

# WALKER TALK

SERVING LAWN MAINTENANCE PROFESSIONALS FOR YEARS TO COME

## MEMBERS of a Special Club

Georgia firefighters fill in their off days by mowing lawns with Walker Mowers.

**Bash Lawns & Services provides a myriad of services**

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**Hot Springs Are Good for Turfgrass, Too**

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**Safety... Safety... Safety**

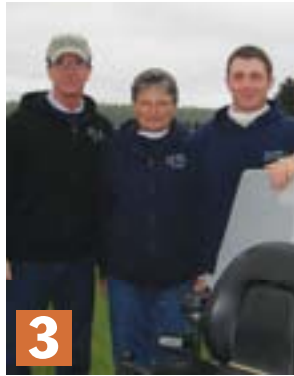
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**Canadian company has capitalized on a booming oil and gas industry**



### 3 'We're Versatile'

Bash Lawns & Services is a tight, family-run operation that provides a myriad of services.



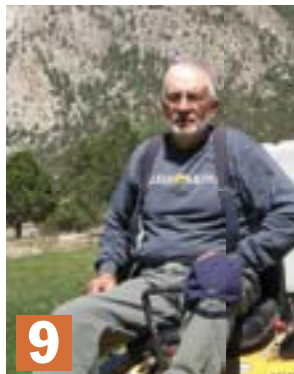
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## Meeting Needs

In simple terms, finding an opportunity to be in business is often thought of as finding an unmet need and creating a product or service to fill that need. In addition to unmet needs, there is the possibility that new emerging technology, new solutions and new combinations of ideas provide opportunities to provide a better way to meet needs that are currently being met the "hard way".



Probably one of the best ways to see an unmet need is to experience it personally in the course of normal living. That's what happened to us. We were operating a manufacturing business and "minding our own business" when my dad and I decided to buy a couple of riding lawn mowers in 1977. After experiencing the riding mower for a few weeks, and surveying the other mowers on the market at the time, we saw an unmet need. The outside observer might say, "It's just a lawn mower ... how hard is it to meet customers' needs with a riding mower?" Yes, we would never have thought of the need until we experienced it ourselves.

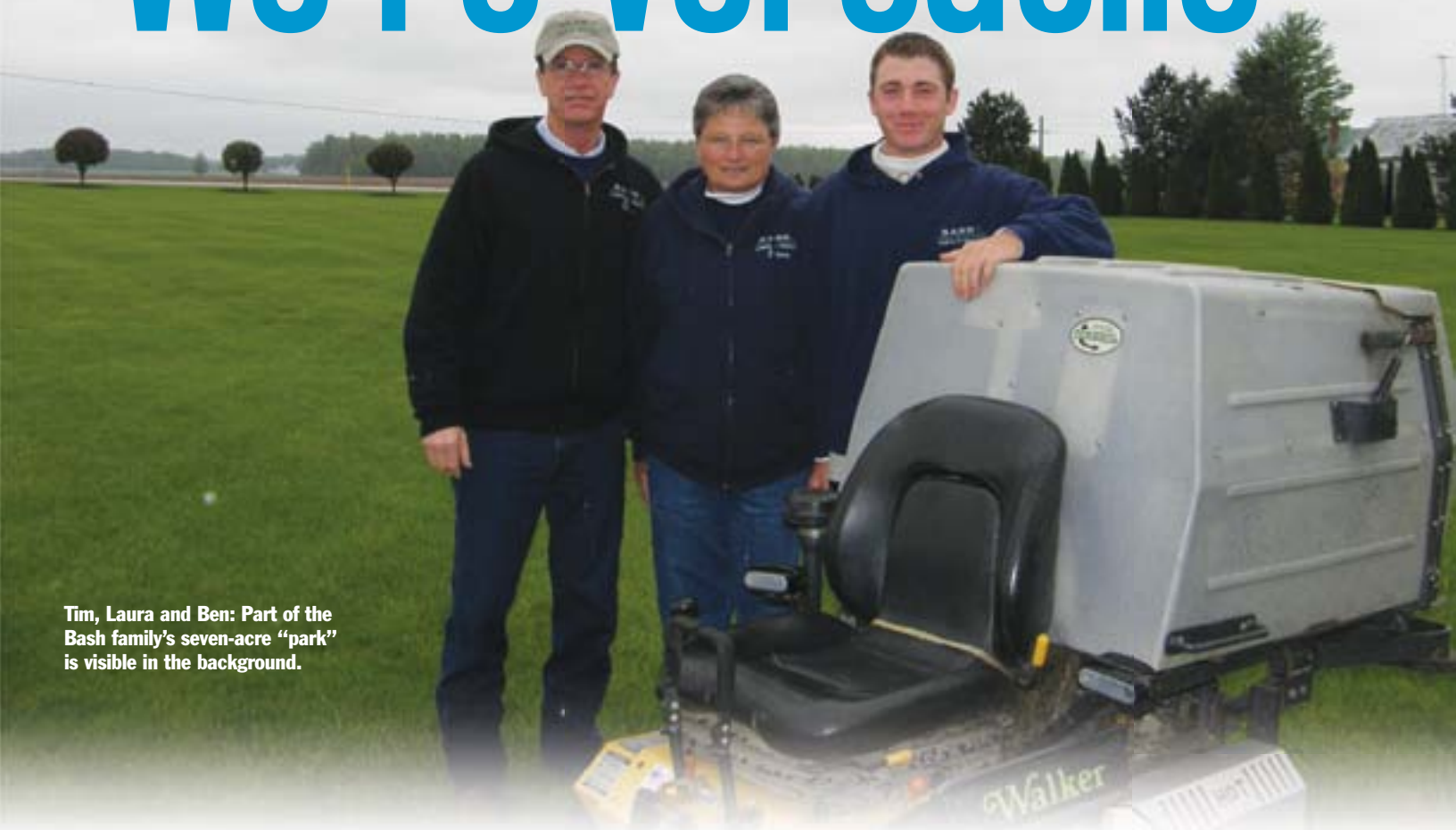
Then there is change. There will be changes in the way a need is met. Continuing innovation will be needed to have a continuing opportunity in business. There are many examples of businesses that at one time met needs, but are now out of business because change and innovation passed them by. Think about companies that produced typewriters and slide rules; today those two needs are met by word processors and calculators.

There are a couple of ways to attempt to meet needs that may not lead to a long-term business opportunity. Customers send us ideas they have for our machines that would meet a need for them. They say, "If this was available, I would buy it." Unfortunately, there are only a few others who have this need and it is not commercially feasible to produce a few of this "niche" idea to meet their need. Another approach that may not work too well is to "imitate instead of innovate" to meet a need—copying what someone else is already doing to meet a need. I think experience has shown that imitators have no long-term opportunity.

I am optimistic that Walker Manufacturing will continue a long time into the future. We will do that by continuing to innovate our products to best meet the needs of our customers. As a smaller company we have a great opportunity to innovate by staying close to our customers and keeping up with their needs. Incidentally, I still mow my yard with a Walker Mower just to have the personal experience of meeting my needs in lawn mowing. **WT**

*Bob Walker*  
Bob Walker, President

# 'We're Versatile'



Tim, Laura and Ben: Part of the Bash family's seven-acre "park" is visible in the background.

**T**he name gives away part of the story. Bash Lawns & Services does more, much more than mow lawns. Located 10 miles south of Findlay, Ohio, in the small community of Arlington, the company provides a myriad of services. The exact number wouldn't be a surprise for a large, full-service contractor, but certainly is for a small family-run operation that relies on a father/mother/son combination and a part-time employee to get all the work done.

"We try to accommodate most any customer need," says Tim Bash, who with his wife, Laura, founded the company in

1996. "Doing so initially was a necessity for us. We were virtually unknown in the market so we mowed, mulched, installed beds, cleaned gutters and did just about anything a customer asked. Two years after starting the business, I obtained an applicator's license, which extended our customer reach."

"We're versatile, too," adds Laura. "It's not only what the customer needs but what the customer wants. Not everyone wants or can afford a perfect lawn and landscape, so you have to be willing to provide different levels of service."

## CAREER CHANGE

Like many of their mowing and

maintenance counterparts, the Bashes had not planned on becoming entrepreneurs. A job layoff for Tim was the dubious catalyst, after which he worked a short time for his landscape-contracting sister, Linda Maurer. "It was October," Tim recalls. "I enjoyed the work and realized it was something I could do to make a living." He formally launched his new enterprise the following year.

In the meantime, Laura had re-entered the workforce to supplement the family income. Six months later, she quit her newly acquired bank job to join her husband in the field, spending most of her time on a mower. By the end of the first year, they had 30 mowing and



**Shaping beds is one of many services offered by Bash Lawns & Services.**

several one-time customers.

Laura has since handed off the mowing to son, Ben, and part-time employee, Mark Phillips; eldest son Brad also worked in the business part-time prior to getting married. Laura now spends most of her time with bookkeeping and paperwork duties, although she is still available at a moment's notice to operate a mower. Tim stays busy mulching, pruning, installing beds, aerating, fertilizing, and even doing some lawn rolling. In fact, a recent experimental promotion on Craigslist resulted in five rolling jobs from one contact.

Today, more than 80 fertilizer and mowing customers and another 80 miscellaneous aerating and cleanup customers, including one-time leaf cleanup properties in the fall, keep the team busy.

### **SIBLING RIVALRY**

At first, brother and sister competed for a few of the same residential properties, "but it was nothing serious," Tim says with a smile. What he remembers most about working with Linda and starting his own company was that he liked her Walker Mowers.

"The first ad we ran in the local newspaper showed me standing between my two Walkers Mowers," Tim relates. "The 20-hp model was brand new and an 11-hp model was a demonstrator with only 50 hours on it. The mowers, with their grass-handling system and cut, gave us a point of difference."

The Bashes still operate the 20-hp Walker Mower, and have added three 26-hp models—all with 48-inch GHS decks. They also own a 62-inch side-discharge deck for a few larger-area prop-

erties. One of the mowers features a high-lift dump that Tim says comes in





handy stacking leaves. Another is equipped with an automatic power dump.

Four attachments, including a bed shaper, Perfaerator, snow thrower and dethatcher enhance mower versatility. Three of the four machines have tallied well over 3,000 hours each.

**COMPETITIVE MARKET**

The old saying, “A shoemaker’s son always goes barefoot,” doesn’t apply to this family. “Last August, we had a large gathering at our home,” Laura explains. “Many arriving guests asked the same question: ‘What is the name of this park?’ This made us feel good. In some ways, we are our best customer and work hard to keep our place looking nice. The Walker Mowers help tremendously, as we use them to mow, fertilize, control weeds, shape beds and cleanup leaves in the fall.”

The Bash homestead, with seven acres of turf to mow and

several beautiful gardens, showcases the family’s ability to maintain a landscape. Unfortunately, an extremely competitive Findlay market, with some newspaper ads touting mowing for \$10 or less, doesn’t always leave room to take advantage of it.

Being versatile and offering different levels of service is one way to be competitive. Another way is to reduce operating expenses, which Tim did early on by learning to repair his equipment.

“One of our first employees was an old friend and classmate, Wes Brown, who had a disability,” Tim relates. “He had lost a leg in an accident and was in need of a job. The disability, though, didn’t prevent him from operating a Walker Mower, and it just so happened that he was also a natural at fixing equipment.

“We began to repair our mowers and soon discovered they are very easy to work on,” Tim continues. “When I can’t fix something, my dealer, Amend’s in Rudolph, takes care of us. The town is 32 miles away, but it’s a trip we gladly take to pick up a part, and occasionally the dealer will stop by to drop off something we need.”

This contractor’s mechanical aptitude

is evidenced in other areas. Tim built a hydraulic dumping system for his dump truck to handle grass clippings and leaves. It was replaced two years ago by a 22-hp Little Wonder truck loader. He added a hydraulic cylinder to his box truck to facilitate raising and lowering the ramp, and even configured a sprayer/spreader for his original 20-hp Walker Mower. He attached the spreader and boom to the mower’s utility hitch and housed the spray tank inside the dump box.

Tim also transformed a 40’ x 60’ barn constructed in 1992 to do double duty as a shop and home. The living quarters feature 1,300 square feet, with three bedrooms and plenty of space for the family to relax—when there’s time.

This spring was one of the wettest on record for the area. There were 46 days with precipitation, 23 in April and 23 in May. As a result, the Bashes spent more time than usual at home, waiting for the ground to dry out. When it did, they were off and running, making up for lost time and adding another dimension to Laura’s comment, “We’re versatile.” **WT**

The original 20-hp Walker Mower with sprayer/spreader attachment.



Tim installed a hydraulic cylinder on the box truck for raising and lowering the ramp.





Dotson started mowing lawns in 2000 after having several conversations with the station's captain, who operated a lawn maintenance business and thought the work would be something Dotson would enjoy.



Jim Dotson finds his mower to be ideal for “fine tuning” Bermuda grass front yards.

# MEMBERS of a Special Club

**J**im Dotson is a lieutenant and an emergency medical technician (EMT) at Station 26 in Gwinnett County, Georgia. He spends 24 hours on and 48 hours off, a schedule most firefighters have and a regimen he has followed for 22 years.

“I’m a little prejudiced,” says Dotson, “but I think most firefighters belong to a special breed. There’s a feeling of camaraderie among station mates. We’re together an average of 52 hours a week, sharing stories about families and lives while at the station,

and then looking after each others’ backs when we’re out on a call. We’re almost like brothers.”

Like many of his firefighting buddies, Dotson fills in off days by mowing and maintaining lawns. In fact, the owner of Dotson Lawn Care in Cumming, Georgia, has been mowing and maintaining lawns for 11 years. He has 19 loyal customers, most on year-long contracts. In addition to providing weekly mowing, he prunes, edges, installs annual flowers, and picks up leaves in the fall. In his words, he does the “whole nine yards”.



**Firefighters share common Walker Mower bond: (L to R) Chip Vanderveen, Jim Dotson, Kyle Doster, Mike Bieger. The firefighters work with two Walker Dealers for sales and service: Howard Brothers Hardware in Duluth, Georgia, and J&C Enterprises in Ball Ground, Georgia.**

### **MOWING MENTORS**

Dotson started mowing lawns in 2000 after having several conversations with the station's captain, who operated a lawn maintenance business and thought the work would be something Dotson would enjoy.

Dotson did, and so would others. Firefighter Chip Vanderveen initially cut his mowing teeth by consulting with Dotson. Today he operates Shrubbs Lawns and Landscape and maintains 25 properties. Dotson's station mate Mike Bieger, a paramedic and fire truck driver, owns Bieger Landscape Management, LLC and also started mowing lawns in 2000. He now has 35 customers and offers full-service landscape management, including weed control. One of the youngest firemen of the group, Kyle Doster, owns Doster Lawn Service. He started his business five years ago and now has 15 customers.

The firefighters share another common bond: They all use Walker Mowers. "I started mowing with a 37-inch Toro walk-behind, but occasionally borrowed our captain's Walker Mower," Dotson recalls. "I liked its maneuverability and the way it picked up clippings." He has since found the mower to be ideal for "fine tuning" his customers' Bermuda grass front yards, leaving Fescue backyards for

his Exmark walk-behind to tackle. His enclosed trailer also houses a Honda walk mower for small patches of turf.

When Bieger started mowing, his properties needed a manicured look and required the clippings to be picked up. He purchased a Walker Mower, later sold it to Doster, and purchased another one for his business. Vanderveen learned about Walker Mowers when conversing with Dotson. Now he is on his second one.

Three of the four mowers are equipped with 42-inch GHS decks and are powered by 26-hp engines. Bieger operates the only 23-hp Walker Mower with a 48-inch GHS deck. Three of the four firefighters also own Exmark mowers.

### **LONG SEASON, LONG DAYS**

The Georgia mowing season begins in early April and goes until the grass stops growing in late-November, if not later. Leaf season, cleanup and pruning, however, keep mowing contractors busy year-round.

"We don't compete with one another," says Dotson. "We're kind of spread out with some of us going north and others working closer in to Atlanta. Station 26 where Mike and I work is located in Sugar Hill about 45 minutes northeast of the city."

Since they're not competitors, the fire-

fighters enjoy sharing notes about how to run a lawn mowing business. Having the biggest operation, Bieger gets most of the attention and answers a lion's share of the questions. In addition to operating like equipment, including the use of enclosed trailers, every member of the group keeps their mowers, hand-held equipment, trucks and trailers in top running condition—not to mention spotless.

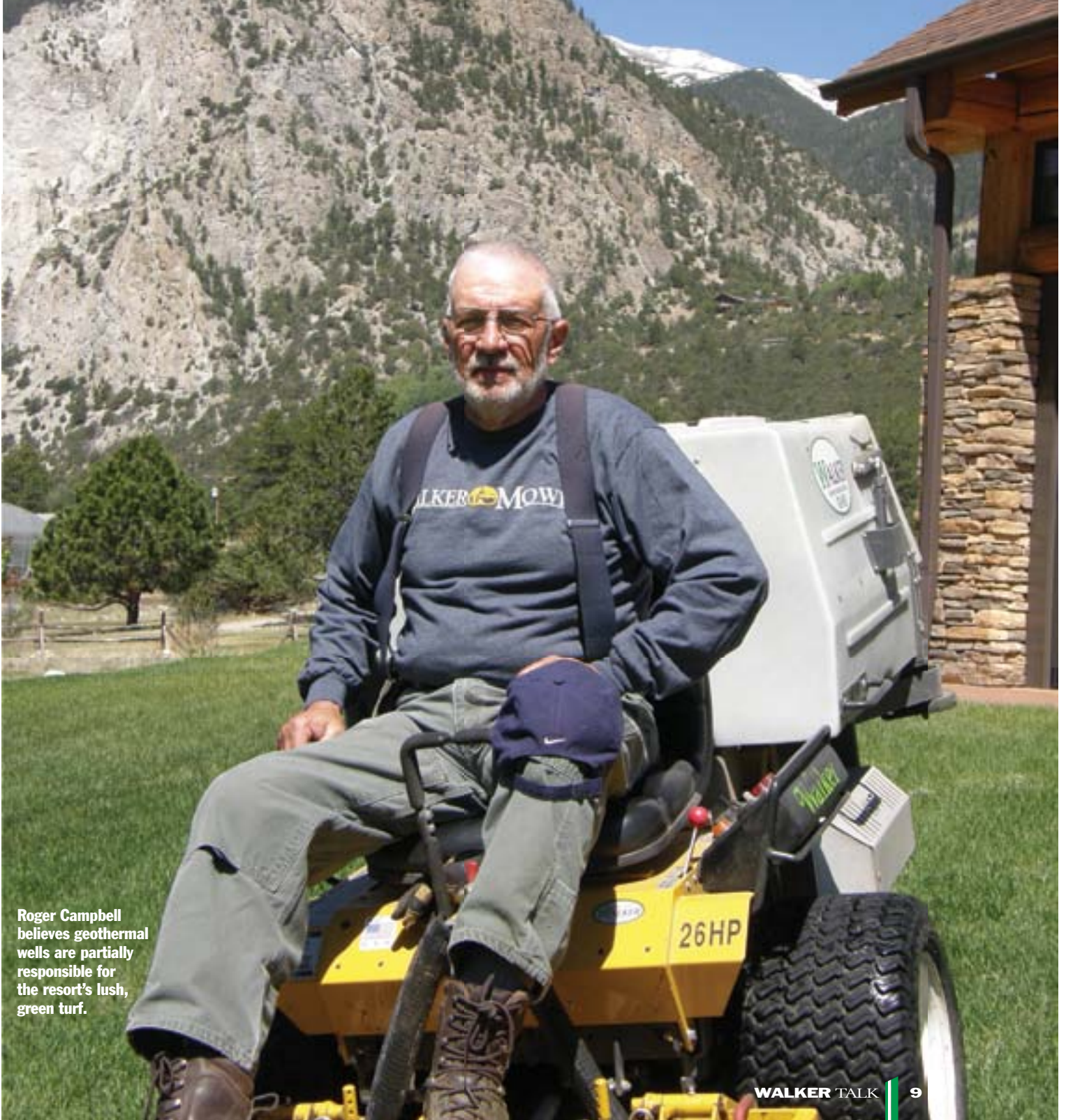
"The attention to detail comes with being a firefighter," says Dotson. "We're trained to keep our equipment in top running order. It just follows suit that we do the same with our mowing equipment."

When asked to describe the most challenging aspect of operating his business, Dotson replies, "Not getting enough sleep." As he explains, there are 24-hour shifts when firefighters go from call to call and really don't get much rest. The next two days are for mowing before heading to another 24-hour shift at the station.

Indeed, these mowing contractors are members of an exceptional club. Yes, they're all Walker Mower users and have an incredible work ethic. But more important than that, they're doing a job only a few people can do, yet everyone depends on them when there's an emergency. **WT**

# Hot Springs

## Are Good For Turfgrass, Too



Roger Campbell believes geothermal wells are partially responsible for the resort's lush, green turf.

**W**hen was the last time you soaked in a mineral hot springs pool, relaxed at a spa, or went for a leisurely bike ride? Maybe a more adventuresome horseback ride, hike along the Colorado Trail, or a whitewater raft trip down the Arkansas River is more your speed. This agenda and more await guests at Mount Princeton Hot Springs Resort in Nathrop, Colorado.

Located approximately two hours southwest of Denver and one and a half hours due west of Colorado Springs, the resort offers a wide variety of activities, although its main attraction for more than 100 years has been the geothermal springs that feed the resort's soaking pools. The breathtaking scenery posed by nearby 14,197-foot-high Mt. Princeton

and neighboring peaks also makes it a perfect venue for weddings and other special occasions.

"There's enough going on here to keep the resort busy 365 days a year," says lawn maintenance contractor Roger Campbell. Up until this past April, he worked full time at the resort taking care of the grounds. Now, as a mowing contractor, he's hired by the resort to keep its turf looking lush and manicured.

"I wanted to back away a bit from some of the other responsibilities I had here and concentrate on doing what I enjoy doing the most," he relates. "That's mowing. I would rather cut grass than do anything else." He has plenty to cut at the resort, five acres to be exact.

#### **EXPERIENCED VETERAN**

Campbell and his wife, Linda, who is

the HR manager at the resort, moved to Colorado from Memphis, Tennessee, in 1997. They had been lawn maintenance contractors prior to the move, and it was only natural for them to seek out similar work around their new home. Campbell soon found a job mowing and maintaining an area ski resort, which he did for seven years prior to hiring on at Mount Princeton Hot Springs Resort four years ago. Throughout, his mower of choice has been the Walker Mower.

"Back in Memphis, I operated a Kubota rider, but I needed a machine that would leave a more finished look," Campbell recalls. "I kept seeing the Walker Mower advertised in *PRO Magazine* and eventually purchased one with a 42-inch GHS deck. Even though it had a smaller cut and a smaller engine (a 16.5-hp Kubota diesel) than my other mower, I used it

**Five acres of turf keep mowing contractor Roger Campbell busy from the first of May until November.**



for most every job, including sometimes mowing and bagging an entire football field.”

Upon his move to Colorado, Campbell convinced the ski resort manager to purchase two 26-hp Walker Mowers, again with 42-inch GHS decks. Not coincidentally, Mount Princeton Hot Springs Resort also has the same yellow machine maintaining its property.

### GEOTHERMAL STAYING POWER

“Weddings are quite popular here,” Campbell explains. “In fact, the resort hosts 40 or more every year. Most ceremonies are held down by a secluded landscaped area that borders Chalk Creek, which also sports 30 accessible small soaking pools. The area is impeccably maintained and is the perfect application for a Walker Mower.”

Campbell says he can mow the resort in two days if need be, but it usually takes the better part of three to cover the grounds. The mowing season begins around the first of May and continues until November. “I think the warm water from the geothermal wells has a positive effect on turfgrass just as it does people,” Campbell adds. “The grass is lush and doesn’t seem to go dormant in the fall quite as quickly as it does in other areas. On average, we get 26 mowings a year.”

Campbell also has a dethatcher and fertilizer attachment for his mower, and mounts a spray tank on the deck for spot spraying. The Walker Perfaerator aerator is on his wish list, along with a new dethatcher.

Mount Princeton Hot Springs Resort is located on 500-plus acres. Guests can stay in separate cabins, select from a

variety of cliffside and poolside rooms, or choose one of nine rooms in the main lodge. In addition to the main-attraction soaking pools, which can reach 105° F, the resort features an exercise pool, the above-mentioned creek pools, and a main swimming pool with a 375-foot slide. Riding stables next door offer guided pack trips.

When not working at the resort, Campbell drives a bus for the area’s oldest rafting company. For guests who want the thrill of whitewater rafting, he says the resort can set up a package deal with one of the companies. The part-time job is a change of pace, and his hobbies of fly fishing, hunting and riding a 1,000cc BMW motorcycle take up any additional spare time. But more than anything else, this landscape contractor would rather be on his Walker Mower, mowing. **WT**

**Secluded area, with meandering Chalk Creek in the background, makes an ideal wedding setting.**



# Safety...Safety...

**Safety is something that is ongoing, and must become part of your company's culture through goal setting, awareness and accountability.**

**W**hen asked if they have a training program in place, most landscape contractors will say “yes.” They then will likely describe a spring startup session where all employees, new and veteran alike, will be introduced to safety protocols and procedures. Day-long training may include a review of safe operating tips, required safety apparel, and a primer on how to operate equipment and drive a truck with trailer. Some companies actually provide hands-on training on any new equipment, putting employees through a driving test.

Having that initial safety training is imperative, but so, too, is having ongoing training that continues to send a safety message to employees all season long. Former Professional Landcare Network (PLANET) president and long-time safety advocate David Snodgrass, CLP, explains why.

“The green industry has been and continues to be on the Occupational Safety and Health Administration’s (OSHA) watch list because of risks associated with it. Companies spend a lot of time on the

road with trucks, trailers and heavy loads; we operate different pieces of equipment with turning blades and chains; and new workers come and go throughout the year, many of whom are unaware of a company’s safety culture and procedures.

“Risk factors are also a moving target, which is another reason to have ongoing training in place,” Snodgrass adds. “New properties may have their own safety concerns, with retaining walls, ponds or steep banks. Wet roads and the first snowfall of the year can pose challenges for drivers, just as the first day of school can.”

As Snodgrass, who is president of Dennis’ Seven Dees in Portland, Oregon, says, when it comes to the topic of safety, there’s always something to share with employees. And continual training and

the top with the owner and key managers. And just like the effort involved when instituting “lean” procedures and adding efficiencies, it, too, is ongoing, and never completed. In other words, even the safest of companies can improve.

Snodgrass’ company has a safety committee that meets once a month that reviews any incidents and near misses. “Experience is a great teacher,” he emphasizes, “and it doesn’t have to be your own experience to get a message across. Just talking about an incident or near miss minimizes the chance of either happening again.”

His company also has weekly safety meetings to review current risks such as those associated with new properties or changing weather conditions. All of his employees attend a stretching session every morning. The exercise warms up muscles and gives managers an opportunity to once again talk about any safety concerns.

“I truly believe the key to having a strong safety culture is creating awareness,” says Snodgrass. “When owners, managers and supervisors continually bring up the subject of safety and train all season long, employees get the message that being safe retains a high priority

**“Being safe is synonymous with being a professional. Certainly, when given a choice, most customers would prefer to work with a professional.”**

sharing is the key to developing a safe work environment.

## **CREATING A STRONG SAFETY CULTURE**

Developing a strong and effective safety culture takes time, and it has to start at

# SAFETY

within the company.” As he points out, it’s the “out-of-sight, out-of-mind” mentality in reverse.

## TAKE STEPS NOW

One doesn’t have to operate a multi-million dollar company or employ several hundred people like Dennis’ Seven Dees does to appreciate the importance of safety and ongoing training. The culture that Snodgrass’ company has in place, the same one that he says allows him to put more than 100 trucks on the road daily without worrying about accidents, can and does work for any size company.

“Keep track of numbers, put safety on every agenda, and create awareness,” he emphasizes. “Set goals to reduce accidents and injuries and consider a bonus and other incentive programs to encourage safe work habits. We’re fortunate that our safety culture is so well-ingrained now

that safety incentives aren’t necessary. Still, we celebrate our safety record with safety barbecues throughout the year.

Snodgrass notes there are several important reasons to take the steps to develop an ongoing safety training program, not the least of which is being safe for the right reason: to prevent injury to



**“When owners, managers and supervisors continually bring up the subject of safety and train all season long, employees get the message that being safe retains a high priority within the company.”**

**Contractor and former PLANET president David Snodgrass**

employees and hardship for their families. “A strong safety culture also has a life of its own,” he adds. “It works to save your company money, it’s great for employee morale, and employees concerned about being safe have a tendency to look out after one another.”

The old axiom that “safety doesn’t sell”

is beginning to erode, too, says Snodgrass. “We just won a huge construction contract. The client requested that we complete a form designed to give them a “safety rating” for our company. Because of our focus on safety and our record, we scored very high and I believe won the account in large part because of it.”

A good safety rating speaks volumes about a company, just as a good credit score divulges more than a consumer’s ability to pay back a loan. “Being safe is synonymous with being a professional,” says Snodgrass. “Certainly, when given a choice, most customers

would prefer to work with a professional.” Ongoing training not only sends a safety message to employees, it opens doors by sending one to clients, as well. **WT**

# Everything



Director of sales and marketing Paul Atkinson and mower operator Brian Peters say that Walker Mowers are fun to operate and especially well-suited for maintaining residential community properties.

# UNDER THE SUN

**W**hen Steve Wheatcroft and Ross Rayment “mowed” their way through university in the late 1980s, little did they dream their small company would be as big and successful at it is today. Rocky View, Alberta-based ULS Maintenance & Landscaping has become one of the premier full-service landscape management companies in the Calgary area. From employing 20 people and grossing \$1 million in sales in the mid 1990s, ULS has grown exponentially in both its sales and service offering. The company also has a second location in Saskatoon.

“We are kind of a unique animal,” explains company director of sales and marketing, Paul Atkinson. “We have a broad array of clients and offer them virtually any service under the sun, and what cannot be done in house is serviced with our subcontracting network.”

During the peak growing season, ULS employs close to 150 people. A robust snow removal operation allows the company to retain approximately 100 of them year-round, while keeping between 100 and 200 subcontracted employees busy, as well.

## BOOM MARKET

Thanks to an economy fueled by the oil and gas industry, Calgary managed to dodge most of the economic malaise that has plagued municipalities throughout the U.S. The housing market continues to be strong, as is the demand for landscaping services. “We are down a bit from where we were a few years ago,”

Atkinson admits, referring to the city’s overall economic picture. “But we never experienced the kind of recession they did in the States.”

Atkinson started with ULS on a mowing crew in 1995. When asked to describe the company’s diverse service offering, he talks about the company’s ability to manage virtually any size property or project from design and installation through maintenance. ULS also installs decorative asphalt, and through its subcontracting network can offer painting, power washing, line painting, parking lot sweeping and site signage, among other services.

Subcontractors follow strict guidelines and are supervised by ULS area managers and field supervisors. Depending on the service, they may even lease some of

their equipment, including snow removal equipment, from ULS.

“Snow is big up here,” says Atkinson. “We have more than 100 snow plows, several truck loaders, a couple of specialized belly-mounted plows, along with two snow melters. The snow season can be long, too, which, in turn, can shorten an already short growing season.”

## MANAGING TURF

ULS mows upwards of 2,000 acres of turf 21 times a year. That figure includes clients like the City of Calgary, several residential communities and large commercial properties, as well as smaller single-family homes. Atkinson caught up to one of the company’s four Walker Mowers while driving around the New



Large truck loaders for snow removal are sometimes leased out for other applications during summer months.

Discovery residential community.

“I’m on a Walker Mower at least 40 hours every week,” says mower operator Brian Peters, a seasonal employee who just started working for ULS this past spring. “I enjoy the machine. It’s fun to operate and perfect for the small, more heavily landscaped yards like the ones here.”

Atkinson shares a common bond with Peters noting that he, too, started with the company on a Walker Mower. “I don’t know how long we’ve had the Walker Mowers, but they were here when I came on board. They are the perfect mowers for many of the properties we maintain such as New Discovery that has 2,200 residents and 40 acres of turfgrass. We don’t equip the mowers with attachments since they get more than a full ration of use during the short yet very intense growing season.

“This has been an exceptionally crazy summer for mowing,” the director of sales and marketing adds. “The winter was long and then it rained for nearly three weeks straight.” Atkinson moves his hands a foot apart to indicate just how fast and tall the grass grew before crews could get to it. In addition to the Walker Mowers, ULS operates John



**HR and safety manager Tanna Duncan oversees the company’s expanding training needs.**

Deere wide-area mowers, a few other zero-turn brands such as Exmark and Gravely, and several trim mowers, all of which are maintained by technicians in the company’s service shop.



**Five service technicians use the company’s service shop to keep vehicles and equipment in top running order.**

### GROWTH SPURTS

Training can be especially challenging for fast-growing companies. Just last year, ULS retained full-time HR and safety manager Tanna Duncan to oversee the company’s ever-expanding training needs. “New employees receive a safety-training orientation and our goal is to have all employees certified in both safe driving and first aid,” Duncan relates. “We also offer training and certification in tree climbing and loader operation, have certified snow professionals on board, and send team members for pesticide training and certification.”

Creating a sound management structure has helped the company handle the challenges posed by going from a very small company to a very large one. Atkinson and his counterpart in operations, Frank Swanberg, report directly to company president Ken Ruddock who, in turn, answers to the two owners. Atkinson has eight direct reports, including area and regional managers responsible for tree care, construction, design and property management. “The managers do most of the hands-on selling and interacting with customers, which gives me more time for implementing new marketing strategies,” he explains.

### THE BIG THREE

For Calgary businesses and homeowners, snow, water and sustainability are among top issues. ULS operates its own brine plant, the product of which helps minimize the use of salt on roads. “Salt sticks to the brine, which keeps it on the road where it belongs and reduces the need to broadcast excessive quantities,” Atkinson notes. “We apply only a bare minimum of pesticides by spot spraying and practicing Integrated Pest Management (IPM). Installing water capture systems and smart controllers help customers conserve water.

“We’ve also purchased some hybrid vehicles. The technology for these vehicles varies, however, so it’s important to shop around before buying something that sends a sustainable message to customers yet may actually increase operating costs rather than reduce them.”

The Walker Mowers, however, don’t fall into the latter category, and neither do other key pieces of maintenance and construction equipment that help the ULS team members provide nearly every service under the sun. **WT**



# The Heat Is On

**Cleaning and maintaining your Walker Mower is essential as we enter the second half of the mowing season.**

**W**ith summer in full swing and several cuts now under your belt, it's a good time to talk about a couple of commonly occurring scenarios.

First, as the temperatures soar and rainfall slows to very little or nothing, you lift the catcher box or dump bed and body to see the evidence of it all over your engine and power train. There it is: dried grass and dirt everywhere. How do you address this?

Second, when rainfall is abundant and you have to mow grass that is wet, you open the mower, and there it is: wet grass all over the engine and working parts.

With either of these possible conditions, or maybe a combination of both, the question that needs to be addressed is: How do I clean and maintain my Walker Mower?

Before we look at some suggested maintenance procedures for the above scenarios, let me tell you why it is important to perform them. Heat, in the way of both outside temperatures and component temperatures, is one of the leading causes of engine and drive component failure on the Walker Mower, as is likely the case with any equipment you operate. This is why it is important that maintenance be performed based on the mowing conditions—and in accordance with the recommended procedures found

in your Owner's Manual. If you have misplaced either your Owner's Manual or Parts Manual, they can be found online at [www.walkermowers.com](http://www.walkermowers.com) under the "Resources" tab, or you can contact your local dealer.

## RECOMMENDED CLEANING METHODS

**In dry conditions, compressed air works best.** A backpack blower can be useful for general cleanup, but it will not give you the pressure necessary to blow out those hard-to-reach areas. Compressed air from an air compressor, however, will remove dry grass and dirt that have collected on your Walker Mower.

Always take care to blow out the rotating screen on the front of your engine; this is the main cooling system for your air-cooled engine. Blow off the fins on the cylinders; this will allow air to circulate through the engine directed by the covers and shrouds that are on it.

If you are running a liquid-cooled unit, blow out the radiator in the opposite direction of the normal air flow provided by the cooling fan. This will prevent the forcing of dirt and debris deeper into the radiator which could reduce the cooling capacity of the radiator.

**Keep the transmission area clean,** especially the bottom side because cooling fins in this area can often be overlooked. As a side note, make sure your transmis-

sion cooling fans are intact; these are essential for keeping the transmission cool. If you don't keep cooling fins clear of debris, heat generated by these components will not dissipate, and you will certainly shorten the life of these very expensive parts.

**Pressure washer precautions.** A pressure washer does a great job of cleaning the grass-handling system from under the deck, blower, body chute and catcher exhaust screen. However, there are some precautions that need to be taken when cleaning with a pressure washer. Always avoid spraying directly into electrical plugs and electrical connections. Take time to cover electrical components, including the control panel. Plastic bags work great for this.

Nothing can create more havoc with electrical systems than moisture. Thus, a simple cleaning job on your Walker Mower with water could create costly repairs if these necessary precautions are not followed.

We definitely want you to keep your Walker Mower looking good. Following these guidelines will help you do that. But more importantly, we want you to be happy with your investment—and we want it to last. It's simple: If you are willing to follow these guidelines so you can keep your mower and its components clean, you reap the benefit of extended life from your Walker Mower. **WT**

# Third Generation Walker Joins Company

Ryan Walker, Dean and Suzanne Walker's second oldest son, came to work at Walker Manufacturing on June 1, 2011. It has been a longtime goal of the Walker family to keep ownership and management of the company within the family. Thus, Ryan's employment is seen as a significant step in that direction.

Ryan's education and experience provides an interesting starting point for coming into the business. In 2006 he graduated from Olivet Nazarene University in Bourbonnais, Illinois, with

a degree in Business Administration. Subsequently he studied at the School of Missionary Aviation Technology in Ionia, Michigan, to obtain his A & P (Aircraft Mechanic) license, and commercial/instrument instructor pilot's ratings. Then working with the SEND International mission organization, Ryan and his wife, Emily, lived in Chevak, Alaska, a remote native village located in the western frontier, working as school teachers while Ryan also served as a pilot for SEND.



Walker Manufacturing does not plan for Ryan to start in a management position. The company has worked with a consultant to develop a training program where Ryan will spend the next two to three years working in six functional areas of the company. After that exposure, Ryan will be ready to begin mentoring for leadership.

It should be noted that another Dean Walker son, Ted, is currently working for Walker Manufacturing part time, off-site, in the area of Technical Compliance Engineering. Ted hopes to join the Walker company full time in the not too distant future.



## SWEDEN DEALERS VISIT FACTORY

Representatives from Gronyte Maskiner AB, Vaxjo, Sweden, and 11 of their dealers made a group of 25 that visited the Walker factory on March 28 and 29. Gronyte Maskiner was one of the first distributors to sign on with Walker in Europe and is celebrating 25 years representing Walker. Over a period of 25 years, many of the Swedish dealerships are now owned and managed by the next generation, and for many in the group, this was their first visit to the factory.

## CHAPEL PROJECT MOVES AHEAD

After the sudden passing of Dan Walker (Dean and Suzanne Walker's third son) in 2008, a chapel project for the Golden Bell Camp and Conference Center in Divide, Colorado, was started in his memory.

Two recent events were held to mark progress on the project and to help with funding; almost 600 people attended a groundbreaking ceremony at Golden Bell in late May, and on June 13th, the "Dan Walker Memorial Golf Tournament and Benefit Dinner" was held at the Harmony Golf Club (across the street from the Walker Manufacturing facility).

Beginning construction of the \$2.5 million, 400-seat chapel and events center is planned for spring 2012. For more information about the project, visit [www.danwalkermemorial.org](http://www.danwalkermemorial.org).

## TWO WALKER DISTRIBUTORSHIPS CHANGE HANDS

In the past six months, two Walker distributors have acquired additional territory by purchasing the program from a neighboring distributor.

In September 2010, Dick Kurtzer, Kurtzer LLC, Haxtun, Colorado, purchased the Denver territory from Avan DeVries, Walker Mower of Denver.

In January, Blair and Michelle Coates, Coates Landscape

Supply, Rexburg, Idaho, purchased the Oregon and Washington state territory from Bill Douglas, Douglas Equipment & Supplies, Boring, Oregon.

Walker appreciates the efforts of the two sellers as they were both "pioneers" in the Walker program. Walker congratulates the two purchasers for increasing their investment and opportunity as a Walker Distributor.

## FACTORY INVESTS IN METALWORKING MACHINES

The Walker factory is increasing metalworking capacity and boosting both productivity and quality of parts by investing in two new machines.

An Amada 12.5-foot x 143-ton press brake is used for bending sheet metal parts. It works 30% faster, with tighter tolerances, and uses 3-D



simulation and off-line programming to set up the bending operation for each part.

For making parts with a rolled shape, a 3-foot Roundo plate roller has been purchased. Quite a few rolled metal parts are used in the Walker Mower. In a particular example, the GHS blower scroll used on the Walker Mower will now be produced in-house using the new roller.

Making parts in-house follows Walker's manufacturing philosophy of "in-sourcing" instead of "out-sourcing".

## NEW DIESEL MODEL

Introducing the Diesel Super B, Model MBSY, powered by a 904cc, 23.6-hp Yanmar diesel engine. The engine installation uses a heavy-duty, "turtle deck" mounted, oversize radiator with the same cooling fan system as used on Model MTL31. In addition, the engine is mounted on rubber isolation mounts and includes an Engineaire® low-restriction engine air filter and pre-cleaner. This engine is a powerful performer for high-production mowing, and as a modern diesel design, offers clean, quiet, fuel-efficient operation.



## BELT DRIVE 42" MOWER DECK (DSD42BD)

As an alternative to the 42" Walker Mower side-discharge deck with gear-driven blades, a belt-drive deck with two staggered blades has been developed using a single twisted Micro-V belt drive (similar to belt drive used on DSD60 or DRD52 Super B decks). Advantages of this design are a lower-cost deck, quieter operation, and more tolerance when mowing in areas with debris.



## 48" MULCH DECK REDESIGNED

The DML48 mulching deck has been redesigned to improve mulch performance and quality of cut. Newly designed parts include the housing and baffles, blade hubs with integrated circulator blades, and Gator®-style cutting blades.

## 'ALL TRAIL' TIRE OPTION

An "All Trail" tire with a more aggressive tread is available as a factory-installed option on Model MBS.



## STEERING CONTROL IMPROVED

All Walker Mower models except the "B" series have a new transmission control spring/dampener assembly connected to the steering levers which provides improved control feel and tighter, more precise steering response. Upgrade kits are available to install the new control system on earlier units.

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