

Editor's Notebook



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Does Deere Gouge Farmers For Replacement Parts?

Most people would answer the question posed in this headline "Yes!" but parts have always seemed expensive. Is it gouging or just good business to charge as much as the market will bear for replacement parts?

Roger Gutschmidt is an innovative farmer and jack-of-all-trades in Gackle, N. Dak. He's been featured in FARM SHOW more times than any other inventor or manufacturer. He runs a lot of Deere equipment and is about as level-headed as anyone I've dealt with in 36 years of writing for this magazine. So when he reaches the conclusion that prices are getting out of control at Deere, I think the company should listen.



Deere wanted \$1,200 for this fan clutch out of a 4-WD tractor. It's available online for \$425.

"A customer came into my shop last fall looking for a replacement Bosch alternator for his Deere 9770 combine. I had one on my shelf and sold it to him for \$250. He was tickled because Deere wanted \$950 for the exact same unit. The one I sold him was a brand new OEM Bosch, just like Deere sells, and my cost was considerably lower than \$250. I'm guessing Deere can buy them even cheaper than I can. So that's a pretty amazing profit margin for both company and dealer.

"Just recently the fan clutch went out on my Deere 8970 4-wheel drive. Deere sells that part for \$1,200. I went online and found the exact same OEM replacement – an Eaton brand – for \$425 (www.fanclutch.com; ph 800 525-0164; ext. 16 or 22; Part #18105-1 – replaces JD Part #RE56310). It's really not much different buying online than buying from Deere because dealers don't stock most of these expensive parts. The company likes to order them as needed. So in either case, the part must be shipped. This fan clutch is a common problem and most people think you can only get them from Deere.

"I think markups on Deere parts have increased so much that anyone should first check online to see if you can't find the same parts for less. If enough people start doing that, maybe the company will change its pricing."

Iowa Billionaire On A Mission

Tongues have been wagging across the Midwest over the past few weeks since an article appeared in Forbes Magazine's "billionaire issue" about Harry Stine, patriarch of Stine Seeds in Iowa. Detailing how Stine built his \$3 billion fortune, the article focused on Stine's mission to double corn yields by developing new "short hybrids" suited for ultra-narrow rows and equidistant spacing.

With more than 900 patents, Stine sells his soybean and corn seed genetics to Monsanto and Syngenta, in addition to selling his own branded seed. Some 60 percent of all U.S. soybean acreage is planted using Stine's genetics. Now, after 7 years of tinkering with corn genetics to develop varieties geared to higher plant populations, extensive field testing has been showing amazing results with plant populations as high as 80,000 per acre with shorter plants that have smaller tassels and more upright leaves. He has modified planters and cornheads to plant and harvest corn in rows 12 in. apart, and even pairs of rows 8 in. apart. Some commercial seed growers quoted in the Forbes article say they've seen yield

increases of 30 percent or more. Some skeptical researchers point out that the increased input costs for seed, fertilizer and narrow-row equipment means growers need consistent yield improvements of 20 to 30 percent to improve the bottom line. However, Robert Fraley, Monsanto's chief technology officer, who has been doing business with Stine since the early 1980's, is quoted as saying, "We absolutely think it's possible to double yields."

Quality Control Problems

When one of our writers interviewed Eric Rego about the gear reduction starters he and his dad sell for Oliver and White tractors (see story on page 38), the conversation turned to quality control. Rego described the impossibility of finding starter components made in the U.S. or even Japan. Virtually all starter manufacturing, including name brands, is now done in China. Ensuring quality control is a constant challenge, even when dealing with the same Chinese company, says Rego.

"We have rigid specifications for high quality parts like bronze bushings," he explains. "One batch can come through fine, and the next batch has nylon bushings substituted for bronze. The starter will work for a while, but the bushing will quickly wear out."

Rego says their small firm bench tests each starter they import. For even greater quality control, they completely tear down 2 or more starters in every shipment to ensure that proper components were used.

"People wonder why one company can sell an item at a lower cost than another," says Rego. "Quality control takes time and adds cost, but it's important."

Prepare For The End

Long-time FARM SHOW correspondent Rex Gogerty recently spent some time dealing with a topic most of us would rather avoid - his own death. To spare his loved ones undue anxiety and effort when that day inevitably comes, he created a file called "Funeral Instructions" for his executor and family members. It's at the front of his file cabinet and contains three sheets of instructions:

1. Where to find stuff. Details the location of wills, tax information, bank statements, records of property, safety deposit keys, life insurance policies, safe combinations, and other documents.
2. Funeral suggestions. Designate a funeral director and whether you want to be embalmed or cremated. Specify costs for casket, vault or tombstone and what prearrangements have been made. Note: donating your body for medical research eliminates most expenses and benefits mankind. Include suggestions for funeral service including music, scripture readings, pallbearers, charitable donations, and even the clergy you prefer.
3. Obituary. Nobody knows the details of your life better than you. Include exact dates, education, military service, marriage, children, survivors, fraternal, religious and business organizations, and your special skills or hobbies.

Rex added a line at the end of his list that says, "If you have questions, I'll have my cellphone with me."

Liberty Quotes

- "It is dangerous to be right when the government is wrong." *Voltaire*
- "Men in authority will always think that criticism of their policies is dangerous. They will always equate their policies with patriotism, and find criticism subversive." *Henry Steele Commager*
- "Deal with the faults of others as gently as with your own." *Chinese Proverb*
- "That men do not learn very much from the lessons of history is the most important of all the lessons of history." *Aldous Huxley*
- "Unjust laws exist: shall we be content to obey them, or shall we endeavor to amend them, and obey them until we have succeeded or shall we transgress them at once?" *Henry David Thoreau*
- "Those who suppress freedom always do so in the name of law and order." *John V. Lindsay*
- "If politicians don't respect the law, why should citizens respect politicians?" *Debra Saunders*
- "The only thing that saves us from the bureaucracy is its inefficiency." *Eugene McCarthy*
- "For who can endure a doctrine which would allow only dentists to say whether our teeth ache, only cobblers to say whether our shoes hurt us, and only governments to tell us whether we are being well-governed?" *C.S. Lewis*
- "Let everyone sweep in front of his own door, and the whole world will be clean." *Johann Wolfgang von Goethe*

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Guitar-Shaped Farmstead

Shortly after Pedro Ureta's wife Graciela died of a brain aneurysm at the age of 25 in 1977, he started planting trees around his farmstead in the shape of a guitar. Before her death, Graciela had talked to Pedro about turning their farm into a giant work of art, but she agreed with Pedro that they would have to wait until they had more time to work on it.



Guitar-shaped farmstead is a living memorial to a wife who died at age 25.

Stretching for 2/3 of a mile, the multi-colored living guitar was created with an outline of mostly cypress trees, with blue strings made using eucalyptus trees. Ironically, Pedro himself is afraid of flying and has only seen the guitar he created in photos.

Lena stormed up to the front desk of the library and said, "I have a complaint!"

"Yes, ma'am?"
 "I borrowed a book last week and it was horrible!" Lena yelled.
 "What was wrong vit it?"
 "It had wayh tew many characters and dere vas no plot vhatsoever!"
 The librarian nodded and said, "Ah! So you must be the person who took our phone book."

"What dew yew love most about me?" Ole asked his wife, Lena. "My great athletic ability or my quick mind?"
 "What I love most about yew," Lena responded, "is your enormous sense ov humor."

The fire department finally found Ole's place, but it was too late. The barn was a total loss. But Ole had insurance, so he wasn't too worried. He called the company and told them the situation and said he wanted money for the loss. "Oh, we can't give you money for the barn," the agent said. "We will replace your barn, but we won't give you the money for it." "Vell, if dat's da way yew do it," Ole said. "I want to cancel my wife's life insurance policy."

One morning as Ole was heading to work, he had to make a quick trip to the outhouse. He hung his coat up on a nail. When he finished, he reached for his coat and accidentally dropped it down the hole. He ran outside to find a stick to fish it out with. Sven happened by and stopped when he saw Ole. "Ole," he called out, "what are yew doing out dis early in the morning running around in da woods?" "Vell," Ole said, "I vas on my way to verk and hat to stop in da outhouse. I accidentally dropped my coat down da hole so I'm trying to find a stick to fish it out." "Vell, Ole, you wouldn't want to wear da coat after it's been down dere," said Sven. "No," Ole replied, "I wouldn't wear da coat, but my lunch is in da pocket!"