

Breakfasts Buy Us Riding Mower? But Wait, There's More

Faster, Quieter, More Reliable

In the Lowes' ads, every man who owns one is smiling. In the Sears' commercials, those owners never show a drop of perspiration. And at Home Depot, you see guys stroking the machine, longing for a reason to take it home.

Only one thing short of a bigger car payment elicits such drooling from grown men: a riding lawn mower, of course.

Now we have a new one here at the church, a shiny 20 hp model with a blade that cuts a 42 inch swath. Truth is that St. A's has always owned one, but it was almost as old as some of its drivers. **Lewis Clowers** has been fixing it all too often and the maintenance contract has expired. "It's a very old machine," **Nate Jones** says. With Florida's heat and sand -- and the summer rains -- that grass was growing so fast we couldn't tell where we'd mowed!"

So the men went shopping and got \$1500 approved for the best non-commercial model they could find, complete with an on-site repair contract. "No way we could haul that off to a shop -- that's a big machine," Nate says. Other professional riding mowers had prices up to \$75,000. "But those prices are for machines running hard, six days a week," **Tom Krug** explained

The Ways and Means Committee contributed \$1000 toward the price of the mower. "That money came from Sunday morning breakfasts," Nate says (see adjacent story). The other \$500, parish treasurer **Greg Duckett** said, will have to be found somewhere in church funds.

Last year when the Men's Club investigated hiring out our lawncare, the cost estimates were staggering. So purchasing this new, larger mower seemed right. The work will get done faster and more reliably. "We've got almost 3 acres here," Lewis says, "and on those steamy days, two of us using the old and new machines might get the job done in half the time -- at least if I can keep the old mower alive a little longer."

So you see, it's not simply a guy thing after all. With Lewis, Nate and **Bobby Allen** (and **Mr. Pope** still pitches in too) all saving the church thousands each year in lawncare fees, the new mower just makes sense. Vrrroooooom!

They're In Our Prayer

Jeff Jeffers, 2671 W. Bay Dr. SE, 33705 821-2425
Minnie Williams, 1726 28th Ave S, 33712 898-0391

Bobby Allen. Brother Enoch Allen died last week
Hazel Hudson Allen. Brother Vincent Hudson died recently
Margaret Smith. Mother died recently in New Jersey

Parish Tradition Plus Ways and Means = Church Economics 101

Sunday mornings after church the question is "Will it be salmon cakes, chicken drums or sausage today?"

"Oh, that's not the main thing for me," **Juanita Walker** said. "I just want to be around the people. I don't see them during the week, so I look forward to fellowshiping with them. Anything the kitchen fixes is all right with me."

What "the kitchen fixes" starts early Sunday morning or even Saturday. During the week, **Inez Ford** has been out chasing bargains all over the city. "I try to keep the cost of the meat under \$25," she explained. "We collect between \$65 and \$70 a Sunday for breakfasts, but then you have to subtract the cost of the food." So maybe the Ways and Means Committee clears about \$35.

Out of that money, the Committee buys breakfast plates and cups, paper towels and restroom supplies, bottled water for the cooler and all the cleaning supplies. Lately they've had to spend more for the supplies that our cleaning people use, "because they clean more often than we did before."

Ways & Means raises \$2000/yr

"But," Inez explained, "the floor sparkles now and the church really looks nice."

Even after those expenses, Ways and Means annually contributes about \$2000 to the parish budget. And according to **Nate Jones**, "This year \$1000 of that went to buy the riding mower."

Ida Matthews doesn't think about breakfast profits. "I see people talking to each other and not just talking to be talking." As she goes from table to table cleaning up, she hears a lot of laughing and people exchanging stories about family. "I think that's very important and maybe that wouldn't happen without breakfast."

"I think it's a wonderful thing," Ida said.

It was way back 30+ years ago that Senior Warden Haynes got our breakfast tradition started, "to raise some extra revenue," **Lewis Clowers** remembers. Over all those years, Lewis, Nate and Inez have been chief cooks and bottle washers. **Si Simmons** worked with them for a long time, long enough to earn a reputation for making very strong coffee. Nowadays **Jeff Jeffers**, a former cook himself, helps out; and **Pat Stewart** and lately, **Lois Ashford**, are in the kitchen serving the meals.

So just how important has the Sunday Breakfast become to St. Augustine's? "The money sure helps the budget," **Greg Duckett** says. And 18 months ago, when responses to the parish survey were tabulated, our breakfast tradition reigned near the top of all the parish's assets.

This newsletter is for members and friends of one courageous Episcopal Church in south St. Petersburg, FL. "... more* from St. Augustine's" is about candor, recognition, spiritual attitude, nixing hearsay and, yes, unashamed cheer leading. Members Judy and Tom Krug are the project's co-editors. Some 65 parishioners are essential to the effort. We think of this weekly as the first draft of our recent history. Every issue is available each Sunday after the service and also online at www.staugstpete.org, our web site for church-shoppers.

Vestry Inks Contract to Create Systems Here

Once upon a time St. Augustine's was a small parish. It was like a family then. Everybody had a responsibility and everybody else knew what that was. So in those days if you needed something done -- or a question needed an answer -- you went directly to the person who had that job. Result: the reservoir of parish information resided in members themselves. It was safe there. It wouldn't get lost.

But we are not that same small church anymore. And today there is more information to be kept, more reports to be filed, more members to be in touch with. Frankly, more organization is expected of us.

Last month the vestry addressed this reality. **Fr. Whitlock** described specific administrative tasks that needed our attention. He also reminded vestry members that they hired him to do spiritual ministry and not record-keeping. Instead, he thought, someone should be hired to establish administrative systems and computer databases for the parish. The vestry agreed and noted that the 2006 budget allocates funds for administrative services.

CLARITY Presentations and Services, Inc., a five year old company co-owned by **Judy** and **Tom Krug**, presented the vestry with a plan for doing the needed work. The vestry approved that plan and a contract was signed last Sunday.

Under that contract Judy Krug will develop systems for tracking church members -- birth, baptism, confirmation, etc.; guests -- so we know who came and whether there was any follow-up; event scheduling -- to eliminate double scheduling -- a potential problem as our pro-grams grow; and various administrative resources.

Judy will also create a computer database full of essential information about us. 'Need to send a letter to everyone? Mail merge will print the letters, address the envelopes and sort them by zip code. 'Need to contact committee members quickly? The same program will send your message to specific people by phone or e-mail.

"That's not such a big job today," Judy said, "because we are still smallish and we have **Mattie Austin** and **Virginia Abrams** to do the calling. But this assignment is preparing for the certain growth we all see in St. Augustine's near future. It also ushers us into the present-day technology."

"We just need to get organized," was the

Real Stewardship Is OK

Don't Be Afraid to Acknowledge Why We Give: It's An Investment

"You know, I think we miss half the story about stewardship," **Louise Stroude** said.

Louise is chair of our parish Stewardship Committee and she's been considering how St. Augustine's does stewardship.

"We only talk about giving, giving, giving. We never get to the part about what we receive when we give. There is a real sense of purpose that comes to you. In the secular world, we'd call it investing in the future. Isn't that what we want to do in our church too?"

An article written by Sondra Wheeler, professor at Wesley Theological Seminary in Washington, DC, picks up on Louise's thoughts:

"...Our work as stewards of God's gifts is not simply sharing them so no one starves. We do not just provide crutches for those who have fallen down. We remove the stumbling blocks that made them fall in the first place.

"That means long-term, time-consuming and labor-intensive stuff like education and child nurture. It means real investment in God's economy. It means getting people moving.

"Our aim is not only well-being, or even self-sufficiency for those at the bottom of the ladder. Our aim must be to bring people into full participation as ministers.

"For this is the real basis of human dignity; not just that people should be fed and clothed and live in safety, not just that they should be able to meet their own needs themselves.

"The real end and the joy that God has for them is the same as for us: that they should be givers too."

And "that's what stewardship is truly about," Louise says. "We give of ourselves to lift up others in the community. It becomes our legacy."

"Everybody can be great . . . because anybody can serve. You don't have to have a college degree to serve. You don't have to make your subject and verb agree to serve. You only need a heart full of grace. A soul generated by love."

Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr.

thought from **Mary Jones**. "We have missed so many visitors because someone was sure someone else would do the follow-up. We can't continue like that and grow."

"Having all this on a computer that's easy to use -- that's what I think we need now," she said.

"There's a lot of administrative help that we need," said Senior Warden **Mary Clowers**. "This job is not permanent; it's just for 90 days. If the vestry thinks the work is advantageous, we'll renew the contract with CLARITY for another 90 days."

"That's fine," Judy said. "What I want to do is set up systems that work for us -- and are easy to use. Then someone else can come in and keep them updated. I plan to work myself out of a job."

Who Will You Call This Summer? Our Elected Parish Council, The Vestry:

Sr. Warden: Mary Clowers 864-3568

Jr. Warden: Joyce Corn 540-0655

Clerk of the Vestry: Shirley Davis 866-1499

Parish Treasurer: Greg Duckett 866-1508

Inez Ford 327-9693

Rudy Gabbidon 866-1077

Michael Griffin 823-5933

Hazel Hudson-Allen 343-4157

Mary Jones 867-7702

Judy Krug 525-5044

Claude Reynolds 422-2395

Louise Stroude 866-2818

