

**THEY KNOW IT'S  
BURNING BUT  
PEOPLE TELL  
THEM ANYWAY**

## Silo Fire Prompts Neighborly Response

"Yes, we know the silo's burning. Thanks!"

That's what the hand-lettered sign says in front of Robert and Betty Thumma's silo on their farm near Tipton, Iowa. Haylage inside the silo caught fire last August 10 and was still burning 2 months later. Spontaneous combustion started the fire

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and local fire departments could find no way to quench it. All the Thummas could do was wait for the 2/3's full silo to burn all the way out.

But even though they made the decision to wait out the fire, passersby still get concerned on busy Highway 38 which runs past their farm. People continually turned up the driveway to tell them about the silo fire and some people even called the fire department when they saw the smoke.

"It's a busy highway with lots of traffic, so we had to put up the sign. We really appreciate all the concern of people who don't even know us," says Betty.

THE Thummas speculate that the hay probably combusted because it was put up slightly more dry than normal. They say the haylage was between 30 and 35% moisture. "Experts tell us that can be too low under some circumstances. Just a couple percentage points can make a big difference," Betty told FARM SHOW. At first they tried unloading the burning silage but the unloader kept breaking down and smoke made it difficult to repair. They pumped tons of water onto the fire, but with little effect. Once the fire burns itself all the way out the Thummas will probably have to reline the silo but they hope it'll still be structurally sound. In the meantime they've rented a silo on a neighboring farm.



Photo courtesy Minneapolis Star & Tribune

Cast iron seat collector Willmar Tiede paints each seat as he adds it to his collection.

### **EACH OF HIS 400 CAST IRON SEATS HAS A STORY TO TELL**

## He's Got A Collection He Can Sit On

"People like to collect them because of the stories they tell," says Willmar Tiede, LeCenter, Minn., who has one of the country's biggest collections of cast iron farm implement seats. He's also an officer in the Cast Iron Seat Collectors Association, which has more than 600 members.

Tiede says cast iron seats, which first appeared after the Civil War, are significant because they signaled the end of the need for farmers to work on foot behind animals in plowed fields.

"After the Civil War factories that had been casting cannons began casting seats. Every seat has a story to

tell. They're all individual and different," says Tiede.

His collection consists of about 400 seats. He says cast seats were made up until around 1900 at which time companies began to stamp seats out of sheet metal.

Cast iron seats come in all sizes and shapes, each suited for a particular use. Some are flat, some are round, and some are only half seats. Others have horns on the front to keep farmers from slipping off. All have individual patterns of letters, ventilating slots, and holes.

Tiede scours auction sales

throughout the Midwest looking for seats and visits other collectors. He has about 100 seats which he's willing to trade or sell. While he has a couple extremely rare seats that he wouldn't sell for less than \$1,500, he says most are worth considerably less.

For a copy of a brochure on the Cast Iron Seat Collectors Association, contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Willmar Tiede, Rt. 2, Box 2229, LeCenter, Minn. 56057 (ph 612 357-4815).

### **AMBITIOUS YOUTHS HEADED SOUTH DOWN THE CUSTOM CUTTER TRAIL**

## 18-Year-Olds Run Combine Business

While most high school seniors were getting ready for graduation last spring, Henry Snell and Robert Lemieux were getting ready to hit the custom combine trail.

Snell and Lemieux, ambitious 18-year-olds from Rolette, N. Dak., spent the summer cutting grain from Oklahoma to Canada, operating leased and used equipment. Although they didn't do as well as they had hoped before setting out, they "made their payments" and plan to head back out again next summer.

The two youths had both worked the custom cutter trail in previous years as hired hands. This year they decided to try it on their own. "We

don't want to work for someone else all our lives and you have to start somewhere," says Snell.

He and Lemieux invested more than \$7,000 to launch the business, including \$4,000 for a used Peterbilt semi-truck and \$3,000 for liability insurance. They leased an International combine and converted an old school bus into a camper, complete with shower.

"It was much harder to find business than we had anticipated. However, we realize you have to start small and work your way up by word of mouth. We did 5 jobs in all. I don't think our age worked against us. If anything, it helped because people

admired what we were doing," says Snell. He notes that the only way to find business is to "knock on doors and then do a good job once you're hired."

The two young men were on the road from June 10 to August 10. They say they charged the going rate for their work without trying to undercut other custom cutters. "You can't undercharge and make money in the long run. It's a very competitive business," says Snell.

For more information, contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Henry Snell, Box 555, Rolette, N. Dak. 58366 (ph 701 246-3878).