



WALKER TALK

SERVING LANDSCAPE MAINTENANCE PROFESSIONALS

Harleys & Walkers

Homeowner wants the best product she can get her hands on

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Student Labor

Students at Thomas Aquinas College help mow and maintain 10 acres of turf

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Mowing Brought Me To The Dance

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WALKER TALK

My Mom

With my mother's passing in May, I have been thinking a lot about all of the upbringing that she gave me and the heritage received from her life. I write this tribute in her memory.

Mom knew how to work and had many skills she had learned from growing up on the farm. She knew how to make applesauce (not from a can), how to make a chicken dinner by killing and dressing a chicken, and how to sew a shirt for her boys among many other amazing things. She was a musician, playing both the piano and accordion and singing with Dad. She self-taught being a book-keeper and office administrator when Walker Manufacturing was founded. She was diligent in her work, not being satisfied with the accounting until accounts were balanced to the penny.

Mom knew how to discipline her four children. We did not have to wait until Dad got home. She had a paddle and she knew how to use it. She taught us right from wrong. I still remember the time I took a cookie out of the kitchen after being told not to; I lied when she asked me. In one lesson, I learned not to steal and not to lie.

Mom knew how to handle an emergency. The time my sister severely burned her hand on a hot clothes iron, my Mom did what needed to be done quietly, quickly and calmly. There was no 911 call to make.

Mom knew her God and believed. Most all of the stories in the Bible I first heard from my Mom reading them to me. She believed the stories and so did I.

Mom knew courage, every bit as much as my Dad. I never heard anything from her but "move ahead" when the decision was made to start the manufacturing company. Mom shared the dream and was Dad's companion in business right from the start. Even when the business failed in 1970 and had to be started all over again, Mom was the optimist and her faith was intact. Mom and Dad were two strands of a cord that would not be broken.

Mom knew who she was. She was an old fashioned woman of grace, graciousness and dignity. She was a modern woman who could think for herself and at the same time respectfully joined forces with my Dad. I never heard them argue and I never heard her say anything disparaging about my Dad.

From the Bible, Proverbs 31:28-29 comes to my mind as I think about Mom's life. "Her children rise up and bless her; Her husband also, and he praises her saying: 'Many daughters have done nobly, but you excel them all.'" **WT**



Bob Walker

Bob Walker, President

Getting a Head Start in Auburn

Jamie Brady started his company 14 years ago as a college student. Today he has his degree — and that same company that has grown to four maintenance crews and 17 Walker Mowers.

If you live in Auburn, AL, you know football and you know how important game day is. If you spend much time outdoors there, you're also likely familiar with Cutting Edge Lawn Service, since its box trucks can be seen daily on their way to and from properties.

Owner Jamie Brady and his company are well-known throughout the city and in nearby Opelika for providing high-quality landscape maintenance and installation services. Since launching his company 14 years ago while a student at Auburn University, Brady has seen his company blossom from a startup mow-and-blow operation into a full-service landscape management company. His extensive client list includes high-end commercial and residential properties. The company also maintains 11 schools and does work for the City of Auburn.

"Growth can be tricky," notes Brady. "You don't want to overextend yourself financially, and labor is always a challenge, especially down here where hot, humid days can be brutal." The owner has attempted to bridle growth for the last two years, but still admits it's hard to turn down new work. Even while trying to hold steady, sales volume has grown 22 percent last year and is on track to grow nearly the same amount this year. He just added his fourth maintenance crew.

DOUBLE TIME

Running a company and pursuing a degree in landscape design and horti-



Jamie with Calley and Lily. With Lily's birth a little over a year ago, the company's office manager now works part-time.

culture is demanding, and there's always the temptation to forgo the degree and grow the business. "I stayed in school for three reasons," Brady explains. "I wanted to finish what I started. A college degree would give me a backup plan if my com-

pany failed, and I would leave knowing that much more about plants and landscape design."

Being able to do both at the same time, however, would have been nearly impossible without some help, and it

arrived in the form of Philippe Scheys, another Auburn University student. Brady's first employee is now the company's operations manager.

Brady recalls the days when he and Scheys essentially tag-teamed accounts while at school. "We tried to schedule our classes at different times of the day so one of us could be in the field working. Depending on the day, I might drop Phil (Scheys) off and then mow a yard or two and vice versa. We worked like

SNOWBALL EFFECT

In addition to four maintenance crews, Cutting Edge Lawn Service fields two installation crews, along with a spray technician. Mowing and other maintenance services account for approximately 50 percent of the company's revenue. Installing new landscapes accounts for the other half. Crews operate out of a 3.5-acre headquarters facility. The company recently purchased what has become the 17th Walker Mower it has owned.

"The business snowballed pretty quickly after purchasing my first Walker Mower," Brady says while reflecting back on the early days. "Before going to Auburn, I attended a junior college and worked part-time for another landscaping company. That job didn't work out, but my parents loaned me the money to help set me up in business, including the purchase of the Walker Mower.

"I was familiar with the mower's cut and knew it was for me. About that same time, I decided to change my focus from business to horticulture and transferred to Auburn where I met Philippe."

After graduation, the business continued to grow and evolve. "It's all about delivering top service to our customers," Scheys emphasizes. "We're not only very detail-oriented, but will also do virtually anything a customer asks. If we can't do it in house, we will point them in the right direction."

High-end homeowners are typical customers for both the company's maintenance and installation divisions. The 11 schools it maintains in the city are also a nice fit, says Scheys, noting that



The newest Walker Mower (number 17) tidies up a front yard.

that throughout school. By the time we were seniors, we had multiple crews and were maintaining close to 100 residential accounts. No, it wasn't the traditional learning experience, texting crew leaders in class and sometimes messing up the halls with muddy shoes. But I wouldn't trade it for anything."

Neither would Scheys, who graduated with a degree in marketing. "At one time, I thought a degree in horticulture would be beneficial. But as it turns out, a marketing background can be useful as well. I talk to customers every day and try to help them. We're always looking for ways to grow and develop our business. I believe the two degrees complement one another."



Installations account for half of the company's annual revenue.



Cutting Edge Lawn Service added a fourth maintenance crew this year. It will likely switch from an enclosed trailer to a box truck when accounts grow in number.

the properties keep one crew busy full time. Less typical are so-called “game day” customers who return to Auburn to attend football games. The company maintains a dozen or so of these properties year-round even though the owners only show up on game day weekends and maybe a few other times throughout the year.

HELPING HAND

Brady emphasizes how important having a good team is to sustain growth. “Philippe has been with me from the beginning and knows as much about running the company as I do. His handling of the maintenance operation allows me to focus on designing and installing landscapes.

“I don’t worry about my crews either. Our employees are hardworking and well-trained to do the job the way Philippe and I want it done. Maintenance crews work Monday through Thursday with Friday built in as a rain day. Our two installation crews work a normal five-day week.”

Two other very important partners include his wife, Calley, and the Walker Mower dealer in nearby Opelika. Calley is the company office manager. She worked

full-time until the birth of the couple’s daughter, Lily, a little over a year ago.

Over the years, the company purchased 16 of its 17 Walker Mowers from Price Small Engines and owner Steve Price. “It would have been 17,” adds Scheys, “except Steve didn’t own the company when Jamie purchased his first mower; instead, he worked there as a technician.

“Not to say we still wouldn’t be Walker Mower users if Steve weren’t in business. But it sure helps to have a great dealer nearby, for the routine repairs and the unusual.”

The unusual occurred a few years ago when thieves cut through a fence and broke into the company’s three box trucks. “They took every piece of handheld equipment we had, essentially putting us out of business. The only reason they didn’t take our Walker Mowers is because they couldn’t throw them over the fence,” adds Brady. “We called Steve and in a few hours he had us up and running again.”

Today, Cutting Edge Lawn Service operates four Walker Mowers, all 23-hp models with 42-inch GHS decks. The mowers will either be traded in or sold outright somewhere between the 1,600-

to 1,800-hour mark (when they’re around 2.5 years old). Brady prefers transporting them in box trucks because he believes they’re easier to maneuver than trailers, not to mention the trucks double as moving billboards.

Among current business challenges, he points to labor as the biggest one. “It gets hot and humid down here and even if people think they can work in this environment, many can’t handle it. There’s no question we could take on more business if we had the people.”

The other challenge he references is low-balling companies on the maintenance side. He views them as more of a threat, however, to potential new customers compared to long-time accounts that appreciate and expect good service.

Operating a business while in school gave Brady and Scheys a head start in more ways than one. Yes, they received their degrees, and unlike most of their classmates, they didn’t have to search for work upon graduation. Beyond that, however, the work experience taught them a valuable lesson they could never learn in class: the direct relationship between providing top service with quality people and equipment and the path to successful, long-term growth. **WT**



“Now I Want Another One”

Homeowner loves the best she can get, from her Harley-Davidson motorcycle to her Walker Mower.

If you want a riding mower, the Walker is for you.” This testimonial comes from Lynda Bulani who lives on a 700-acre farm 20 minutes north of Biggar, Saskatchewan.

Four years since purchasing her mower, she continues to mow her two acres of lawn every week, sometimes more often depending on the weather and other variables. What are some of those other variables? Bulani explains, “Two years

ago, my husband, Dennis, pulled up with a float truck and applied probably what is equivalent to 500 pounds/acre of fertilizer on the lawn. I mowed twice a week all summer that year.”

In addition to the farm, the Bulanis own and operate eight agriculture stores that sell fuel, oil, fertilizer, chemicals and seed to farmers. The locations, which operate under the name Rack Petroleum, Ltd., also offer custom applications, and

they have a research division. The farm acts as a test site for the research. “Maybe Dennis was working on some special fertilizer formula when he condemned me to mowing twice a week that year,” Bulani says with a laugh.

For this homeowner, though, “condemned” would surely be the wrong word to describe her days mowing lawn. “There are so many things I like about this mower,” says Bulani. “I like the design, it’s

comfortable to ride, and it's easy to adjust the mowing height. I also like the front deck for its maneuverability.

"Since I do all the routine maintenance on the mower such as greasing it, changing the oil and filter, and changing the blades, I also enjoy how easy and accessible everything is, including how accessible the tilt-up deck makes the blades."

By her own confession, Bulani is more than a little obsessive about the mower. One of her daughters reportedly operated it just once, and mother spent most of the time walking next to the mower to her daughter's annoyance. Her possessiveness comes across in other ways. She engages the blades very slowly and gradually increase the mower's RPMs, something for which most contractors wouldn't have the patience. What they would condone, however, is her meticulous attention to mowing lines and patterns.

"I had time to kill while the dealer changed the tire. He had a mower on display and the first thing that caught my eye was the catcher box."

– Lynda Bulani

MOTORCYCLE MAGIC

So how does a homeowner in Saskatchewan end up buying a Walker Mower? Blame it on a Harley. While taking a motorcycle trip, Dennis and Lynda stopped in Jackson Hole, WY, to have the rear tire changed. The shop, Jackson Hole Cycle & Saw, was also a Walker Mower dealer.

"I had time to kill while the dealer changed the tire," Bulani relates. "He had a mower on display and the first thing that caught my eye was the catcher box. I walked around and found a brochure, which I took home with me.

In the meantime, a salesman came up and pointed out all the features of the machine. So, too, did a customer in the store who told me it was the best mower they've ever used."

From there on, this homeowner was on a mission. Her Kubota diesel with a belly-mount mower was getting old and worn out and she needed a replacement. The Walker Mower was it.

Back in Biggar, Bulani asked the owner of Fick's Small Engines, Brian Fick, to do some research on the mower. She explains, "He told me it was an excellent mower, but maybe a bit pricey



This homeowner rivals any contractor for keeping straight mowing lines.



The mower's maneuverability and tilt-up deck are two of several features that stand out for Lynda.

for what I needed. Admittedly it was. Sure, I could have purchased something that was less expensive, but I wanted the Walker Mower.

"Brian helped me get the mower I wanted, a 26-hp model with a 48-inch GHS deck. Just this year, I purchased a dethatcher from Walker Mower dealer Mini Tune in Saskatoon."

NOT YOUR AVERAGE HOMEOWNER

Bulani had little trouble getting used to operating her new mower. As she says, "I operate a Bobcat skid-steer, so getting the hang of the Walker Mower was easy."

In fact, she's been around equipment her entire married life, first helping Dennis operate the family farm after they were married in 1981. Three years later, to supplement farm income, they became an agent for a bulk fuel supplier. In 2001 they started their own independent retail operation, growing it from one store and two employees to eight locations and 120 employees.

"I don't really have a job title," says Bulani. "Over the years, I've acted as office administrator doing HR duties, payroll and so forth. More than anything now I consider myself to be Dennis' assistant." She's also mother to three daughters, Chelsea, 33, Cassandra, 31,

and Coralee, 29, two of whom work in the business out of the Saskatoon store.

Helping Dennis run the business makes life pretty hectic for Bulani, especially during the busy season, which also happens to be lawn mowing season. "Having the Walker Mower makes the job really enjoyable," she adds. "It's not a chore at all."

When asked how long it takes to mow, she shrugs her shoulders. "It depends. Sometimes I mow it all and other times I may not have time to do everything." They also rent a few acres to their son-in-law for pasturing cattle. Bulani mows part of this, too. After the cattle have spent a few days chewing the grass, she smooths out the area with a harrow, waits a couple of days, and then mows it with the Walker Mower—but not before raising the deck.

Just as if this homeowner doesn't have enough lawn to mow already. "I want another one," she says, referring to her mower. "I won't need a catcher or a GHS deck on this one, but would look instead for a model with a wide-area, side-discharge deck."

It sounds like a Model B with a 62- or 72-inch deck is in order. This time, though, she won't have to ride to Wyoming to get a brochure and see the machine in person. **WT**

Thomas Aquinas College

Unique Mower, Unique Education



Austin Moore is one of 17 students working full-time at the college this summer. Here he is putting a 15,000-hour Walker Mower through its paces.

Located in Santa Paula, CA, Thomas Aquinas College is a private Catholic Liberal Arts School. Nestled in a valley neighboring California's San Padres National Forest, the college features a 132-acre campus, 10 acres of which are manicured year-round, and an enrollment of 375 students. This is not a typical venue for a *Walker Talk* story. Yet the mowers and the school complement one another.

The story is a bit unusual for several

reasons, not the least of which is how the grounds are maintained. A beautiful landscape, highlighted by buildings representative of Spanish Revival architecture, is cared for almost exclusively by students participating in the school's Service Scholarship program. The program commits students to work 13 hours a week during the school year. In addition to maintaining the landscape, they help in the kitchen, assist full-time staff in the library and business office, and work elsewhere on campus as needed.

The latter also includes contributing to the upkeep of the school's fleet of automobiles and trucks, along with its mowing and maintenance equipment.

Dave Gaston, landscape supervisor, relies on 42 students to maintain the grounds. "In my department, students mow, garden, prune, fertilize, spray for pests, renovate gardens, and maintain our extensive irrigation system, among other duties," says Gaston. "They do essentially everything relating to the outdoors. I don't do any of the work myself. I just train, and



Landscape supervisor Dave Gaston (left) with college student Austin Moore and automotive department head John Vineyard.

we only bring in outside professionals for bigger jobs we can't handle here."

Most students rarely have any horticulture or mowing experience, Gaston relates. Training is an ongoing challenge because they move from one job to another as they go through school. "But the students are all fast learners and have excellent morals and strong work ethics," he adds quickly. "In addition to learning about horticulture, the work experience teaches time management and gives students a reflection of the real world. Some have even pursued a career in horticulture after graduation."

MOWING YEAR-ROUND

Each semester, three or four students are assigned to the mowing crews. John Vineyard, head of the automotive main-

tenance department, oversees their initial instruction, which includes training on two Walker Mowers, one of which has an impressive 15,000 hours on it. Another Walker Mower, also with 15,000 hours, sits in reserve, waiting for a new paint job.

"I teach them how to start the mower, stop it, and make turns without harming the turf," Vineyard explains. "I also direct them to give the mowers a walk-around before mowing to check the tires and overall give the machine a visual inspection."

Vineyard also shows them how to engage the blades at a lower RPM to reduce stress on mower parts, and instructs them to be aware of anything unusual that occurs while mowing. "I want them to listen for any unordinary

sounds or changes in how it mows or steers. It's important to take care of potential problems before they become issues," Vineyard emphasizes.

Speaking of which, he notes that the Walker Mowers, including the oldest with mega hours, have never experienced any serious engine problems. The mowers all operate with 48-inch GHS decks. Of the two older models, one features a 20-hp air-cooled engine while the other is powered by a 25-hp water-cooled engine. A third mower, the newest, has a 23-hp air-cooled engine. As Vineyard relates, two mowers operate four hours a day, five days a week, all year long—unless it rains.

"It's mostly about maintenance," he emphasizes when quizzed about mower longevity. "I follow the book

and grease everything that needs greasing, lubricate with WD-40 just about anywhere two pieces of metal touch, and routinely change the engine oil, oil filter and air filter.”

Maintenance, Vineyard adds, is only part of the longevity story. The other part is operation and being aware of how the mower is communicating to you.

A CLASSIC EDUCATION

The college, founded in 1971, is unusual in a couple of other ways. At a time when too many college graduates find themselves \$30,000 to \$40,000 or more in debt, the school holds their debt ceiling to no more than \$18,000. It does this without state or federal funds, relying instead on help from alumni and other donors and benefactors. Approximately 75 percent of students receive some form of financial aid. The Service Scholarship program is an important part of this financial commitment.

“In my department, students mow, garden, prune, fertilize, spray for pests, renovate gardens, and maintain our extensive irrigation system, among other duties.”

– Dave Gaston

In the course of study, students neither purchase textbooks and other secondary reading material nor do they attend large lecture-hall classes. In fact, Thomas Aquinas College is only one of two schools in the country where curriculum is based exclusively around learning from the Great Books, the original works of Western civilization thinkers. Classes are small. The faculty-to-student ratio 1:11. Instead of lecturing, faculty members engage students in active discussions about the texts they’ve read.

By helping students seek out what is true, good and beautiful within a small,

close-knit community, this college is preserving a classical education. Part of this education extends to the landscape.

“There wasn’t much grass here, only weeds when I took the job in 1998,” landscape supervisor Gaston recalls. When asked about his responsibilities, college administrators told him that whatever he did, they wanted it to be beautiful. He emphasizes that the Walker Mowers have played an important role in that charge. Just like its emphasis on preserving a classic education, the college has been very good at preserving the mowers, too. **WT**



Instead of lecturing students, faculty members engage them in active discussions about the texts they’ve read.

4 Reasons to Purchase an Out Front Mower



There's an application for every mower and each machine has its advantages and disadvantages. Before purchasing any piece of equipment, it is incumbent upon the buyer to demonstrate it, ensure that it operates well, and determine that it fits the application.

Oftentimes, though, a mower's true benefits are best revealed in real life,

while mowing several accounts over time. It's then that things like maneuverability, compact design, balance, ease of maintenance and so forth come to the surface. That holds true for their mowing decks, too.

As an out front mower manufacturer, Walker Manufacturing is more than a little biased about the value of owning and operating a mower equipped with an out front deck. But don't take our

word for it. It's best to talk with landscape contractors who have been using them for several years.

Sposato Landscape & Irrigation in Milton, DE, has been using Walker Mowers since 1995. The company's satisfaction with the machine and its out front deck is evidenced by the fact that it currently operates 73 of them on a variety of properties, everything from HOAs and high-end residential accounts to

several 55-and-older communities.

Here are four advantages that stand out for company president Tony Sposato and account manager Jason Powell, who has been with Sposato Landscape & Irrigation for 11 years.

1 DRAMATICALLY REDUCES TRIMMING TIME

“We have five locations and in Milton alone 18 trucks go out every morning with two Walker Mowers. There’s no question that an out front deck, with its reach and ability to mow close to obstacles, is a time saver,” says Sposato. Given the fact that his company has so many accounts, that savings gives new meaning to the word “dramatic.”

2 DELIVERS A SUPERIOR CUT

“Our Walker Mowers have always delivered a quality cut, something that all our customers, not just our high-end customers, expect and appreciate,” adds Powell. “I know the design has a lot to do with that; they’re good decks. But the simple fact that they get to the grass before the mower runs over it makes a lot of difference, too.”

3 BETTER VISIBILITY

Operators actually see what’s being mowed *while* it’s being mowed. That alone is different than a mid-mount. “More to the point,” says Powell, “the unencumbered visibility allows the operator to feel comfortable mowing a little faster. Again, it comes down to being able to actually view what the machine is doing, which is especially helpful when mowing on heavily landscaped properties.”

4 ACCESSIBILITY

“We change our mower blades every day,” Powell emphasizes. “When a mower cuts 40 or 50 properties a day, that’s a necessity for delivering a clean cut. With the tilt-up feature, I can change blades in three to five minutes. You can’t change



UNIQUE DECK DESIGN

All mowers with out front decks share many of the same attributes. But only Walker Mower decks will deliver the manicured, finished look that your customers have come to appreciate. Here’s how they do it.

1. True floating design. This allows the deck to follow the contours of the lawn. With Walker Mowers, only a fraction of the tractor’s weight is carried by the deck wheels compared to the competition. Working in combination with a flexible carrier frame, the reduced weight allows the deck to easily float from both side to side and front to back.


2. Exceptional reach. The Walker Mower deck delivers a 15 to 35 percent reach advantage over competitive out front models. This allows the operator to trim close, even under and around hard to reach areas such as low-hanging branches and fences.

3. Light and durable. Deck engineering and design favors structural integrity over excess metal and weight. This enhances the deck’s overall performance, one that leaves a gentle footprint by effortlessly floating over the lawn’s surface.

blades on a mid-mount in that length of time and then you’re on your back. Even with the couple of stand-on mowers we operate, I have to jack them up and still get on the ground to change the blades.” Sposato adds, “Decks that are easy to access are also easier to maintain—and they get cleaned more often.”

Three of the four above advantages (reduced trimming time, visibility and accessibility) help define productivity, something that’s important to the bottom line for any size company. Decks that deliver a superior cut also deliver repeat business, which also adds to the bottom line.

“All of our Walker Mowers have 48-inch GHS decks, which allows them to get into most backyards,” explains Sposato. “The decks are also easy to remove, allowing the tractor to be equipped with a different deck or an attachment. We have three snow blades and just last year purchased a snowblower. Now all we need is the snow.”

Sposato’s company rotates engines every 3,000 hours and completely overhauls mowers every winter. In between, crews are vigilant about routine maintenance, something that keeps mower and deck where they belong: in the field. 



The Woehler Landscaping team (from left): Valentine Fonseca, Juan Fonseca, David Woehler, Derek Possuto, Salvador Fonseca, Shane Murray, Roman Flores, Victor Garcia and Crisoforo Sanchez. Losing two guest worker visas this year has contributed to long work days.

‘It Brought Me to the Dance’

Pennsylvania contractor says he’ll always mow lawns, even though his growing business is also doing a lot more design/build, mulching and hydroseeding work.

Since launching his company in 2005, David Woehler has seen it grow from a small mowing operation into a full-service landscape management business. In addition to providing a variety of maintenance services, Woehler Landscaping in Pittsburgh, PA, installs new landscapes, renovates old ones, and specializes in hydroseeding and mulching.

The company’s extensive client list includes 80 residential accounts, seven

HOAs, three churches, a shopping mall, a 58-acre sports complex, and a 34-acre convent. The owner gets the work done with two full-time employees and six H-2B seasonal guest workers, four of whom have been with him for four years.

Woehler has had the proverbial pedal to the metal since March, with employees often putting in more than 80 hours a week. “It’s one of the big challenges the industry faces,” says Woehler, who

graduated from Penn State in 2004 with a degree in landscape construction. “There just aren’t enough people willing to do the kind of work we do. Without the guest worker program, we would certainly have to downsize.”

Woehler notes that the H-2B program is getting more difficult and expensive to use, not to mention the fact that he lost two visas this past year. That alone has contributed to the longer workweeks this year.

STAGING GROWTH

But long workweeks are indicative of something else, too. Customers like the work that Woehler does, and growth has been steady. His story is a familiar one. While in high school, he mowed to earn extra spending money and continued to mow lawns while attending Penn State. “I would drive 140 miles one way every weekend to mow lawns,” says Woehler. “The work paid for my education. No, I didn’t have much of a life beyond the classroom and the work, but I also have no regrets.”

Upon graduating, he nearly took a job with Davey Tree before deciding to go into business for himself. “I purchased a dump truck and small trailer that first year and brought in \$67,000,” he recalls. “The very next year, I bought a brand new 20-hp Walker Mower with a 48-inch GHS deck. I liked the way it mowed and maneuvered. Even more important, I liked the way it was designed and built. Over the next several years, I put 3,000 hours on it.”

Woehler purchased another two Walker Mowers the following year and just this year purchased two more, both 25-hp EFI models with 48-inch GHS decks. The maintenance work, including mowing, fertilizing, weed control, mulching and snow removal, represents nearly 35 percent of an annual revenue that exceeds \$1 million. Landscape installations account for about half of his billings while hydroseeding makes up the rest, roughly 15%.

“I’ve been hydroseeding large landscape installation jobs and erosion control projects for several years now,” says Woehler. “We probably hydroseed eight to 12 acres a year. Our mulch truck stays busy, too, to the tune of 4,000 to 5,000 yards of mulch annually.”

Woehler says his company is at the stage where he needs an office administrator and an account manager. He recently retained a mechanic to maintain his large fleet. In addition to his Walker Mowers, Woehler’s fleet includes Exmark mowers, GM trucks,

“There just aren’t enough people willing to do the kind of work we do. Without the guest worker program, we would certainly have to downsize.”

– David Woehler

two Cat skid-steer loaders, along with a Cat excavator and dozer.

“Like my customers, I like to deal with a one-stop shop,” he emphasizes. “I buy all of my trucks from the same dealer, and that goes for my excavation and mowing equipment, as well. Jefferson Hills Lawn Equipment is my mower dealer and that’s also where I buy all my Husqvarna handheld equipment. In many ways, the owners Pat Prosser, Tom Anton and Harry Anton are one of us. They understand how important service is to their customers.”

SUPPORT GROUP

As the saying goes, “You don’t do it alone.” His younger brother, Patrick, helped mow lawns while his older brother attended Penn State. After graduation and during the formative years of his business, Woehler lived at home. His mom, Patricia, screened calls while his father, Dave, did much of the maintenance work on equipment. In 2012, Woehler married Cordelia, an elementary school teacher. When not teaching, she’s helping her husband install seasonal plantings.



David with one of his two new Walker Mowers



A 58-acre sports complex features a two-tier driving range and many other “cool” amenities.



David (right) with Walker Mower dealer Pat Prosser. “They’re one of us,” says Woehler, referring to his dealer. “They understand how important service is to their customers.”

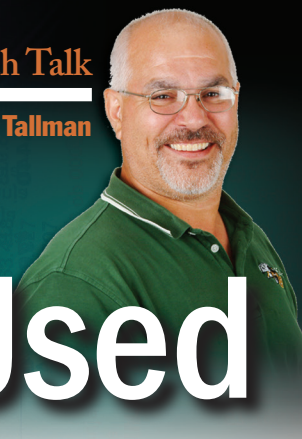
Lady luck had a helping hand, too. Early on, Woehler was able to purchase a four-acre property in foreclosure, and has since built a 6,000-square-foot shop there.

In 2014 the owner of a new sports complex happened to see one of Woehler’s trucks and called the company. The property, the Allegheny Health Network Sports Complex at Cool Springs, is a sprawling 58-acre campus. In addition to a two-tier driving range and mini-golf course, it features a huge indoor facility with several multi-purpose fields, basketball and volleyball courts, a fitness center and restaurant, among other “cool” amenities.

“For the first six months, I spent every day at the complex working on the landscape,” Woehler says. We’re still doing landscape installations and there’s a ton of turf to mow to keep a crew busy for a couple of days.” As he points out, the complex continues to evolve and expand, likely providing more future work opportunities.

Just what he needs, right? More work? “You reach stages in a business and I’m at one now. I want to take it to another level and keep on investing in my people and equipment. Yes, labor is and will continue to be a challenge, but we have to try to work around it,” Woehler relates.

He says he still enjoys designing and building landscapes, but they’re very labor-intensive. Hydroseeding and mulching jobs are less so, to the extent that he may focus even more on that part of his business. Design/build projects can also create a cash flow shortfall, one reason mowing and maintenance accounts continue to be desirable; they create a steady revenue stream. There’s another reason Woehler likes to note. “I will always be mowing. It brought me to the dance.” **WT**



Tips On Buying Used

Not long ago I had the pleasure of meeting a young man about 15 years old. He and his family were dining in the same restaurant as my wife and I. Dad first approached me because he noticed the Walker Mowers logo on my shirt. His son was close behind. They began asking me questions and showing me pictures of the 1984 Model MS they had recently purchased. It looked its age, but you could certainly sense their enthusiasm of owning their first Walker Mower. We talked a bit more and parted with a promise that I would come by and look at his recent purchase and give him some operational and maintenance advice.

That conversation got me to thinking about all of the used Walker Mowers that are still out there. With over 140,000 Walker Mowers being built in the last 36 years, there are certainly a lot of them with life left. In a given week, it's not uncommon for our technical service department to receive calls from current and potential customers asking what they should look for when inspecting a used Walker they are interested in.

This got me to thinking about a list of items that I would look at if I were in the market for a used Walker Mower. This is

by no means an exhaustive list, but would make up the main items for a good first inspection. After checking these initial items, if you feel that a more detailed inspection is in order, check with your nearest Walker Dealer. They will be able to provide a more comprehensive inspection of engines as well as other major components. It may cost you a few dollars, but it will be worth it.

ENGINE. The first thing to check would be the engine. Are the fins clear of debris? Is the valley between the cylinders on V-twin engines clear, allowing air to pass unrestricted? Is the oil clean and at the proper level, and does it smell burnt or like gasoline, which would both be red flags? Is the air cleaner assembly intact and sealed? When the filters are removed, does it show signs of dirt passing into the intake?

TRANSMISSION. Next inspect the transmissions for signs of leaks, which would show as dirt mixed with oil around input and control shafts. Are the cooling fins clean and clear of packed dirt or anything that would prevent complete airflow across the unit and effect its ability to cool properly? Typically, oil-soaked dirt is a sign of low oil in the transmission, so this should be checked as well. Make sure the

cooling fans are not missing or broken.

DRIVES. Next on the list would be the final drives. Based on the age and model, this would be either a chain drive or a cast iron gear reduction drive. With a chain drive, the obvious inspection points would be the chain and sprocket, rust, end-to-end play in the links, and sharp teeth on the sprocket are signs of wear. With the sealed gear box, look for oil leaks and axle bearing play. Check oil level and quality of the oil.

Check the PTO and deck gear boxes for oil leaks and level. Next, look the chassis over for cracks near the PTO mount and the side bars where the gear axles are mounted.

If the unit is grass-handling, inspect the deck chute for cracks and holes, the blower for excessive wear, and the body chute. Does the PowerFil work properly and the door seal adequately? Finally, do a quick check of pulleys and belts for possible wear and belt glazing caused by slipping.

This inspection takes little time and requires little work on your part. It will give you a good idea of the condition and maintenance practices of the current owner. If at that point you are comfortable with your findings, it would still be a good idea to have a Walker Dealer inspect it because a second opinion never hurts.

The dealer can also look at the warranty history and check for any advisory, service or recall bulletins that may pertain to the mower. Also ask the dealer to use the serial number to verify the date of manufacture and to make sure the machine is not listed as stolen in the Walker database. **WT**



Walker Matriarch Passes

We are sad to report that Margaret D. Walker, the co-founder of Walker Manufacturing in partnership with her husband, Max, passed away on May 15, 2016 at 92 years of age.

Margaret was an instrumental and an integral part of the founding and development of the company starting in the late 1950s on the family farm in Fowler, Kansas. She was the secretary, office administrator, bookkeeper, and a faithful homemaker, raising four children. She is remembered as a steady and strong lady of dignity, grace and style.

Margaret was active in the company when the Walker Mower project was started in 1977. In the early years, she and Max made many trips together around the United States, showing the mower to prospective customers and collecting the initial orders that started production of the mower.

Margaret was preceded in death by her husband, Max, of 68 years. She is survived by her sons, Bob and Dean Walker; and daughters, Ruth Saunders and Nina Rattle; 13 grandchildren and 18 great-grandchildren.



WALKER EXPORT SALES AFFECTED BY STRONG US DOLLAR

Over the last two years, the US dollar has strengthened approximately 20% over all foreign currencies where Walker Mowers are exported. This increase in cost is reflected in the selling price in each country which has slowed export sales significantly during 2016 with a decrease of 23%.

Export sales have averaged around 30% of Walker's total sales over the last 10 years and now are trending around 21%. While lawn mower sales in each country are influenced by local economy and weather, the exchange rate has a

strong linkage to the sale of capital equipment since there is a price shift with no change in value to the customer.

Overall, Walker 2016 factory sales are on track with 2015, with the decrease in export sales being offset by a 9% increase in sales in the US market. A benefit of worldwide sales is the stability that comes from selling in a broad marketplace. Well beyond the status of being "international" is the fact that slower sales in one area are often counterbalanced by stronger sales in another area which helps level out the manufacturing operations.

MH38i FITTING HIGH-PRODUCTION MOWING ROLE

Since the MH38i was introduced earlier in 2016, early field reports are giving strong testimonials to the high-production capability of this machine, combined with either the DR64 or DS60 mower decks.

As is often said, there is no substitute for power when it comes to mowing a large volume of grass. With 38 horsepower, this model has the power.

One of the early contractor customers said it like this: "To anyone thinking about buying the MH38i, it has met and exceeded our expectations and increased our productivity. This is exactly what we needed the mower to do. I am a huge fan of the (Walker) GHS mowers, but the new 38i is winning us over and is just plain fun to operate."

RECALL BULLETIN ISSUED

Recall Bulletin #16253, issued June 17, 2016, affecting Model MH S/N 16-139333 thru 16-140523, replacing transmission cooling fans. Compliance with this bulletin is strongly recommended due to possible derailment of the transmission drive belt and unexpected free-wheeling and loss of ground drive and steering. All owners of affected units are encouraged to have their machines upgraded free of charge by contacting their local dealer (contact the factory if there is difficulty finding your Walker Dealer).

CHANGE TO PERFORATED METAL FOOTRESTS

The footrest on the carrier frame of all 36" to 56" gear-driven decks has been changed from a rubber tread to raised metal perforations. This increases durability and wear resistance of the footrest.

DIESEL-POWERED MODEL MH

Introducing the Walker Model MH24d with the 23.4-hp Kohler KDW1003 diesel engine installed in the MH chassis.

The engine is mounted on rubber iso-mounts and the engine installation features a rear-mounted radiator with electric cooling fan, keeping the radiator's hot air away from the operator.

A roll over protection system (ROPS) is included standard equipment.

This unit offers the power for high-production mowing applications combined with great fuel economy and durability from the diesel engine.



TWO OPTION KITS FOR MODEL MB

Two option kits that are dealer-installed or customer-installed are available:

1. A utility bed can be installed on all MB models for increased versatility. The bed is hinged on the back for dumping and uses a gas spring to hold the bed in the "up" position. Order Kit P/N 4650-10.

2. The Grammar suspension seat, offering full air ride suspension action, can be installed on all MB models for increased operator comfort. Order Kit P/N 4103.



REDESIGNED 48" SIDE-DISCHARGE DECK (DS48)

The 48" side-discharge deck has a new housing and carrier frame design, shifting the discharge opening 3" forward. The new design gives a better discharge of material and the cutting quality is improved in difficult mowing conditions. Also included is a new foldable deck tilt-up handle.



Please send to:
P.O. Box 803
Fort Atkinson, WI 53538-9985

Electronic Service Requested

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U.S. Postage
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Permit # 246



She trusted Jesus Christ as her Lord and Savior. She was a devoted wife, loving mother, precious grandmother, great-grandmother, wonderful friend, and committed follower of Christ. She was a talented pianist, organist and singer. She was patient and taught her children and grandchildren how to follow in her needle and thread ways.

She gave thanks IN all things . . . not FOR all things. 1 Thessalonians 5:18

Margaret Dean (Fisher) Walker

September 5, 1923 - May 15, 2016

