

NEAL KISSEL

& the Mechanical Wonder

Neal Kissel (Rising Sun Lodge No. 22) grew up on a 75-acre farm in Ashtabula, Ohio, surrounded by trees and soft, rolling hills. As a child, his favorite chore was mowing the grass with the family's early model Gravely Walk-Behind mower. Now a resident of Masonic Square at Springfield Masonic Community, Neal still looks forward to the task, and in a single month has accumulated nearly 100 hours of volunteer time helping to care for the expansive campus lawns.

One morning in April 2016, Neal sat down to breakfast with Robert Lane, Corporate Director of Procurement for the Ohio Masonic Home, and requested assistance with buying a 1962 Gravely mower. When the attempt failed due to safety concerns, Robert contacted the manufacturer to see if there were any late model riding mowers available. Although the company does offer a seated, zero-turn model, Neal specified that the only good cut is created by blades that are positioned in front of the wheels and seat, not underneath them. In the end, a 2016 walk-behind was selected and outfitted with a seat that is a sight to see.

Neal, a veteran of the United States Air Force, says, "things mechanical intrigue me," and his career path makes that obvious, taking him from the military to the electrical industry where he worked for Southern California Edison for 21 years. He then moved on to construction management, working for Cedars-Sinai Medical Center in Los Angeles. Neal also owned and operated a classic car restoration business for sixteen years and even built and restored pipe organs as a hobby.

Neal moved from California to Springfield Masonic Community in 2012 to be nearer to his children. When he is not mowing, he can be found reading scientific books, staying up-to-date on the latest classic car restoration trends, and winding the many clocks across campus and in his personal collection. He says that he truly enjoys volunteering his time because it not only gives him something to do but it creates an opportunity to feel pride in a job well done.

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