



Jane Lowe and Skip Marvel with her Walker mower. Marvel, a Walker dealer, recommended the mower for Lowe to mow 3-1/2 acres of her 23-acre homestead.

Former teacher takes student's advice

Jane Lowe needed a new mower, and not just any brand would do. She lived on a 23-acre homestead in Wittman on Maryland's Eastern Shore and mowed 3-1/2 acres of lawn every week from the end of April through October. To get the right mower for her application, she turned to a former fourth grade student of hers, Skip Marvel, who owned a power equipment dealership in nearby Easton.

"I drove to Skip's place, but before he would sell me anything, he want-

ed to see how I was going to use the mower," Jane recalls. "He came out, and after taking a stroll around the property, told me that I needed a Walker Mower. I had never heard of any such mower, but Skip brought one out for me to try. I tried it, and I was absolutely sold on it."

Sitting around a table in Jane's kitchen, the student and teacher relive that day nearly 13 years ago. "Jane's lawn was not only big, it also had many broken-up landscaped areas," Skip remembers. "There were

lots of trees, too, with overhanging branches. She needed a compact, front-deck mower to be able to mow around the plantings and trim under the trees. I sold her a 16-hp Walker with a 42-inch side-discharge deck, and I believe she has never been happier with a mower."

"That's right," says Jane adamantly. "The front deck reduces my trimming, and the mower almost magically transforms a mishmash of dandelions, wild strawberry, clover, and marsh grass into a beautiful lawn. It

is also easy for me to handle, and the utility bed in the back is always full of garden tools.”

“Do I sound like I like my mower?” Jane asks. “Well, I do, and I won’t let anyone other than Skip operate it. You know, everyone operates a machine a little differently, and my Walker is accustomed to me.”

MARYLAND ROOTS

Both Skip and Jane are native Marylanders. In fact, Jane has lived in her 150-year-old renovated farm house for almost 50 years. Her husband passed away 21 years ago at the age of 56, and Jane has been maintaining the property by herself ever since then. “I do more than mow the lawn,” says Jane. “As you can see, I am an avid gardener. I am also a painter and a carpenter.”

For those living on the Eastern Shore, being independent comes with the territory, as does the surrounding beauty. Jane’s property has a spectacular water-front location, and the nearby communities of Easton and St. Michael retain their old-world charm. Her 2,400 sq-ft home has plenty of charm, too. The cozy kitchen features a fire place where an old musket, possibly dating back to the Revolutionary War, hangs above the mantle. There is a library filled with all sorts of books and memorabilia, and a spacious screened- and glassed-in porch where Jane, no doubt, spends many days and evenings enjoying her landscape and the view over the water.

Skip takes in the view. He shakes his head thinking about all the changes they have experienced since those days back in fourth grade. “The property values have sky-rocketed around here,” he relates. “People are coming in and putting up huge summer homes on the shore. There has been an influx of big box stores and the subsequent loss of smaller retailers just like in other parts of the country.”



Jane Lowe in the kitchen of her 150-year-old renovated farm house. Lowe took the advice of one of her former students and bought a Walker mower to cut her 3-1/2 acre lawn.

The changes, he points out, have altered his business. Skip opened Marvel’s Lawn & Garden in 1973, and started selling Walker Mowers in 1986 in response to a growing commercial market. “The large homes brought with them a need to maintain them,” says Skip. “At about the same time, homeowners were beginning to buy their lawn equipment at the larger box-type store. I naturally started selling more products to commercial operators and less to homeowners.”

SELLS MANY WALKER MOWERS

Skip, though, still caters to both customers – commercial operators and higher-end homeowners such as Jane. In fact, he says nearly 25 percent of his Walkers are sold to property owners. “A high-quality commercial mower like a Walker will last a homeowner a long, long time,” he adds. “In roughly 13 years of use, Jane’s mower

has only 950 hours on it. Some commercial operators may put that many hours on a mower in a year, and hers has plenty of life left in it.”

That’s good news to Jane, who says it takes her approximately 3 hours to mow her lawn. “Even though I am careful with the mower, I can be kind of rough on it. I bang into things from time to time.” Skip nods his head and says, “Yes, we have had to do a little work on Jane’s mower deck over the years. But other than that, she has had nothing major done to the machine. Like any good operator, she has us give it a ‘once-over’ before the season starts and then she’s good for the rest of the year.”

Jane and Skip look at each other and again start reminiscing about the “olden” days. They agree that things have changed, but neither would ever consider leaving their Maryland roots or alter the common bond they have with Walker Mowers. **WT**