

# WALKER TALK

SERVING LAWN MAINTENANCE PROFESSIONALS FOR YEARS TO COME

## THE RIGHT MOWER for a Performance-Oriented Company

- 'One Man Show' in Louisville
- Amazing Garden, Amazing Gardener
- Facebook Grows Relationships and Sales
- Father and Son Team-up To Be 'Fussy'



VOL. 37



### 3 The Right Mower for a Performance-Oriented Company

Ed Castro Landscape Company in Roswell, Georgia, has had to learn how to deliver on its customers' high expectations.



### 6 'One Man Show'

54-year-old Mike Hill of Louisville-based Clean Cut takes great pride in the 20 properties he still maintains.



### 9 Amazing Garden, Amazing Gardener

Dr. Bernard Huang, a retired surgeon, now spends much of his time looking after his 7.5-acre estate in Massachusetts.



### 12 Facebook Grows Relationships and Sales

Social networking sites are helping contractors find new customers, nurture existing customer relationships, and stay connected to suppliers.



### 14 Father and Son Team-up To Be 'Fussy'

Ross Lawn and Landscaping in Cape Coral, Florida, focuses on tight customer relationships to withstand a collapsed housing market.



### 17 Tech Talk

### 18 News & Products

# WALKER TALK

## Guilty as Charged

A comment we hear from time to time is, "Why doesn't Walker design a mower that costs less and competes with some of the other lower-priced mowers on the market?"

The quick answer is that we try to design equipment that we would like to buy ourselves, and we just happen to have a taste for high-quality equipment. In our family, we grew up with the idea that we would be willing to pay more to get more value. We are not talking about "luxury" here, but simply high quality and high value to match. So we have never had much interest in building "cheap" or designing to hit a low price point.

If that is considered a fault of ours, then we are guilty as charged.

In thinking about the design of a machine, the machine often takes on the personality traits of the designers. That is, unless the machine is designed by a design team (committee) as is sometimes done in big corporate culture. In our case, the Walker Mower primarily reflects the personalities of my brother, Dean Walker, and from earlier times, my dad, Max Walker. You can see a lot of my brother's design DNA in our machines as he has honed his skills across the years and recalled the core beliefs and ideas that came from growing up around our dad.

When you hear Dean talk about what he believes in and what he is passionate about, you can see it in the mower design. Dean has an obsession with the performance of a machine (making it do the best at what it was designed to do) and continuously works to improve performance; never being satisfied, never being done making improvement. He likes to keep working and improving an earlier design as a priority over starting a new project.

For a lawn mower, Dean sees extra weight as the enemy and he tends to use aircraft design principles—design for strength and not by weight or simply adding "boiler plate". Quick accessibility to working parts and easy replacement of parts is a design goal that was started with my dad when he designed the Walker Executive Golf Car in 1957 with a tilt-up body. And then there is the importance of making a compact design with tight packaging—anyone can make a big contraption—it takes passion, talent and clear vision to design a compact machine. Lastly, Dean likes to make a machine that will last a long time and works to avoid "planned" obsolescence. Many of the new design improvements are deliberately designed to be installed as upgrades on earlier models.

When you see a Walker Mower, it is a Walker because it was designed by a Walker. Yes, it may cost more than some, but it is an authentic machine that comes from our family and we just happen to want to design and make machines we would want to buy ourselves. **WT**

*Bob Walker*

Bob Walker, President



# THE RIGHT MOWER

## for a Performance-Oriented Company

**E**d Castro, BLA, ASLA, president of Ed Castro Landscape Company in Roswell, Georgia, knows why the Walker Mower is the only rider he's ever owned. "Our customers have high expectations and we have to deliver," says Castro, who founded his design/installation/maintenance company 19 years ago. "The mower is not only maneuverable and versatile, but also delivers a high-quality cut that helps to set us apart."

Not to say that Castro's company needs much help

in that regard. A wall filled with award-winning plaques, along with countless accolades and recommendations from customers, sends the message that Ed Castro Landscape is clearly special.

### INTERESTING TIMES

After receiving a BLA (Bachelor's of Landscape Architecture) degree from the University of Georgia, Castro traveled to London to practice landscape architecture. "I sent out 10 cover letters to London-based companies and received job

A Walker Mower is the only rider Ed Castro has ever owned. Today, his company operates nine of them.







**Castro says his Walkers are not only maneuverable and versatile, they also deliver a high-quality cut that helps to set his company apart.**

offers from three of them,” he recalls. He stayed there for 18 months before studying architectural history and visiting several European countries, including spending three months in Spain, making, in his words, “lots of sketches.” Castro later returned to Atlanta and joined a large landscape architectural firm to put his training and experience to work.

Unfortunately, timing is everything, and in this case, it wasn’t the best. A year later, in the midst of an economic downturn, Castro was laid off. “I couldn’t find a job so I did the next best thing,” he says. “I started my own company, selling

Christmas trees and doing small installations, gradually getting work designing landscapes.”

As customers asked for more services, the company started doing larger installations, mowing lawns, and providing other maintenance-related services. Within five years, Ed Castro Landscape was doing \$1 million in sales. In eight years, the young company tripled in size. By year 10, mowing and maintenance was bringing in \$1 million on its own. Today, the company generates \$7 million in annual revenue, 20 percent of which is maintenance.

“We’re not the biggest company

providing maintenance services in the Atlanta area, but I have to think we’re in the top 10,” adds Castro. “Altogether, we have nine Walker Mowers, including eight 25-hp models equipped with 42-inch GHS decks and one Super B. Most of our properties are wooded with tons of leaves to remove, which makes the GHS vacuum invaluable.” The Super B, Castro explains, is a recent addition to accommodate his company’s entrance into the public space market where picking up clippings is not a requisite and a larger mowing deck and speed are important.





## CONSISTENT PERFORMANCE

Castro is a stickler about quality, and emphasizes that an important part of this equation is consistent performance. “In maintenance, just like in design and installation, certain things need to be consistent,” he explains. “Safety, along with equipment reliability and performance, needs to be there every day. Customers expect the same look, which means you don’t want to be changing equipment; the lawn’s appearance depends both on the type of cut a mower delivers and employees who are familiar with its operation and actually take ownership of it.”

“As we grew crews, we grew our Walker Mower numbers, one per truck,” Castro continues. “I know that employees were fighting over them early on, but that’s less of an issue today. We have one more Walker Mower than maintenance crew. Our plan is to rotate mowers every three years or 2,000 hours.”

The mowers get a workout, Castro adds. “Lawns with warm-season grasses are mowed between 32 and 36 times a year, whereas cool-season turf gets more than 40 cuttings. Most of our maintenance accounts, just as our design/build accounts, are residential, or what we refer to as private gardens. In fact, our early design customers were the ones who told

the lesson,” meaning that area landscape contractors have to continue to be vigilant about becoming better business people.

Castro adds, “One of our greatest concerns is the degradation of the industry caused in part by the recession. We want good competition, and we want to compete against company owners who understand good business practices and costing, and who run good equipment. I also think that having good business partners is more important now than ever before. For example, we purchase all of our maintenance equipment, including our Walker Mowers, from nearby Howard Brothers. It’s not about price, it’s about them understanding our business,

**“The lawn’s appearance depends both on the type of cut a mower delivers and employees who are familiar with its operation and actually take ownership of it.”**



us we needed to get into the maintenance business. It was a natural progression for them. We designed and installed their landscape, and they wanted us to maintain it.”

## LOGISTICALLY SPEAKING

Ninety percent of the company’s work is within a 30-mile radius of Atlanta, which means that crews log a lot of miles. “When I was looking for a place to build, I came across this 10-acre parcel right across from a UPS distribution center,” Castro relates. “If any one company understands the importance of logistics, it has to be UPS, and their presence nearby immediately made the property more attractive to me.” Castro has since built a shop there and recently constructed a new design studio.

When asked about the current economic climate in Atlanta, Castro remarks, “The longer the recession, the greater

keeping us informed, and taking care of us when our equipment is down. Similarly, we consider our Caterpillar dealer to be a partner with us in our construction business.”

Overall, Castro is very optimistic about the future of his company and the green industry. “I’ve always had an entrepreneurial spirit,” he says. “As a kid, I mowed lawns, shoveled snow, and did just about anything I could to make a few dollars. I learned back then that there was always a customer or service in need. That holds true today, too.”

As Castro points out, it’s not just about providing a service, though; it’s about performing at a consistent, high-quality level—something that engenders customer loyalty and a good reputation. **WT**



# 'One



# Man Show'

## Gets It Done In Louisville

Mike Hill of Clean Cut went from manufacturing aluminum foil to mowing lawns.

The day before the *Walker Talk* editor arrived, Mike Hill celebrated his 54th birthday—54 that is, going on 45. This energetic Walker user worked 30 years for Reynolds Aluminum before retiring five years ago. For nearly 10 of those years, he logged overtime as a rolling mill operator, producing Reynolds Wrap® aluminum foil, only to go home and mow lawns.

"I wanted something else to do and I kept seeing pickups towing trailers and mowers around town," says the owner of Clean Cut in Louisville. "Upon a friend's advice at work, I purchased a 36-inch walk-behind mower, a set of ramps for my pickup, a hand-held blower and a string trimmer. A year later I bought a trailer and a 16-hp Walker Mower with a 42-inch GHS deck. It has always been just me, my Walker Mower, and lots and lots of overtime." Hill continues to trailer his 36-inch Scag, but rarely uses it.

Not much has changed from the very beginning—from Hill's customers to his equipment. He maintains primarily small residential accounts, and up until last year, used much of the same equipment he purchased nearly 15 years ago. "I pulled into a Lowe's parking lot last year," Hill recalls. "When I came back out of the store, my string line, blower, and gas can full of gas were gone."

Hill returned to the store and talked with the store manager who pulled up a video recording of the parking lot. It showed that the equipment had been

"lifted" even before its owner had entered the store. Hill pulled up, a box van pulled up beside him, and the rest is history. "It was all original equipment and it hurt me to see that it was stolen," says this Walker user. "Now, my hand-held equipment is locked onto the trailer."

### AMAZING DECK

Not to say Clean Cut's owner hasn't made a few advancements over the years. Last year he replaced his 16-hp Kohler with more than 2,000 hours on it with a new 20-hp engine. The original Walker Mower (with new engine) and the Scag walk-behind ride along in style on a custom-built 14-foot trailer. The original 42-inch deck hangs on the outside of the trailer neatly tucked behind a fender.

"I don't use that deck much anymore," Hill explains. "Several years ago, I purchased a 52-inch side-discharge deck that does a great job with the clippings. Only a handful of my customers want me to collect their clippings, and the larger deck with the mulching kit works wonders on leaves."

"The first year after I purchased the kit, I was mulching leaves when a lady stopped me and wanted to know how I could fit so many leaves into the dump box," Hill goes on to say. "She was amazed when I opened the box and saw that it was empty. 'Where did they go?' she asked inquisitively, as if I were a magician. 'On the ground,' I said, 'where they do the most good.' She could hardly believe

it, and it is truly unbelievable how the mulching kit literally disintegrates the leaves. People, even some of my customers, routinely think I collect the leaves. Instead, the leaves go back on the lawn where they add nutrients."

Hill charges a little more for mulching the leaves simply because it takes a little longer to mulch than to mow. "Oak leaves are the most difficult to mulch, but when they are dry, they, too, are no match for this amazing deck," he explains.

### SLOWING DOWN

Since retiring, the Louisville native has made a few adjustments. He only mows 20 lawns a week, on a Tuesday/Wednesday/Thursday schedule. On his "off" days, he's either working on his new two-story garage (that he calls his "garage mahal"), renovating his lake house, or showing friends through his and wife Chris' home, which again he has literally redone from the floors up. "I take pride in everything I do," says Hill. "That's one reason why I've had so much success in my mowing business. Customers like their lawns and landscapes looking neat and clean."

He says the Walker is the ideal mower for him. Being a one-person operation, he doesn't want to spend all his time trimming and blowing, and the Walker's outfront deck design and maneuverability help cut down on both tasks. "I know this mower isn't for everyone," Hill adds. "It's more expensive than others on the market



**Mike Hill purchased a new 14-foot custom-built trailer last year. Among its features are:**

and it's not as fast as many mid-mount machines. But it fits my application to a tee. It's easy to control and sweet to handle. I love my Walker."

Indeed, Hill likes it so much that he's looking into the purchase of a new Super B. "I rarely pick up clippings and I don't collect leaves," says Hill. "The Super B could be just the mower I need." In the meantime, he's made a couple of other purchases that indicate just how much he has slowed down since retiring.

He points to his "garage mahal" that houses what looks like a new diesel pickup. Instead, it's a 2001 Ford F-250 with a 7.3-liter diesel engine. "I've just detailed it," Hill says, while beaming with pride. "See, I've even cleaned all the rubber along the inside of the doors." The vehicle looks brand new, but actually has just over 125,000 miles on it. Its purpose is to tow around a new 33-hp John Deere utility tractor.

"I'm thinking about doing a little snowplowing and some excavating around the lake house," he relates. "The tractor is the smallest John Deere I could get with a cab. You need the cab when moving snow. It also has a backhoe attachment, which will come in handy." To accommodate his new purchase, Hill asked his trailer manufacturer to bolster the end gate and install a couple of jacks for additional support when loading and unloading the tractor.

Hill looks at his watch out of habit. "My friends say they can set their watch by me. I guess that's what happens after working so many years in a factory and only having just so much time to get everything done at home." Face it, for this retiree, there still isn't enough time in the day. **WT**



**A deck-carrying apparatus for saving trailer space**



**Jacks for additional support when loading his new John Deere utility tractor**



**Locks to prevent equipment theft**



# Amazing Garden, Gardener

Dr. Huang took up gardening several years before retiring from practice in 1997.

**“T**he only way to understand Mother Earth is to be a serious gardener,” says Dr. Bernard Huang. “Only then does one understand how amazingly complex and beautiful the planet is that we live on.”

The retired cardiothoracic surgeon talks from experience. His 7.5-acre estate in Lexington, Massachusetts, resembles an arboretum that features more than 150 plant species, a tranquil pond, and two beautiful homes—one for Dr. Huang and his wife, the other for his daughter, one of his two children.

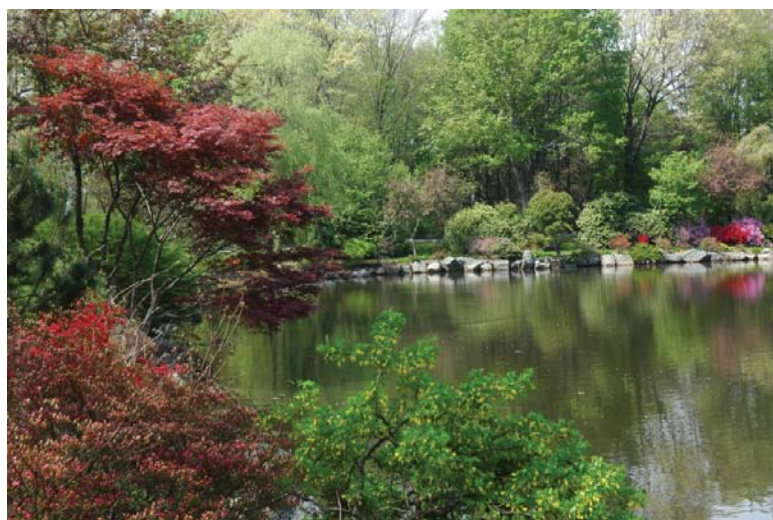
Dr. Huang took up gardening several years before retiring from practice in 1997. “I used to see older doctors hanging around hospitals because they didn’t have any other interests in life,” he recalls. “I wanted a hobby, so I took up gardening, something that would keep me occupied in later years.”



Soon after retirement, gardening became more than a hobby for Dr. Huang. It became a passion. "This was a wetlands and my house was literally the first one in the area," he says, pointing out details while maneuvering his utility vehicle over a bridge built with his own hands. "The rhododendrons are beautiful in the spring, and I've just planted nine weeping cherry trees. They will bloom in the spring, too, just like those in Washington, D.C."

Transplanting plants in his greenhouse took the place of performing heart bypass surgeries while his garden helped absorb some of his abundant energy and enthusiasm for life. At the young age of 79, Dr. Huang still spends a full day nearly every day there, but he doesn't maintain his property alone. No, he has help from his Walker Mowers, one of which resides at his summer home in New Hampshire, a Kubota tractor and loader, and a four-wheel-drive Kubota utility vehicle.

"I read about the Walker Mower in a magazine and thought it would be perfect for my property," he relates. "So I purchased my first one in 1997, a 20-hp diesel." With so much work to do on his land, Dr. Huang decided he needed a few



more for his attachments: a snow blower and blade, a leaf blower and a dethatcher. Today, his lineup includes four Walker Mowers: three diesels and one gas-powered unit on his leaf blower.

"If General Motors made automobiles like Walker Manufacturing makes mowers, the company wouldn't have needed a bailout," says this user. "Yes, the mower is a bit expensive." But using an American cliché, he notes, "You get what you pay for."

"There's not a better mower on the

market," he adds. "I know that. I've done my research and I've used the machine for nearly 15 years."

### LEADING BY EXAMPLE

Born in Shanghai, Dr. Huang came to this country in 1953 when he was only 17 years old. He had \$25 to his name, a Chinese-American dictionary under his arm, and a scholarship to Boston University. After spending seven years in school and finishing his residency, the young doctor established a private practice and proceeded over the next three decades to perform surgery in eight Boston area hospitals. His first return visit to his homeland wasn't until







1973 when President Nixon opened the door to China. At the time, Dr. Huang became the first American-trained doctor to enter Shanghai. He has since been back to China 18 times, sharing his medical knowledge with Chinese students.

Still attached emotionally to China, Dr. Huang says there is no question where his loyalty lies, though. "I'm a U.S. citizen and an American," he emphasizes. "This is where I was educated, made a living, and raised my family."

In many ways, the garden represents the gardener's view of life, not to mention life in America. Dr. Huang brims with pride as he talks about gradually transforming a virgin wetlands area into what he calls "an American chop suey garden" filled with a wide variety of indigenous plants. "There is no social welfare here," he laughs. "I

plant trees and flowers, and baby them for the first few months. Then, if they make it on their own, that's great. If they don't, they didn't belong here in the first place."

Later, while sifting through hundreds of digital images of his native homeland, before and after Nixon's visit, he talks about his family escaping from the Japanese in 1945, hearing about President

western world for leadership.

"It's not about domination anymore," he emphasizes. "We are in a global economy and no one country will dominate like we did after World War II. But I believe the U.S. is in a great position to lead the world by example. This country is very privileged with its geography, resources, people and government. We

have issues, too, but by resolving them we can help show the way for other countries."

Dr. Huang is certainly leading by example. His students are practicing medicine in all corners of the world,

and even his neighbors are learning that native landscapes don't have to all look the same, or be maintained in the same way. "I think I may have been one of the first Walker Mower users in the area," he remarks. "Then, I began to see more of them."

No, this retired surgeon doesn't take credit for introducing the mower to Lexington, but just possibly his example has made life easier for a few area property owners and local landscape contractors. **WT**

**"If General Motors made automobiles like Walker Manufacturing makes mowers, the company wouldn't have needed a bailout."**

Roosevelt's death while on a boat to Taiwan, and later coming to this country to study medicine. "You know, I wasn't able to return to China until 1973," he explains. "By then, my father had passed away, and my mother had been ill from having a stroke. So many things were on the verge of changing in China, too."

Dr. Huang shows images of barren streets and broken-down train stations, all from his early visits. He then scrolls to present-day China where cities are alive with color, modern shopping malls, and futuristic-looking train stations. Still under communist rule and with more than 1.4 billion people, Dr. Huang admits that China has its issues, but he says the country and its economy are on the right path—and will one day challenge the



**With so much work to do, Dr. Huang decided he needed a Walker Mower for every attachment.**



# facebook

## Grows Relationships and Sales

Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn and YouTube are just a few of the rising stars in the social media world. Until recently, their application reflected their social media status. Users tabbed them to share interesting moments with family and friends and to update them with “happenings” on a daily and even hourly basis.

These social media tools may have been designed for social interaction, but companies, including landscape contractors, are finding them useful for staying in touch with customers and growing revenue streams, as well.

### BEYOND THE WEB

What’s the saying today? “If you don’t have a website, you don’t exist.” To be sure, a website is an important e-commerce tool since the Internet is likely to be the first place, or one of the first places, property owners will look to find service providers.

“You absolutely need a web presence,” says Heather Schuster, president of Wisconsin-based Terra Firma Landscape and former president of the Wisconsin Landscape Contractors Association (WLCA). “Our company no longer spends one penny on Yellow Pages advertising and instead uses those ad dollars to keep our website up-to-date.”

The words “up-to-date” are key, she adds, pointing to the growing significance of social media tools, especially Facebook. “To add images or otherwise change our website, I have to contact our IT person who will then orchestrate the changes for

me. On the other hand, I can post new images of projects we’re working on to our company Facebook page anytime I want.”

Terra Firma’s Facebook page, which can be accessed from its website, features images from more than a dozen projects, with new postings nearly every month. Schuster also posts the company’s involvement with charitable events,

**“Our customers, many of whom are on Facebook, get an opportunity to see what projects we’re working on. The tool’s power comes into play when they send an image of something we’re doing to one of their friends.”**

– Heather Schuster, Terra Firma Landscape

company awards, timely updates on service offerings, as well as gardening and landscaping tips for property owners.

Adds Schuster, “Our customers, many of whom are on Facebook, get an opportunity to see what projects we’re working on. The tool’s power comes into play when they send an image of something we’re doing to one of their friends.”

### NO DOWNSIDE

This landscape professional says there truly is no downside to having a Facebook page. It’s easy and free to set up. Just visit facebook.com, set up an account (including password), add some photos and news items, and start looking for friends.

Chestnut Oaks Lawn & Landscape in Greenville, South Carolina, has been on Facebook for only six months, yet already the company has more than 320 active friends, including 60 who are customers.

“From our perspective, Facebook is more beneficial than our website,” relates company owner Dean Cox. “Facebook is so easy to update with images such as ones we recently posted showing before and after images of a sod laying project.”

Cox explains that Facebook is like talking to a friend on the phone except there is an important multiplier effect. “Every time

I post an image, it goes on our friends’ walls. If one of them has 500 friends, those friends also get to see the image.”

This Walker user estimates that Facebook generates two or three new customers a month, and doesn’t cost a dime in the process. “We don’t do any advertising anymore,” he emphasizes,

adding that Facebook does something that Yellow Pages and other forms of advertising cannot do: prequalify customers. “Pictures don’t lie,” says Cox. “They tell an important story about the type of company we are, the services we provide, and who a typical customer is likely to be. If customers are price shopping and see us on Facebook, they won’t give us a call.”

Conversely, being on Facebook allows Cox to stay connected with both existing and potential customers.

### DEALER CONNECTION

For landscape contractors, Facebook offers another advantage. It affords a way to stay connected with their suppliers.

“We can easily post images of new Walker Mower products on our Facebook page for customers to see,” says Laura Cross, IT manager for Dickel Duit Outdoor Power Inc. “Just as an example,







Walker user Dean Cox estimates that Facebook generates two or three new customers a month.

we posted images from a Walker meeting we attended last summer, including ones of a new mower deck. A few days later, a customer saw the deck on Facebook and came into the store to have a closer look.”

This Red Oak, Iowa, dealer has more than 160 “friends” on its Facebook page, many of whom are commercial customers. “We’ve only been on Facebook since July, but already I’m amazed by how much interest it generates,” says Cross. “Facebook may be in its infancy, but it has become an effective e-commerce tool for us.”

Cross is less excited about business applications for YouTube, Twitter and LinkedIn. “YouTube doesn’t convey the professional image we want,” she says, “and Twitter seems to attract users who want to follow celebrities. LinkedIn, on the other hand, seems like more of a career-building site for professionals.” The dealership isn’t blogging yet, Cross points out, but might do so in the near future.

In the meantime, it’s full speed ahead with Facebook. This outdoor power equipment dealer would like to have

at least 500 Facebook friends, many of whom would be commercial customers. Cross refers to this social media tool as “an electronic word-of-mouth” and an “eBay for people who can find anyone, anywhere.”

It works that way for this Walker dealer, and it works similarly for Chestnut Oaks and Terra Firma. The word “social” is a good fit for any relationship business, and taking advantage of Facebook is just one way to give social media a business application for your company. **WT**



# Father and Son Team-u



The Ross Lawn and Landscape team  
(left to right): Mario Sahr, Mike Porter,  
Bruce Ross, Roger Ross and Andre Tum.



# p To Be 'Fussy'

For years, Cape Coral, Florida, neighbors could say that their lawn maintenance contractor was fussy. Indeed, because that was the name of the company, Fussy Lawn Care, owned and operated by Roger Ross.

Things are a bit different today. Some 25 years later, Roger is joined by his son, Bruce, in the operation, and the name has been changed to Ross Lawn and Landscaping. But don't think for a moment that fussy Roger still isn't fussy, because he is. "I can remember helping my father after we had moved here from Michigan," says Bruce. "After the lawns were mowed, he made us go out with shears to trim straggling grass plants. He's still just as meticulous now."

Roger just laughs, and then tells the story of moving to Cape Coral to get out of the cold. Once here, he worked retail before launching his own mowing and maintenance business. "I started with a Gravely, but soon traded it in for a 16-hp Walker Mower with a 42-inch GHS deck," he recalls. "Everyone wanted their grass caught back in the mid-1980s. Then, in the early '90s, that all changed when the city banned grass clippings from the landfills."

Fussy started to transition his small fleet of yellow mowers to mulching and side-discharge decks, although he still operates the first Walker Mower he purchased in 1986. It logged 3,500 hours before the engine was replaced. He upgraded to a Walker diesel in 1997, with a 52-inch side-discharge deck. The mower, he says, has somewhere between 5,000 and 6,000 hours on it, having outlived a couple of decks. In addition to these stalwarts,

Ross Lawn and Landscaping operates two other Walker Mowers, each equipped with 25-hp liquid-cooled engines and 42-inch side-discharge decks, and two Scag zero-turn riders with 52-inch decks. Last year, the company purchased a Super B with a 60-inch deck.

"The Super B is fast, the foot control to raise and lower the deck is very convenient, and two back wheels instead of a single caster wheel straddle sprinkler heads," adds Bruce. "We use the Scag for rough terrain and the Walker Mowers for finish work. Our Walkers will go anywhere, too—up, down and sideways. They are balanced just right and the machine's

**"Everyone wanted their grass caught back in the mid-1980s. Then, in the early '90s, that all changed when the city banned grass clippings from the landfills."**

design allows for the perfect transfer of weight necessary for negotiating the hills."

## ECONOMIC IMPACT

Cape Coral is literally a huge housing project with 500 canals stretching to the Gulf and a landmass second only in the state to Jacksonville. Houses that seem like they're right next door are likely separated by a canal, with two homes sharing a rather steep canal bank.

"The collapsed housing market hit us fairly hard," says Bruce. "Houses that originally sold for several hundred thousand dollars can now be purchased for \$100,000 or less. In fact, housing developments remain partially completed while never-occupied new homes for sale are easy to find."

Still, the father-and-son team is doing well, although the customer count is down

30 from a peak of 200 two years ago. "Mowing lawns is very competitive right now," adds Roger. "Everyone is trying to get into the business. We're charging our homeowner customers an average of \$25 per cut, which comes to about \$90 to \$100 a month. What saves us is the close proximity of customers and our Walker Mowers that cut down on trimming and cleanup time."

The fact that the company offers a complete lawn maintenance package, including applying fertilizer three times a year, helps to differentiate Roger and Bruce from the competition. They also lay sod, install flower beds, do some hard-


scaping and install sprinkler systems. "If they want it, we can do it," says Roger. "If we don't have the equipment to get the job done, we will rent it. If we don't have the expertise, we will subcontract-out the work."

As Roger points out, having a solid relationship with customers is always important, but in a down economy, it's absolutely necessary. "I've had some customers who've been with me for 25 years. They know we offer quality service and that we can take care of most any of their landscaping needs."

Thinking back, Bruce says his dad has unknowingly helped their dealer, ABC Lawn Equipment, also in Cape Coral, sell more than a few Walker Mowers over the years. "Fussy is one of our long-time customers, and a good one at that," says ABC parts manager Craig Simpson. "We provide the service when they need it, and they keep the machines maintained."

One new customer on the horizon is former Fussy employee Mike Porter. His dad dug most of the canals in the area, and Mike later operated a trucking





Roger and Bruce purchased their Super B last year. Says Bruce, "The Super B is fast, the foot control to raise and lower the deck is very convenient, and the two back wheels straddle sprinkler heads."

company hauling landfill to building sites. During Cape Coral's growth spurt, he would draw enough fill to start 25 homes a week. Last year, after his company fell on hard times, Porter took a job with Ross Lawn and Landscaping. This year, he started up his own lawn maintenance company.

"Roger and Bruce direct work my way

when they can," says Porter appreciatively. "I'm gradually building my book of business and will buy a Walker Mower as soon as I can. That machine is ideal for the application."

Roger and Bruce agree. For Mr. Fussy, it's a finish machine that aligns perfectly with his meticulous maintenance practices. For his son, it's a machine that will

deliver a quality cut while cutting costs. "In the early years, we used to make more money mowing 50 accounts than we currently do mowing 170," adds Bruce. "It's so competitive here that you have to be both quality and cost-conscious at the same time." I guess one can say it makes this father-and-son team fussy about the equipment they use, too. **WT**





# Change

**C**hange is a word that stirs up all kinds of ideas, thoughts and visions—both positive and negative. It is used many ways in business, financial, manufacturing and political circles. The bottom line is that change has, and will continue to be, a major part of our world for as long as we are alive.

A friend recently told me that the only person who likes a change is a baby. I think he is right about that; change isn't always easy. Here at Walker Manufacturing we are consistently cultivating a culture that embraces change. As a matter of fact, that is why I am writing this article (my first) as opposed to my friend Bob T, who made a change about six months ago and took the position of Assembly Quality Engineer; he's enjoying it very much, by the way. Now I have stepped in to fill some very big shoes.

If you haven't already noticed, there have been some changes taking place with the Walker Mower recently in the area of compliance with fuel vapor emission standards. I will not be able to go into great detail in the space allotted here, so I will simply provide a summary of the changes, along with their effects on our models.

## VAPOR DOMES ON FUEL TANKS

The first thing you may notice is that the fuel tanks have changed. The tanks are now molded with a vapor dome, which is the portion of the tank above the fill opening. This creates an area where fuel vapors can collect in the tank, preventing them from releasing into the atmosphere when the cap is removed. Both our 5-gallon and 3-gallon tanks are now molded with this configuration, resulting

in reduced volumes of 4.7 gallons and 2.8 gallons, respectively.

## MEETING EMISSION STANDARDS

One of the most active areas of change has been in fuel vapor emission standards, which are addressed by the EPA and CARB. The EPA (Environmental Protection Agency) is the governing body for emission standards in the United States while CARB (California Air Resources Board) governs emission standards for the state of California.

At the present time, CARB's air quality standards are more restrictive than those of the EPA. Therefore, we are manufacturing two models based on the two standards.

## CARB's air quality standards are more restrictive than those of the EPA. Therefore, we are manufacturing models based on those two standards.

Models sold into California will be equipped with a carbon canister which collects fuel vapors when the engine IS NOT running, and then releases them to be burned off when the engine IS running. This canister is connected inline between the fuel tank and the engine air intake. It is mounted to the chassis and protected by a shield.

These California units will also have an inline rollover valve and diffuser mounted on the vapor dome of the tank before the carbon canister to prevent liquid fuel from getting into the carbon canister.

Finally, these units will also be equipped with a ratcheting, tethered, non-vented fuel cap.


All other units produced at Walker will also have the new-style fuel tank and will meet EPA standards. These units will not require the carbon canister, diffuser or ratcheting cap configuration.

## CHANGE REQUIRES TEAMWORK

As I said earlier, this is a summary of the changes as they relate to the subject of environmental compliance—and the changes they bring to the Walker Mower. There are many more pieces to this complex requirement; engine suppliers as well as other suppliers must work diligently to comply with these standards as well.

You may be asking the question: How will Walker keep up with the ever changing standards? First, we have added

a compliance engineer here at Walker Manufacturing to oversee this area of the business. Second, because of Walker's long-term commitment to excellence, we will work diligently to design and produce compliant equipment. Finally, as I stated earlier, Walker is willing to embrace change and not be fearful of it, or its implications for the future.

I hope I have been able, in some small measure, to give you a glimpse of some current changes and why they have come. It definitely takes teamwork to make this happen, and we at Walker are committed to do what it takes to provide you with the highest-quality compliant mower on the market. 



# Production, Employment Up At Walker Factory

After a dramatic slowdown of production in 2009 and the beginning of recovery in 2010, the Walker factory is seeing another year of increases in sales, production and employment in 2011.

Sales began to increase last year in March and finished with a strong fall

quarter. Some of the sales may have been due to pent-up demand and low inventories from 2009, but the strong pattern of Walker Mower orders going into spring 2011 is supporting an optimistic production plan.

Currently, 2011 production is set to

increase 44% over 2010. Employment at the factory has increased from a low of 118 in 2009 to 141. While production is not back to the peak levels of 2007-2008, Walker is experiencing a real rebound—and it looks like the factory will really be humming this year.



Pictured left to right: Don Brown, Walker World Championship Course Director; Shawn Unruh, 2010 Walker World Championship winner; Bob Walker, president of Walker Manufacturing

## NEW WORLD CHAMPION CROWNED

Mr. Shawn Unruh of Dumas, Arkansas, was crowned the Walker World Champion at this year's Walker World Championship in Louisville, Kentucky, at the GIE+EXPO. Unruh dethroned four-time champion Chris Ulrich of Jesup, Georgia.

The winner received a five-day trip for two to Colorful Colorado, including a full day at Walker Manufacturing. In addition to spending several days exploring Colorado, the winner and guest will enjoy a tour of the Walker factory, lunch with Walker staff, and the opportunity to meet with individual Walker employees.

The second-place winner received \$500 cash on the spot, while the third-place winner received \$250. Each of the 10 finalists received a Walker Ware gift pack valued at \$115.

## WALKERMOWERS.COM ADDING NEW LANGUAGES

In 2011, walkermowers.com will be available in seven additional languages. The project of manually translating the text of the site is underway.

Once the translations are complete, the site will be updated to include the multiple languages, which will then be available via a drop-down menu to all users. The seven languages currently being worked on are German, Spanish, French, Dutch, Swedish, Italian and Latvian.

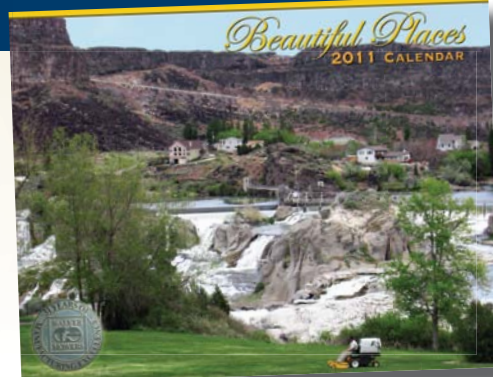
Walker is excited about this project which will allow current and potential customers from a number of countries to access the web site in their native language. With a successful export business, Walker is committed to reaching and supporting international web users.

## 2011 CALENDAR CONTEST WINNER

Mr. James Cleland of Twin Falls, Idaho, took home the top prize for the 2011 Beautiful Places Calendar Contest. Mr. Cleland took a spectacular shot of Shoshone Falls Park located in Snake River Canyon. He also took home \$1,000—and his photo is on the cover of the calendar.

Be sure to enter the 2012 Beautiful Places Calendar Contest. See full details at [walkermowers.com/programs/calendar-contest.php](http://walkermowers.com/programs/calendar-contest.php).

2011 Calendars are still available through your local dealer.





- Carbon Canister (controls gasoline vapor when engine is not running)
- Fuel Tank Vent Line to Engine
- Rollover Valve and Diffuser prevent liquid fuel from reaching carbon canister
- Fuel Tank with Vapor Dome
- Non-vented fuel tank cap with tether



**Updated Fuel System**  
(shows California design)

## EPA/CARB-COMPLIANT FUEL SYSTEM

All 2011 models will have a new fuel tank system to meet evaporative emission regulations required by the EPA (U.S. Environmental Protection Agency) and CARB (California Air Resources Board).

The fuel tank has been designed to include a “vapor dome”, which results in slightly less fuel capacity; the 5-gallon tank will hold 4.7 gallons while the 3-gallon tank will hold 2.8 gallons.

The ratcheting, tethered fuel cap on the tank is not vented. Instead, the tank will have a vent line connected to the engine to prevent fuel vapors from reaching the atmosphere. California models will also include a carbon canister in the vent line for more stringent control of fuel vapors.

These new controls for small gasoline engines mirror the clean air technology introduced by the automotive industry a number of years ago.

## IMPROVED CHECK VALVE FOR EATON TRANSMISSION

Starting in September 2010, Eaton hydrostatic transmissions installed in new machines and service parts from the factory have an improved check valve design in the transmission.

Earlier transmissions produced from 2007-2010 were prone to check valve failure under heavy loading. As shown by extensive field tests, the new design has corrected the problem.

Due to higher than normal failure rates, Walker is extending the warranty period (pro-rated) for the affected transmissions from three (3) years to five (5) years to take care of customers with earlier units that experience a transmission check valve failure.

## SUPER B HITCH AND IMPLEMENTS

A power-lift hitch (P/N IH6621) is now available for the Super B tractor which is used to attach three interchangeable implements.

The 50” two-stage snowblower (P/N SB6671) and the 60” dozer blade (P/N DB6661) are for use only on the Super B while the 47” rotary broom (P/N RB6650) is also used on Models MC, MD, or MT.





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# Walker Products of Yesteryear



*Walker*  
EXECUTIVE



Ninth-grader Will Peterson of Lowell, Indiana restored this 1963 Walker Executive Golf Car as a 4-H project and received a purple ribbon Grand Champion award for his efforts. The golf car originally belonged to Will's great-great uncle in Illinois.



This Walker Power Truck was originally used at the Amoco oil refinery in Casper, Wyoming, but now serves as a "clown wagon" in Shriner parades for Shriner Clown 'Raggedy Andy' Rob Knaus and his wife "Raggedy Ann" Jolene Knaus of Casper, Wyoming.



Originally used as a pizza delivery vehicle with a propane oven mounted on the back, this 1964 Walker Power Truck is currently being restored by David Schneider, Kitchner, Ontario, Canada.

*Walker*  
POWER TRUCK