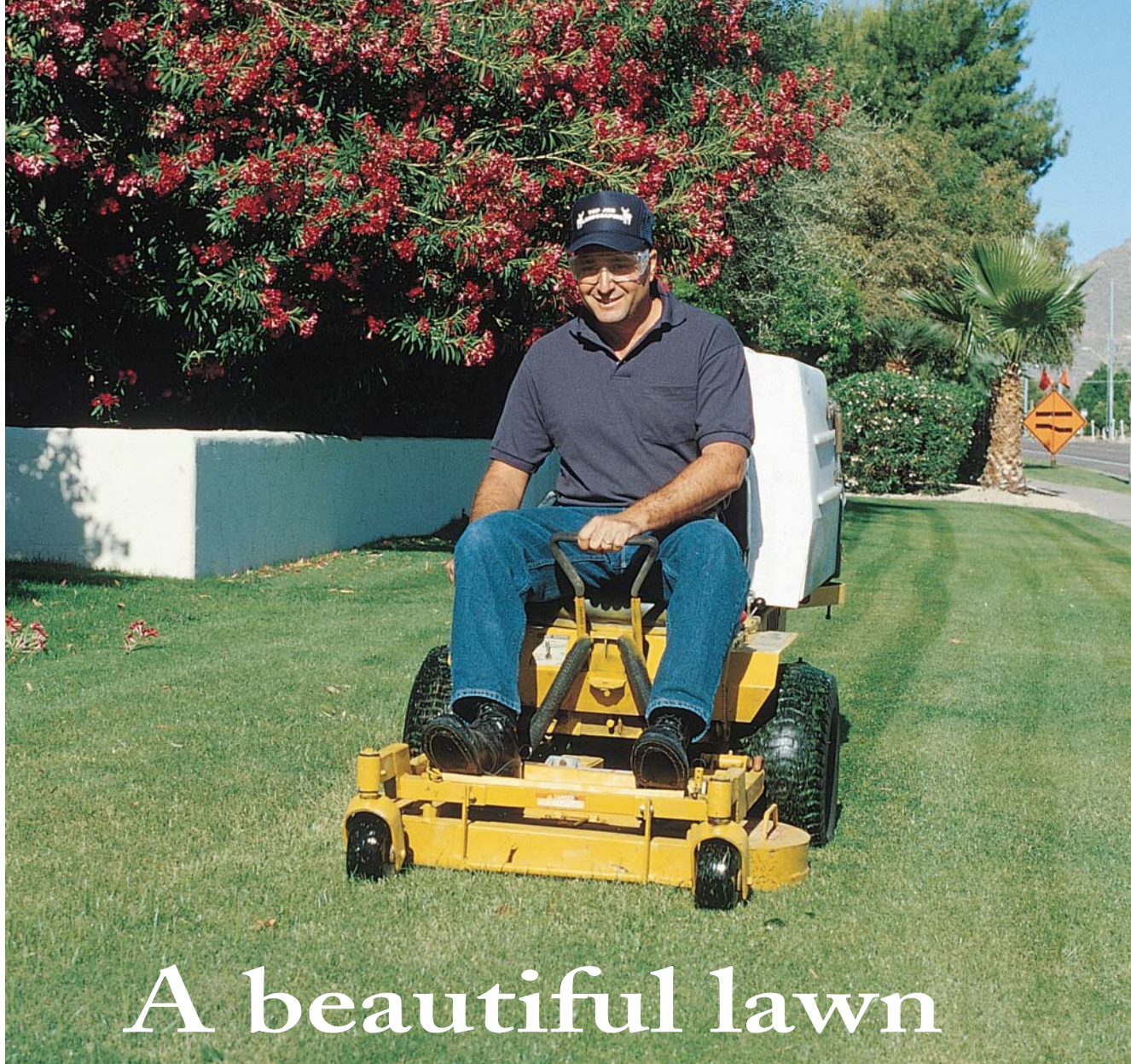
His standards are high, according to Lois Richardson, a long-time customer and chairman of an apartment strata. "John has been maintaining my property for at least 12 years. I like the way he conducts business. I never have to phone him, he is always on schedule, and he always leaves the property neat and clean. I like everything automatic and John is automatic, always here the same time every week."

He is also considerate. Tony stops his Walker when a resident passes him on a sidewalk, and John uses his trimmer at half-throttle,

keeping the noise level down and minimizing the risk of throwing any debris. The company, John adds, also separates itself from other competitors by being fully insured. He and his dad are vigilant about being safe, as well, placing safety cones at the rear of the trailer for unloading and loading. And they always wear safety gear.

The duo makes a strong case for owner-operators, with one caveat, John notes. "The big problem with having no employees is: What happens if you get hurt?" All the more reason to be deliberate, John adds. He is willing to take the risk, though, especially when he has his father and two Walker Mowers backing him up.





A beautiful lawn

The way you use your mower can mean the difference between an average-looking lawn and a spectacular one.

Walker Mower owners pride themselves in having a machine that does more than mow a lawn; Walkers, they say, actually “manicure” a lawn. As a manufacturer, we like to hear that, yet at the same time we understand that the way an operator uses the mower can mean the difference between an average-looking lawn and a spectacular one.

The following are some tips to help you help your Walker Mower (or any mower for that matter) perform to the best of its ability, delivering an optimum cut for the health and beauty of your customers’ lawns.

Adjust and clean. The best way to adjust your mower is to park it on a level surface. Check and adjust the deck so its nose points down approximately 1/4 inch and the sides are level within 1/8 inch. If necessary, use washer shims on the four deck height pins to adjust the deck to the dimensions.

Check to make sure the tires are inflated according to recommended specifications (see owner’s manual). Clean (e.g., remove any “caked-on” grass from the underside of the deck) and make sure the blades are sharp. Sharp blades ensure a clean cut, and they minimize engine stress.



Cutting height. A common mistake is to cut grass too low. Lawns that are cut too low are especially susceptible to disease and are rather intolerant of dry conditions. Mowing low also increases the likelihood that the lawn will be “scalped” if the mower encounters a particularly uneven mowing surface. Conversely, lawns that are cut too high lack the smooth, tabletop look desired by customers. The challenge, then, is to cut grass at just the right height. What is that height? Most grass varieties should be mowed when the grass reaches approximately four inches tall, at which time the

deck should be adjusted to remove no more than one-third of the grass plant. Grass types like Bermuda and Zoysia can be mowed a little shorter, to approximately two inches.

Ground speed. Speed counts when mowing lawns, but ground speed isn’t everything. In fact, operating a mower too fast can cause the deck to bounce and leave behind an uneven cut. Going too fast can also compromise the overall performance of the mowing deck and cause it to clog in wet conditions. Learn to match your mowing speed to the application, and don’t be afraid to slow down when conditions dictate.

A common mistake is to cut grass too low. Lawns that are cut too low are especially susceptible to disease and are rather intolerant of dry conditions.

Remember, how fast any operator completes a mowing job depends less on the actual ground speed of the machine and more on how maneuverable the mower is, how much trim



Operating a mower too fast can cause the deck to bounce and leave behind an uneven cut.

demonstrating a mower's maneuverability. But in the field, turning quickly and sharply can damage the turf. When making any sharp or zero-turn with your mower, slow down prior to making the turn and avoid twisting on the inside tire. Note: Watch the "How to Mow" video furnished with each Walker Mower to see the technique for making a zero turn without damaging the grass. In wet conditions, you may have to modify the turn a bit by angling your mower back and forth before starting your next run.

Patterns. One of the unique features of Walker Mowers is their ability to naturally stripe a lawn. The suction or vacuum created by the deck lifts grass blades to create the striping effect. Other mower decks use a roller to create a similar effect. Either way, leaving behind a pattern or stripe can enhance a landscape's appearance and add value to your ser-

vice. When striping or otherwise making a pattern in the turf, work to keep your lines straight and avoid "messing up" the finished product by driving across the pattern. Remember to alternate your mowing direction from week to week. Mowing in the same direction can create ruts in the lawn and leave behind an unsightly "washboard" effect.

Additional services. Aerating and dethatching a lawn will help to keep it healthy and looking lush. Most lawns should be aerated a couple of times a year to reduce compaction and allow air, water and nutrients to reach the plants' root systems. An excessive thatch layer has the same negative impact on a lawn and can be removed by using a dethatcher attachment. Since dethatching can sometimes disturb the tender roots of newly emerging grass plants, treatment should be done when grass is dormant.

Beautiful lawns don't just happen, they are planned. Behind every beautiful lawn there is a well-maintained and properly adjusted mower, not to mention a careful operator who matches his or her mowing technique to the application and mowing conditions. **WT**

work it saves a crew, and how easily it handles clippings and debris.

Clippings. Whether an operator picks up clippings, side-discharges them or employs a mulching deck is again dependent on mowing conditions and application. Collecting clippings will deliver the nicest-looking lawn. However, to save time and return valuable nutrients back to the soil, many mowing contractors prefer to side-discharge or use a mulching deck when conditions permit.

Turning. Any zero-turn mower has the capability to literally turn on a dime. This can make a dramatic picture in a parking lot when



The only Walker in town



Nine out of 10 contractors in Morgantown use mid-size walk mowers. Nathan Greene is not among them.

Morgantown, West Virginia, is not the first place one would expect to see a Walker Mower. After all, the town is surrounded by mountains, and many lots are as steep as they are wide. So why does the owner of Think Greene have a Walker Mower on his trailer? “That’s easy,” says Nathan Greene. “When I was looking for an alternative to my mid-size mower, my uncle in Ohio said, ‘Buy a Walker.’ When I reminded him how hilly it was here, he told me the Walker could handle most any hill, and it will go backwards up anything.”

The nephew took his uncle’s advice. Two summers ago he purchased a used Walker from a dealer in Pittsburgh for \$6,000. The 20-hp mower has a 48-inch GHS deck and a dethatcher attachment. “I have the

“When I reminded him how hilly it was here, he told me the Walker could handle most any hill, and it will go backwards up anything.”

only Walker in town, and I believe there are only one or two other lever-steer mowers here,” says Greene. “Nine out of 10 contractors in Morgantown use mid-size walk mowers. I use the Walker on all but one of my 33 properties. Doing so gives me a time and quality advantage over my competition. And since I purchased the machine, I have had more time to provide other services to customers.”

Greene received a degree in landscape architecture from West Virginia University. After marrying his college girlfriend, he moved away from Morgantown for a couple of years and returned when his wife found a job back home near her family. He found work with an area landscape contractor, only to lose his job a year later when a fire destroyed the company's headquarters.

"The owner told me he was planning on rebuilding, but couldn't give me a definite answer about when he would be rehiring," remembers Greene. "We had just purchased a new home and I couldn't wait around long without working. I decided to mow lawns and started stuffing mailboxes looking for work. One mailbox happened to belong to a contractor who wanted to sell his mowing business. I purchased a Gravely walk-behind and a trailer from him, and picked up a few of his accounts. A year later I purchased the Walker."

"I use the Walker on all but one of my 33 properties. Doing so gives me a time and quality advantage over my competition."

Of his 33 properties, two are commercial establishments, three are apartments and one is a homeowner association. Thirty of his properties are full-time mowing accounts; on eight of them he also applies fertilizer. He mows three residential properties every other week. In his spare time, he offers landscape enhancement services, too, including the installation of hardscape features.

According to Greene, using the Walker gives him two distinct

advantages over competitors. First, the machine does such a nice, clean job of mowing that he now promotes the quality of cut his Walker delivers. "The Walker deck just doesn't scalp, and that has proven to be a distinct advantage in this area," he points out. Then, Greene says the Fine Fescue so prominent in Morgantown requires the collection and bagging of clippings, which "took forever" with his Gravely. The Walker's collection ability and maneuverability cut his mowing time in half.

TURNING POINT

After a couple of years in business, Greene has a decision to make. Does he want to continue to grow his mowing business or should he expand into other areas, possibly taking further advantage of his landscape architecture degree? There is some discussion, too, about providing an entirely new service: landscape edging and curbing.

"The thing I really enjoy is working by myself, and no matter which way I grow the business, I will have to retain an employee," he relates. For the immediate future, though, his used Walker takes the place of an employee. That's not a bad trade-off, he adds. The Walker is reliable and easy to maintain, especially with the tilt-up deck. The mower rarely calls in sick and doesn't even complain about mowing the hills. Sounds like a match made in Morgantown.



The Walker's collection ability and maneuverability have cut Greene's mowing time in half.



‘Field of dreams’ forms community bond

Nitro, West Virginia’s, high school baseball field rivals any in the country, creating a lasting memory and something the whole community can enjoy.

There are not many high school baseball fields around the country that look and play like the one in Nitro, West Virginia. Brandon Matthew Sneed Field hosts more than 100 baseball games a year and truly sets the bar high for other baseball fields in the state. Fitting enough, the field is home to one of the state's top high school baseball teams, and it has become a showcase for the community of 35,000 residents.

The field was constructed in 1995 in memory of star athlete Brandon Sneed who was killed in an auto accident. The design and construction of the field was a total community effort, sponsored entirely by private funds. Since then, its maintenance has been the responsibility of volunteers who care for the field like it is their own. Brandon's father Dave, a school planner and architect, designed the field and is one of a group of three dedicated volunteers who oversee field improvements and maintenance.

"At first, the school just couldn't figure out why we spent \$11,000 on a mower, but the machine has turned out to do everything we wanted it to do."

"From the very start, the field has been a complete community effort, and it seems to generate more interest and enthusiasm as years go by," says Dave. "Our high school, from the school principal and athletic director on down, has been very supportive, as has virtually every member of the community."

FROM BULLPEN TO GROUNDS CREW

The volunteers head up the ongoing fundraising effort to keep the field operating, and provide the muscle to keep it maintained. In addition to Dave, the group, known as the "Bullpen," includes Bruce Adkins, Interim Director for the state's Division of Tobacco Prevention, and local retiree Steve Lykins, affectionately known as Dr. Dirt.

"From the very start, the field has been a complete community effort, and it seems to generate more interest and enthusiasm as years go by."

"The magic that makes this project work is also one of our major challenges," relates Steve. "Since we are an all-volunteer operation, we don't have a trained or experienced staff to help answer turf questions or to pitch in with maintenance duties. Hence, we have been very careful from the beginning to do everything to the best of our abilities. As they say, 'There's never time to do it right, but always time to do it over.'"

Over the years, the group has looked to Virginia Tech and Landscape Supply in Roanoke, Virginia, to answer questions about the outfield comprised of turf-type tall Fescue and 10% Bluegrass and the Bluegrass/Perennial Rye grass mix infield. An in-ground irrigation system helps keep the grass green, while also watering down a dusty infield between innings. The county employed a local contractor to maintain the field until four years ago when Dave's group purchased a Walker Mower.

According to Steve, the contractor just wasn't doing the mowing job that the group wanted. After spending countless hours on the Internet researching mowers, the "Bullpen" finally decided they needed a Walker Mower, and struck a deal with the county. The county put up half the money to purchase the mower (the money it would save by not having the contractor do the mowing) and the group put up the other half.

"At first, the school just couldn't figure out why we spent \$11,000 on a mower, but the machine has turned out to do everything we wanted it to do," Steve remarks. "It's a workhorse — it stripes and collects the grass." Dave agrees, noting that the 26-hp mower, equipped with a 48-inch deck and large hopper, is also fun to operate. "I find myself sneaking over here early in the morning to do some mowing. It is almost as if the three of us compete to see who gets to operate it. I can't imagine another mower being easier to operate."

The machine gets a workout. In addition to mowing the field three or four times a week, the volunteer crew uses the Walker to dethatch, and has even equipped it with a boom sprayer. From time to time, the mower is recruited to drag the infield.

Dr. Dirt keeps a watchful eye on both the infield and outfield, fertilizing the field five times a year with an organic fertilizer, and adjusting the mower deck to take no more than 1/3 of the grass plant off with every mowing.

"Our biggest maintenance challenge is not the playing field," he notes. "Instead, it involves the high-traffic areas around the coach's boxes and in front of the dugouts. Since the field hosts so many games throughout the season, from early spring to late fall, just striping the field and getting it ready for games keeps us all busy, too."



David Sneed (seated) and Dr. Dirt discuss maintenance strategy for the season's last game.

The Bullpen crew doesn't mind, though. In fact, the busier the field is, the better they feel. "We are building something special here for the community," Steve adds. "Every year, we strive to improve the field in some way. We recently installed some new landscaping, and plans are in the works for lining the outfield border with pine trees. A practice field is under development, too, thanks to the effort of a nearby technical

"We are building something special here for the community. Every year, we strive to improve the field in some way."

school that is using its construction as an opportunity to train students."

There's no question Nitro has something special going on, and it

transcends the lush, green infield and outfield turf that rivals any high school field in the country. The field has become a focal point, not to mention an example of how a tragic accident can bring together an entire community to make something that is not only a lasting memory, but something that everyone can enjoy.

WT



BOB T'S

Tech Talk

Why did my Walker break?

One of the foremost reasons I enjoy my job is because I can be completely open and honest concerning our product. Some manufacturers would never consider walking down this road, but let's be straightforward. Just because we don't talk about the possibility of breakdowns doesn't mean they are not going to happen. Does this mean our product breaks more than other brands? Certainly not! It means we take a very realistic approach to the performance of our product. Anyone who would say their product will never fail at some point is either lying or living in a dream world.

I'm sure that at some point we have all asked the great question, "Why did my (brand name) break?" The statement, "I've done all the recommended maintenance and operated it properly," usually follows this question. So, why did it break? I wish I could point my finger at one particular cause. Unfortunately, it's not that simple. Whether it's a Walker Mower or any other electro-mechanical piece of equipment, it is subject to breaking at any point in time. Let me quickly clarify that Walker Manufacturing Company, like most manufacturers, tries to set its standards high enough that failures are not the norm. But let's be realistic. They do happen. And when they do, what's more important for you (the customer) is how they're resolved, rather than what caused the failure. On the other hand, we as the manufacturer not only want to get the situation resolved quickly, but also want to determine the cause and correct it so it doesn't continue.

I would put failures into one of five categories:

1. **Manufacturing error** — human error in fabrication and assembly
2. **Component flaw** — material flaw
3. **Component failure** — failure of a purchased component
4. **Operator error** — misuse or abuse, accident, improper maintenance
5. **Normal wear and tear**


The first two are fully our responsibility. We must train our personnel well and provide an environment and tools that are conducive to high performance. We must set specifications to achieve a high level of quality and per-

formance. We have put checks in place that will reduce human and mechanical error to as close to zero as possible.

When it comes to purchased components, the rules change. We set the specifications for our suppliers and run spot checks. But there is a large degree of trust involved that they are meeting our requirements. It would take a NASA-type quality control department to be able to check every component that came through our doors. If you added the cost for such checks to the end product, we would price ourselves out of business.

The fourth area is, for the most part, out of our hands. We provide an Owner's Manual and training video with every mower. Both provide valuable information on proper operation and required maintenance. There's an old adage that says, "You can lead a horse to water but you can't make him drink." In this case you can provide all the information possible, but you can't make people read or view it. Our field experience has proven that if an end-user will follow the maintenance schedule religiously, breakdowns will be minimal. And if they will operate the equipment properly using some common sense, their mowing experience will be enjoyable and profitable. Can all breakdowns be avoided? No. Can they be minimized? Absolutely!

Whenever a breakdown occurs during the warranty period the great question is, "Who's paying for this?" I'd like to clarify that our warranty, like most other manufacturers, covers defects in materials and workmanship, and it is our discretion on whether a component will be repaired or replaced. Because of our two-tier distribution system, we count heavily on our dealers and distributors to evaluate each situation accurately and fairly. If every situation were black and white, warranty would be simple. It's the gray areas that are most challenging. To be fair we try to give the customer the benefit when in doubt. Let's be fair and honest — misuse and abuse should not be given warranty consideration.

If all of us work toward creating a dependable product, and it's used safely and properly, the results will be a very high degree of satisfaction for all of us. 



Layoff sparks career change

After Dan Todd lost his job, he and wife Shelley loaded a push mower onto a “beat up” Toyota pickup and went hunting for work.

When four warehouses located in Regina, Saskatchewan picked up their stakes and left for Calgary, Alberta, Dan Todd not only lost his job, he lost nearly any chance of finding a new one. He and wife Shelley had two choices: They could move to Calgary and Dan could have his old job back, or they could stay behind and Dan could try something different. They chose to stay.

That was the inauspicious beginning of Top Notch Lawns. Shelley kept her job, and Dan decided to get serious about his two hobbies: mowing lawns and trimming trees. Without a bona fide customer in sight, they loaded a push mower onto their old “beat up” Toyota pick-

up and went hunting for work.

Those initial years were slow and rather difficult, Shelley recalls. At the end of the first year, the couple had only 13 residential customers. They picked up more accounts the following year and added still more residential and commercial accounts a year later. In between, both took horticulture courses on the side to gain more knowledge. “As we grew we wanted to increase our knowledge base for our customers,” Dan relates. “We wanted to be able to answer their questions and provide more services.”

The fourth year proved to be the “charm.” By then, Top Notch Lawns had more than 100 accounts. But the owners still mowed the majority of them with a push mower. The walking came to an end after a dealer

demonstrated a Walker. “I realized immediately that this was just the machine we needed to go forward,” says Dan. “That year we purchased our first Walker, a 20-hp gas model with a 48-inch deck.”

He continues, “Having the Walker allowed us to take on more work. We also purchased a snow thrower attachment for clearing snow at our condominium accounts.” Thinking back, Dan says they truly abused their new mower, cutting anything and everything in sight. “I’m amazed at how well the machine held up. I expect a lot from my equipment, but I put that mower on properties I wouldn’t consider putting our new mower on today.”

LEVERAGE

Dan and Shelley credit the Walker with their ensuing growth. The following year, they retained their first full-time employee and offered more services. Shelley even quit her job.

"The amount of work we could do with the Walker gave us the leverage we needed to grow," Shelley relates. "We took on more work, bought more equipment and targeted larger commercial properties." Gradually, the company built a reputation of being a full-service provider. "Our customers didn't want to call 10 people to work on their properties," Dan recalls. "Instead, they wanted to make just one call, and we wanted that call to come to us." When it did, the Top Notch owners offered plant and shrub installation, irrigation installation and repair, tree care, and mowing and maintenance. The only service the company subcontracted was rough mowing.

Throughout, other services were added. Shelley launched a silk plant


"As we grew we wanted to increase our knowledge base for our customers. We wanted to be able to answer their questions and provide more services."

cleaning business, and Dan filled in the off season cleaning stables for area farmers. The couple also recently opened a composting facility for landscape contractors. Top Notch charges them a nominal fee for dumping their yard debris, then uses the compost on its installation jobs or sells it to property owners.

Today, all the services are grouped under a new company name: Top Notch Enterprises. Dan runs the installation crew and oversees the field work, whereas Shelley supervises the maintenance crew and runs

the office. During the busy season, Top Notch Enterprises employs 13 people. Most are laid off for the duration of tough Regina winters, with the exception of those who remain on call for snow duty.

A new Walker Mower appeared on scene this past spring and, like its predecessor, was put in the traces to mow at least 40 hours a week. "We would like to leverage our new Walker like we did the old one to grow more business and possibly even buy a second mower," notes Dan. "The challenge isn't mowing, it is finding employees." To solve the dilemma, Top Notch Enterprises is considering a plan that would allow key employees to literally take ownership of their jobs. Under the plan, Top Notch gives maintenance accounts to employees and supplies them with the equipment to do the job. In return, the employees buy their own fuel and supply the labor. Owners and employees then split the revenue 50/50.

"We probably don't have all the logistics down yet," Dan emphasizes. "But it is apparent that if a company wants to expand today, the owners will need to be more creative." Whatever arrangement employee and employer reach at Top Notch, a Walker Mower will be part of the equation. "I can't imagine using one of those other mowers with big steering levers," says Dan. "They are so cumbersome. We want to expand, we want to grow, and we will continue to do it, with the help of Walker Mowers." 



Their new Walker gave the Todds the leverage they needed to grow, to take on more work, to buy more equipment and to target larger commercial properties.



COMPANY FOUNDERS CELEBRATE 60TH

Walker Manufacturing founders Max and Margaret Walker celebrated their 60th wedding anniversary in September. Wesley Max Walker and Margaret Dean Fisher were married at The Friends Church in Liberal, Kansas on September 11, 1942. After a stint in the family farming operation at Fowler, Kansas, the Walkers, working side-by-side in true partnership, started the manufacturing company "from

scratch" in the late '50s. The first product was a gasoline-powered golf car.

On hand for the celebration were their four children (Bob, Ruth, Dean and Nina) and their spouses, as well as most of the 13 grandkids, spouses, and seven great-grandkids.

Max and Margaret are in relatively good health and still keep an eye on the daily activity at the company. They live in an apartment above the offices at the factory.

WALKER NATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIP PLANNED FOR EXPO 2004

Walker Manufacturing has committed to EXPO show management to hold another Precision Obstacle Course competition at EXPO 2004 in Louisville, Kentucky. This event was first held during EXPO 2002 and was well received by participants and spectators. It was not held in 2003 due to a change in show dates. (Walker did not want to operate the event on Sunday due to religious convictions.)

For 2004, the qualifying runs on the obstacle course will be on September 24th (Friday) and the semi-finals and finals will be held on Saturday. This competition has proven to be a great way to display operator skills and to recognize the achievement of the best Walker operators at the national level.

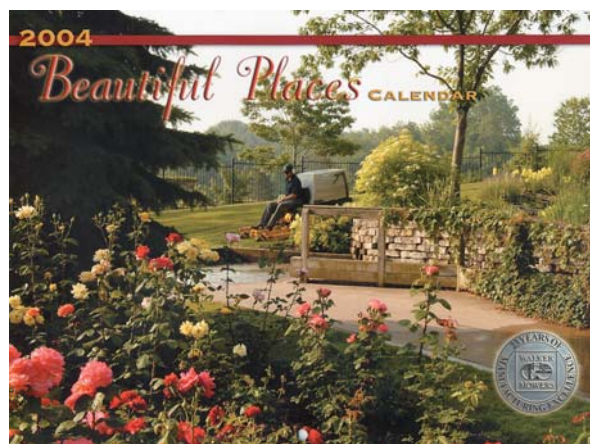
Walker will provide awards to the top three competitors including an expense-paid vacation trip to Colorado for the winner.



2004 CALENDAR AVAILABLE, 2005 PLANNING UNDERWAY

The Walker "Beautiful Places 2004" calendar is already hanging on walls and proudly displayed in many places where Walkers are sold or used. For Walker enthusiasts who want a calendar, they are being distributed by Walker dealers while supplies last.

For the 2004 calendar, Walker Manufacturing handled the whole project, including having the photos taken professionally at locations throughout North America. A new approach is planned for the 2005

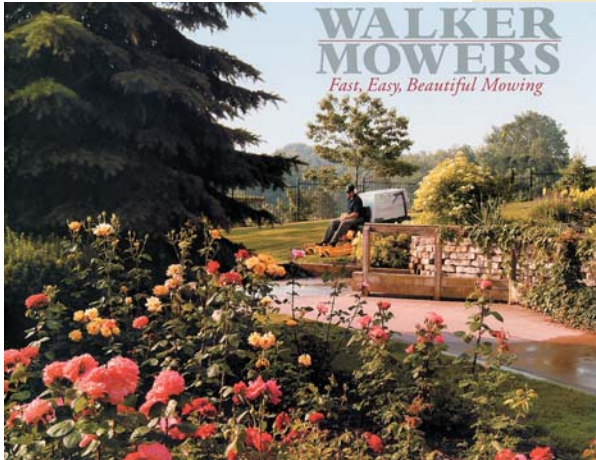


calendar by making a photo contest. Submissions from any property (where Walker Mowers are used) will be taken and judged by Walker staff for entry into the calendar.

A complete list of photo guidelines and rules will be posted at www.walkermowers.com this spring.

WELCOME ABOARD

In late 2002 and during 2003, three new distributors have joined the Walker marketing program. Emmett Equipment Company, Richfield, Ohio has acquired the distributorship for the states of Ohio and most of Indiana (except the northwest corner). New distributors in Europe are: Ets Paul Kellen SARL, Mersch, Luxembourg and Geaney + O'Neill Ltd., Cork, Ireland. Walker now has 25 distributors covering the USA and 27 export distributors.



NEW PRODUCT LINE BROCHURE AVAILABLE

A completely updated 14-page product line brochure is available (P/N 5895-31). The update reflects changes in the Walker line over the last several years and includes a thorough presentation of product innovations, features, models and specifications. Also available, as a companion piece, is the Walker Attachments, Options, Accessories Brochure (P/N 6895-17) which completes the overview of Walker products.

RECALL BULLETINS

Recall Bulletin #03178 was issued December 2003, Model MT26 (EFI), concerning rerouting and securing the fuel line, affecting S/N 02-58347 thru 04-67392. All owners of affected units are encouraged to have their machines inspected and updated free of charge by contacting their local Walker dealer (contact the factory if there is difficulty finding your Walker dealer).

EZ PIN PULLER

A new tool is being included with the big side-discharge decks (52, 62, 74) to make it easier to change the deck cutting height pins. The small lever hooks on the height adjustment hitch pins for easy removal and installation without "skinning knuckles". The design also includes a bracket to stow the tool on the tractor when not in use. The pin puller will work on earlier units; order P/N 8770.



CS6120 CHIPPER/SHREDDER ATTACHMENT

Walker is introducing the "Jo-Beau" chipper/shredder attachment to the USA market. This attachment is designed and produced in Belgium and has been in use in Europe for several years. The design is a drum-type chipper which connects directly to the Walker PTO and GHS blower, blowing chipped material into the grass catcher. Mobility is a big advantage of the Walker with a chipper on front; move the Walker to the



trimmings instead of dragging the trimmings to the chipper. Chipping capacity is 2-3/4" material, and due to power requirements, works best with Walker models MT26 or MD.

GHS BLOWER LOCKOUT KIT

A simple mechanical linkage may be added to GHS models to disengage the GHS blower when not in use. When a side-discharge or mulch deck or other attachment is installed on a GHS tractor, the blower lockout disengages the blower drive belt, eliminating the power loss, noise and air turbulence of running the blower without the GHS deck in place.

The lockout kit (P/N 6541) is easily installed, very convenient for operators to use, and it also eliminates the use of the blower intake cover (P/N 5595-2). Fits current models MC, MD, MT and earlier models with micro-V blower belt drive (S/N 01-52900 and on) or earlier units with the micro-V blower pulley kit installed.

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Dean, Max & Bob Walker



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