

A MAN AND HIS MOWER

By: Fred Castenschiold

It was business as usual back on June 18 of this year when my general manager asked me to send out a couple of quotes to an account which, over the past 25 years, has occasionally purchased the Toro Groundsmaster 300 series. What was different this time was that they wanted a quote for the 300 series as well as the Groundsmaster 7210. As it worked out, the 7210 was a little less expensive; so, they expressed more interest in the 7210 and requested a demo. The account was Pillar of Fire in Zarephath, a Christian college in our area. The administrator indicated that the **"operator must** approve of the different type of mower which they were not accustomed to."

Having sold lever steer mowers early in my career I thought "no problem" and made arrangements for the business-as-usual demo on an early summer morning. Having arrived at the school a little early, I spoke with the mechanic and showed him the new style Groundsmaster while it was positioned on the trailer. I asked him, "Who is this operator I must convince to go with the 7210 versus the 300 series." I was thinking that the operator was some young fellow who would take to it instantly. The mechanic answered, "Here he comes." From down the driveway moving a bit slowly the operator approached. When he arrived I introduced myself and unloaded the 7210. His name is Rubin and was quick to inform me that he was 94 years old. I thought to myself, "Oh my, this should be interesting, to say the least."

I took the unit out into an open field next to his on-campus residence and reviewed the machine with Rubin and the mechanic very carefully. Rubin nodded as if ready to climb aboard. With encouragement to operate the 7210 with only one hand to get use to it at half throttle and with the mower deck turned off he was soon in slow flight. I asked him to stay in the open and make some figure-eight turns and practice going back and forth. After a few minutes he returned and shut the machine off. He stated, "Its ok, but I'm not cutting any grass!" Appearing ready to go the next step, I showed him the yellow knob to pull-out in order to start the mower as well as how to throttle-up to full power. I asked Rubin to again stay out in the open and give it some time to get use to the operation of the mower.

While Rubin gave it a try on this hot sunny morning I sat on his deck behind his little cottage with his wife of 77 years. We talked about Rubin and his long career with Pillar of Fire. Evidently he has been working for the school in one capacity or another since he was 16 years old! While listening to her I occasionally glanced past to keep an eye on Rubin. He really seemed to be getting the hang of it! After excusing myself I approached the field where he was operating the mower and signaled to stop.

I asked, "Well Rubin, what do you think? Do you have any questions?" He exclaimed, "I'll take it!" However, he noted he wasn't 100% sure he would like it and stay with it. Within a week I delivered the shiny new mower and re-trained him in an effort to make it work.

Over the summer I made several visits to see how it was working out but never seemed to find Rubin; although, I saw the mower in the garage - which showed signs of use so I didn't worry too much about it. In addition, I never received any phone calls from the administrator or mechanic indicating that there were any problems with machine or operator.

One cool fall afternoon I stopped-in to find Rubin still at it; mowing while grinding leaves with his new 7210. Before pulling over to say, "Hi", I went to see the mechanic who was standing outside of his garage and asked him how the new mower and Rubin were going. He said, "Great! We can't get him off of it!" "Awesome", I thought as I was preparing to say, "Hi" to Rubin. I went over to Rubin and he came to a controlled stop and shut down the engine. I asked him how it was going and he said, "GREAT! I love operating this machine because it is so easy to control versus the older Toros." Rubin said that he turned 95 years old recently and after mowing all day with the 7210 he wasn't tired. I asked him if it was alright to take a few pictures. He said, "Sure, why not!" Later, I found out that Rubin donated ... out of his own pocket ... \$10,000 towards the purchase of the machine for the school. Now it all made sense when the administrator said that the **"operator must** approve of the different type of mower which they were not accustomed to."

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Rubin, a dedicated operator at pillar of Fire in Zarephath, NJ who is 95 years young, operates his favorite mower.