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Justin Harter

Manly Mower Moments

Two weeks ago while I was in town I made sure to swing by the house and pickup one of my dad's old lawn mowers and gas trimmers. The lawn of my new house had been neglected for far too long and the neighbors would soon be complaining about woodland creatures making their nests in my front yard. It was time to mow the lawn like good homeowners do.

I helped Dad put the lawnmower (it's a push model, in case you're curious) in the trunk of my car. I helped through a process known as "popping the trunk." Then we squeezed a gas can, an oilcan, a trimmer and a pair of pliers into the back of the car. I continued my assistance by shutting the trunk and I drove back to Indianapolis with a lawnmower and trimmer in tow.

Then, that evening I heaved the lawnmower out of my trunk and set it in the garage and assembled the handles back to their dad-set conditions. It was late and I was traveling to Chicago the next day so I left it alone and went to bed. Two days later when I was ready to mow my lawn (on my day off due to Columbus Day) I got up, ran a few errands around town and returned ready to cut the grass. I was sure that this was a manly thing to do and that I would look manly while starting the gas-powered machine.

I pulled the lawnmower out of the garage and onto the corner of the lawn. I readied myself, checked all the fluids and made sure all the valves were set where they needed to be and I pulled the engine ignition cord. And I pulled it again, and again. And then it started! Hooray!

I lowered the throttle a little bit and headed on my way. I cut three blades of grass and it died. I tried starting the engine again, and again, and again. Lucky for me I live on a cul-de-sac with low traffic and the neighbors were all gone since it was the middle of the morning. Otherwise there'd be a video of me attempting to start my lawnmower on its way to America's funniest home videos. I was left standing at the edge of my lawn with three blades of cut grass lying on the sidewalk. I believe they were mocking me while the rest of my lawn was going, "Neener-neener-neener!"

I tried starting the engine again and it continued to do nothing remotely resembling mowing. The most I was doing to my lawn was making tire tracks in the grass. Not about to let the manly moment between man and machine escape, I dragged the lawnmower back into the garage, kicked it a few times, grabbed the car keys and headed to Lowe's. There, it turns out, items like lawnmowers are "seasonal" and many models were gone to make way for Christmas decor. I had a choice between a large John Deere mower as expensive as my car or a small, Justin-powered cutting device that closely resembled the

lawnmower of choice for Fred Flintstone. You've seen it – the large crab-like creature at the end of a handle that cuts the grass with its claws as Fred pushes it along.

I chose the Flintstone model.

After trying to feel manly about my mower I soon realized there is nothing you can tell yourself that will make you feel manly while buying a \$90 Flintstone-style grass-snipper. I tried reminding myself of how much money I'd save on gas each year but that didn't help. So, I took the box home, dumped out all six parts on the garage floor and did the manly thing by not reading the instructions and assembled my mower based on the picture on the box. Then, I spent 90 minutes mowing less than a quarter acre of grass in 90-degree heat. My neighbor, a retired truck driver, sat down in his lawn chair in the shade with a beverage and I assume chuckled as he watched me heave a large pair of scissors through my grass.

I called Dad later that evening and much to his surprise, the lawnmower that's worked for him for 22 years finally decided to quit as soon as I touched it. That lawnmower, with a full tank of gas, is now sitting in the corner of my garage. Dad seemed surprised. I was not.

The good news is that I finally managed to get the grass mowed, albeit with technology as advanced as my disposable Gillette razor. Next time I might just buy a goat and let it eat the grass. It probably would have been faster.