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"The Glenwood can be set up for almost any kind of fuel. The one in the house is set up to use wood, coal or fuel oil. If we go away in the winter, we just switch it to fuel oil, and the house stays warm.

"I keep costs down by burning skid pallets, cardboard and paper from a second family business spring and fall. Last year, I burned pallets and paper most of the winter. This year I may add a coal burner for the colder weather.

"It's amazing how much heat comes from burning that waste. The Glenwood has a secondary burn chamber, and the amount of ash is unbelievably low. There's definitely less smoke than with the traditional outside boiler.

"I had previously used a fuel oil boiler to heat the shop floor. With the waste fuel I use now, I wish I had added the new boiler earlier.

"We're saving between \$4,000 and \$5,000 a year in fuel alone."

**Dougherty Farms, Pylesville, Md.:** "I've used my 1987 Deere 1360 discbine to cut more than 200 acres of hay per year. It still runs great and has had only one bearing replacement. It still has the original belt."

**Bradley Pepper, Franklinville, N.Y.:** Bradley nominates his 2009 Massey Ferguson 2615L tractor equipped with a Wallenstein FX90 winch as his "best buy". "This tractor is built strong and reliable. Most of the plastic had to be replaced, as well as the instrument panel, before it had 100 hrs. but we've had no problems since.

"I'm happy with the 2000 Ford 1920 tractor that I inherited."

He's disappointed with his 2004 Chevy Silverado extended cab pickup. "This pickup has only about 76,000 miles but I'm spending about \$2,000 per year on maintenance. It needs new brakes every 12,000 to 15,000 miles. The front bearings went out before it had 40,000 miles on it, and the extended cab doors operate hard even with a lot of grease. All the lines leading to the transmission and brakes have been replaced as well as the water pump. The instrument panel went out and had to be replaced, as well as the tailgate hinges and rocker panels."

**Fred Stratton, Glenrock, Wyo.:** "It has about 200,000 miles on it but still has the original brakes and shocks," says Fred about his 1999 Toyota Land Cruiser. "We live in snow country many miles from nowhere, but this vehicle always comes through. I like it better than my 1-ton, 4-WD pickup."

**Herman Ulrich, Lampman, Sask.:** "In 2005 I purchased a Chevy Silverado Duramax 3/4-ton diesel pickup, which was a buyback from GM, with about 40,000 miles on it. It has required only routine maintenance and now has about 100,000 miles on it. I use this pickup to haul round bales, 10 bales per load and 1,500 lbs. per bale."

**Dave Ibach, Reading, Penn.:** "I bought a box of Simpson strong tie deck brackets for 2 by 8 and 2 by 10 treated lumber (ph 800 999-5099; www.strongtie.com). They made building my deck easy and the fit was perfect every time. I also used my \$15 Senco SN4 air nailer on the deck (www.senco.com). It never skipped a beat."

**Ken Tuffner, Thermopolis, Wyo.:** "In 2006 I bought a Nortrac 20 hp diesel tractor equipped with a front-end loader and box blade. (Nortrac is Northern Tools' brand name for Chinese-built Foton tractors.) I bought forks for the loader, an auger assembly, and a grader blade for the rear hitch. I've used this tractor to dig and to haul stuff, and it just keeps on going. I've only had to replace a seal on the loader; otherwise, no problems. I work the heck out of this tractor

but it just takes it. It's a great machine.

"The 2011 500 cc Pony utility vehicle I bought online came with a cracked rear fender, which the company hasn't replaced yet. I had to take the front differential apart because the electric motor that switches between 2 and 4-WD was installed wrong. This vehicle doesn't start worth a darn in hot weather, and there's no way to adjust the carburetor."

**Rick Bachman, Union, Iowa:** "I'm now on my third pair of Rocky boots (ph 877 905-6566; www.rockyboots.com). For years I wore Red Wing boots but lately they've become very pricey and the quality isn't what it used to be. Rocky boots are reasonably priced and well made. They last as long or longer than Red Wings. Besides being one of the most comfortable boots, they also look good."

**Brenden Janssen, Vega, Alta.:** "After 32 years it's still going strong," reports Brenden



about his 1980 Deere 400 garden tractor. He restored the tractor and added a 60-in. mower deck. "I use this tractor to mow 3 acres every week. It's well-built and has power steering and a 3-pt. hitch. No other garden tractor brand is built this well."

On the "worst buy" side, "Tools and manufactured goods made in China aren't worth taking home, no matter how cheap. All have a shortcut taken somewhere on material or design, or they're a poor imitation of something made here. China has no respect for patents."

**William K. Kamp, Grantsville, Md.:** "I fell in love with this tractor within the first 15 min. of use," says William about his 2010 TYM T233 HST sub compact 4-WD tractor. It's equipped with a hydrostatic transmission, front-end loader and 60-in. mid-mount mower. It rides on super size turf tires. "This tractor is user friendly, with all controls and the loader joystick located close to the operator. The attachments go on and off in minutes, and the 3-cyl. diesel engine is easy on fuel."

**John Carter, Seagoville, Texas:** John's disappointed with his 2001 Deere 5420 tractor equipped with a 541 front-end loader. "It has had a defective right front tire and a defective battery; the cab roof leaked because there were no rubber washers around the roof bolts; and I had to replace the radio and antenna. The tractor wouldn't start and I had to install an electric diesel pump to solve the problem. The pto clutch went out the first time I hooked the tractor up to a bush hog, and diesel fuel ate up the plastic tube between the filler entrance and the fuel tank. With only about 1,200 hrs. on it this tractor is a true lemon."

**Jim Bartlett, Bottineau, N. Dak.:** Jim says his "made it myself" fodder system is his "best buy". It consists of four, 55-gal. plastic barrels, rubber hose, and a few plastic tees.

"We put 200 lbs. of wheat, barley and oat grains in the first barrel and soak it a couple of times the first day," explains Jim. "Each day we add grain to a new barrel and soak it along with the previous days' barrels. By the third or fourth day the grains in the first barrel have sprouts about 1/2-in. long, and we feed them to our pigs. We used the fodder to

## "Kuchar-Built" Deere Combine

"One of the best investments we've ever made to produce excellent grain quality and to increase the performance of our combine was to buy a Deere 9600 with a Kuchar concave, filler plates and aggressive walkers," say Brian Flom and Lorn Manthey, who farm near Kenyon, Minn. (ph 217 854-9838; www.combinehighperformanceparts.com). "We purchased the 9600 six years ago and it did a great job giving a clean sample of corn and beans, when conditions were tough or when they were real good," Flom says. The elevator where Flom sells his grain commented that his corn had the least amount of cracked or broken kernels that they had seen. The grain could be sent directly to the poultry producer who had purchased it without cleaning.

In 2012, Flom and Manthey sold the 9600 and bought a used Deere 9760 equipped with Kuchar high performance parts. "We'd heard that a Kuchar rotor was better in tough conditions because it's heavier and built different than a bullet rotor," Manthey says. "Two people we talked to said it took less power, didn't break up material as much to load the shoe and put cleaner grain in the hopper." Their 9760 also had a Kuchar concave and separating grates, which reduces grain cracking and does a better job of cleaning the grain before it reaches the chaffer.

"We started the 9760 on 25 percent high moisture corn and the machine had no problem going 4 1/2 to 5 mph with the 8-row head," Flom says. "After about 10 acres, I noticed a vibration that seemed to be getting worse." Two experienced Deere combine dealer mechanics spent about an hour each evaluating the machine and reached the same conclusion - something was wrong with the rotor or the main rotor bearing.

Manthey called Kuchar, who said he'd be there within a day to fix it. "George has stood behind his equipment in the past, and this was no exception," Manthey says. "He showed up with his motor home and his tools and the two of us spent about 12 hrs. pulling that front bearing out, re-installing it and putting in a new set of concaves.

supplement pigs we feed on pasture for local buyers."

To reduce labor, the barrels are set up next to the granary. One barrel is hauled to the pasture each day. Waterlines run to each barrel and plastic tees at the end of each hose spread water over the sprouting grain. He just turns on the water to soak all four barrels of grain.

"When it's hot, the grain sprouts to 1/2-in. in 2 to 3 days. We've never had a problem with mold or mildew, perhaps because the grain is in the barrels for such a short time."

**Spencer George, Marietta, N.Y.:** Spencer lists his Frigidaire refrigerator as his "worst buy". "I bought a new refrigerator that failed after one year of use. I got it repaired, costing me \$150, and it failed again 3 mos. later. This time the company said it was unfixable. I bought another new one, the same model, which also failed one year later. The company offered 'lip service' but nothing more than that. They're owned by Electrolux, and their products are manufactured in Mexico. A major appliance lasting merely a year is unacceptable. No more Frigidaires for me!"

**Bob Muller, Delanson, N.Y.:** Bob likes his Scaltrol water treatment system. "Our water comes from a spring in our limestone rich area. It makes for great tasting water, but it's also very hard. About 14 years ago,



George Kuchar (left) drove 14 hours during harvest to help Brian Flom (right) and Lorn Manthey solve a problem with their "Kuchar-built" Deere 9760 combine.

George tested the machine for vibration, checked bearings and went with us to the field just like he said he would."

During the two days of downtime, Flom and Manthey rented a 9660 Deere without Kuchar equipment to combine beans. "It worked great when the dew had burned off, but as soon as dew came at dusk the machine was laboring. Even though the grain was at 11 percent moisture, we had to stop," Flom says. "When we got our own machine back, we started earlier in the morning when conditions were tougher and ran 3 hrs. later in the evening. We could get a lot more through the 9760 with George's parts and still get clean grain in the tank."

Manthey says, "Kuchar has been around combines all his life and knows what he's doing. His parts make a good stock machine better. His accelerator beater, the heavier rotor, concaves with a different pattern opening and the discharge beater improve thrashing, let the machine run smoother, and put better grain in the tank."

Flom said he's also impressed with Kuchar's ability to solve a big problem, even if it means driving 14 hrs. to do it. "George stood behind his parts, showed up when he said he would and fixed the machine without complaining. I like that kind of service."

we bought this water treatment system, and what a difference it made.

"Instead of taking out a calcium ion and putting in a sodium ion like conventional salt-based softeners do, the Scaltrol feeds a minute amount of food grade polyphosphate into the water. The polyphosphate causes calcium, iron and other hardness molecules to actually repel each other so instead of bonding together on your pipes and water heater elements, they pass harmlessly through the system. This is the same process that cities have used to treat for hard water since the 1920's.

"The units are easy to install, economical to operate and, unlike conventional softeners, there's no salt to carry and no regeneration cycle is required - which saves 40 to 100 gal. of water per week.

"We liked the system so much we decided to become distributors of the product about 5 years ago, (ph 877 872 1012; www.homeandfarmsolutions.com). We've been servicing utilities, farms, solar stores and consumers ever since."

**Wendy Wellnitz, Lanesboro, Minn.:** "When my father passed away, I ended up with trays of old family slides. The color had faded, and they were dusty and stained. A friend of ours told us about ScanCafe (www.scancafe.com), an online photo/slide