

TAKE A STEP BACK IN TIME

# Dairy Farmers Still Use 40-Year-Old Round Balers

By Janis Schole

Peter Grandoni and his two brothers put up 7,000 bales of hay and 3,000 bales of straw each year at their Niagra Falls, Ontario dairy farm. They've used the same equipment continuously for 48 years - small round balers that Allis Chalmers stopped manufacturing in 1963.

If that's not unusual enough, Grandoni invented two of his own attachments to improve his haying operations - a "bale straightener" and a "bale turner". He picks up the bales in the field with a Kneibe bale loader that he bought in 1970 (also discontinued).

The AC small round baler produces 3-ft. wide bales that vary from 16 to 22 in. in diameter, depending on the type of hay and density of the windrow.

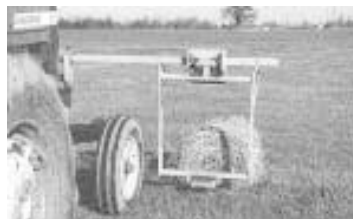
Since all of the Grandonis' hay storage facilities were built to accommodate the small bales, he and his brothers chose to continue using the old baler, even when many of their neighbors switched to large round bales.

Grandoni owns eight AC balers, four of which are operational. He says a company salesman once told him 189,000 small AC round balers were sold in North America before it went out of production.

Grandoni buys the old balers cheap whenever he can find them. He got one for just \$15. The extra units are his only source of parts, and, as each year passes, they are harder and harder to find.

"My father bought our first AC baler in 1952 and we've been using them ever since," says Peter. "They shed rain much better than square bales so there's no big rush to get them off the field."

Peter and his brothers built a skid-mounted bale "straightener" that tows behind the AC baler. It simply turns the bales 90 degrees as



**Peter Grandoni and his brothers have used the same equipment continuously for 48 years - small round balers that Allis Chalmers stopped manufacturing in 1963. Their home-built, tractor-mounted "bale turner" picks the bale up and stands it on its end.**

they come out of the baler so they lay end-to-end in the field. That makes them easy to pick up with a Kneibe bale loader that mounts on front of a hay wagon.

When bales need extra help drying, the Grandonis use their home-built bale turner. It turns bales over so they dry out faster after a rain or if the hay or straw was baled tough. Grandoni says the antiquated haying system works well for his family.

"It's true that the equipment requires more repairs than most modern systems, since it is already so old and many parts are worn out, but it is also a very low investment, and it suits our hay storage facilities perfectly," he says. "It's an efficient system when you have to rely on the weather so much. I like to think I'm making use of things that would otherwise be scrap metal, and perhaps also keeping haying memories alive for an earlier generation of farmers."

Grandonis' dairy farm is one of very few left in the Niagra Falls area and is located only five miles from the world famous falls.



**The brothers built a skid-mounted bale "straightener" that tows behind the AC baler.**



**"Straightener" turns bales 90 degrees as they come out of the baler so they lay end-to-end in the field.**



**Laid endwise, the bales are easy to pick up with a Kneibe bale loader that mounts on front of a hay wagon.**

## "Tractor That Cooks" Attracts Crowds At Shows

"Anybody can tear something apart and put it back together, but every now and then I get in a mood to build something no one else has. This project just got a little carried away," says Kevin Chapman, Carthage, Ind., who built a one-of-a-kind "tractor that cooks".

It looks like an antique steam engine but it's really a big barbecue grill that's also equipped with an ice cream maker, a can crusher, a big caboose whistle, and an air horn.

Chapman began with a 30-in. dia. steel pipe, which serves as the main barbecue chamber. He put an antique steam engine door in the front end of the pipe and sealed up the other end.

He mounted the back end of the pipe on the stripped-down rear end of a Farmall F-20 and the front end on an axle off an old corn elevator. The axle pivots back and forth controlled by cables that run to a steering shaft.

A platform over the F-20 axle holds a 1 1/2 hp Farmall stationary gas engine. The engine belt-drives a gearbox which is hooked to the pto shaft on the tractor by a chain. When the transmission is engaged, it propels the barbecue grill forward at a "smoking" 1 1/2 mph. Un-engaged, it powers the rotisserie

in the grill via the input shaft from the tractor drive system.

A second belt from the pulley on the motor powers a gearbox that runs a 5-gal. ice cream maker. A third belt powers a can crusher which resembles a single stroke piston found on most steam engines.

A compressor pulled off an old refrigerator also runs off the gas engine. It supplies an air tank which powers the air horns and caboose whistle. What appears at first to be a flyball governor, like those found on old steam engines, is in reality the ball from an old Stanley hand drill. Other odds and ends were added to complete the "steam engine" look.

Friends helped out with the project. A machinist friend fashioned the smoke stack, complete with dampers to control the fire. Another friend helped paint the tractor.

Completed in April of 1999, the "Little Tractor That Cooked" was kept busy nearly every weekend last summer and fall. "We can grill 100 hamburgers an hour and 4 dozen ears of corn at a time on the 30 by 50-in. grill," says Chapman.

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**One-of-a-kind "tractor that cooks" looks like an antique steam engine but it's really a big barbecue grill that's also equipped with an ice cream maker, can crusher, big caboose whistle, and an air horn.**

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