



George Kuchar, right, worked his way through this brand new Deere 9600, installing his "high-performance combine parts" for owner Dale Petersohn.

FARMER SPENDS \$5,000 TO REWORK NEVER-BEEN-USED, \$140,000 COMBINE

He "Rebuilt" New Deere 9600 Combine

By Gene Schnaser

The first thing Dale Petersohn did last fall after buying a new \$140,000 Deere 9600 combine - before he even made one round in the field - was to call George Kuchar, "The Combine Man", to see if he had any specialty parts that would improve performance of the new machine. He ended up paying Kuchar \$5,000 to "rebuild" the never-been-used combine, installing modified parts that Kuchar said would supercharge performance of the machine.

Petersohn, who farms near Claremont, Minn., had confidence in Kuchar's ability because he'd previously hired him to "Kucharize" an 8820 Deere. He raises 3,000 acres of corn and beans and harvests it all with the one combine so he needed the best possible performance he could get. Thanks to the new Kuchar concave and separating grate, pre-cleaner, filler plates (especially built for the 9000 series to eliminate vibration by keeping dust out of the cylinder), fan divider (feeds shoe more evenly), and "chaff breaker" (breaks up material coming off the cylinder so it doesn't bunch up on the front of the chaffer), he says he got what he wanted and paid for the cost of the modifications in the first 1,000 acres.

Kuchar, who headquarters out of Carlinville, Ill., is part of a new breed of traveling technician who eats and breathes combines. He'll travel just about anywhere to refurbish, adjust and coax combines to absolute top efficiency. A farmer himself in North Dakota until 1973, he spent 11 years on the custom combine circuit before he started selling a combine load governor that got him launched into the business of combine troubleshooting.

Kuchar has reworked "at least a couple hundred" combines across the country and figures that demand for his business is as sure as the sunrise. "As long as they keep making combines to harvest more than one crop, and as long as weather and crop conditions change every year, I'll have work to do." His customers often first run across him at farm shows where he uses an actual cut-away combine to display his specialty parts.

Kuchar is so confident of his work he makes a standing offer that he'll do a conversion for free, providing the owner gives him the difference in binned crop from just

one harvest. Only one condition: The field check is determined by a weigh wagon in a side-by-side test with an identical combine.

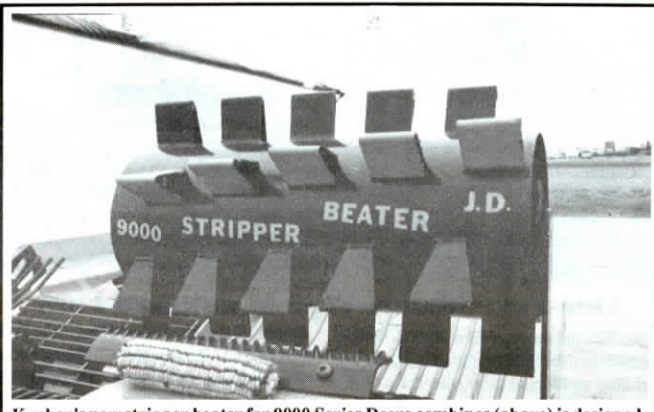
One thing his farmer clients agree on is that he's no fly-by-nighter. "Once you hire George to work your combine over," points out one, "you get a technical adviser who will stick with you. Besides installing parts which correct a combine's weak points, George helps you make adjustments sometimes even the dealers don't know how to do."

Kuchar is the first to tell you that he's carrying on the work of the "original combine guru", Ray Stueckle. An Idaho-based ex-farmer, Stueckle gained a national reputation for combine troubleshooting through his combine clinics and columns before his death in 1985. Besides blazing paths for followers like Kuchar, the legacy of Ray Stueckle's expertise also lives on through three books still being offered by his wife Arline.

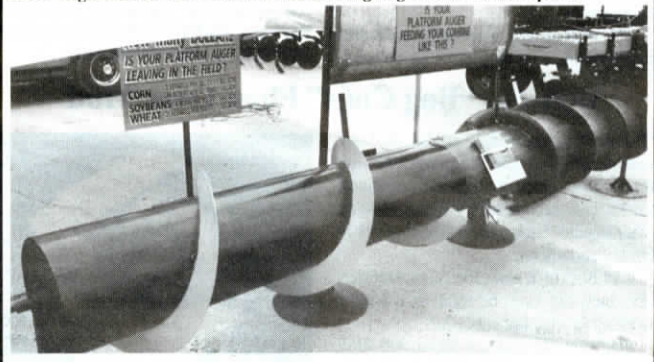
Another company carrying on the pioneering work of Ray Stueckle is Harvest Services Corporation of Craik, Saskatchewan, Canada, which has been doing a booming business selling modified combine parts since 1979. (Harvest Services markets its line of parts in the U.S. through Joriessen Sales in Rogers, North Dakota.) Like Stueckle and Kuchar, the Wildfong family, which owns the Harvest Services Company, has its roots in years of farming and custom cutting experience.

Rick Wildfong, son of founder Bert, explains: "Until Ray Stueckle came along, farmers tended to take combine performance as something in the hands of the factory. If grain was coming out the back, they figured there was not much they could do. But Ray showed them how combine performance could be improved, and that they shouldn't be afraid to dig in and experiment."

Wildfong's Harvest Services has enjoyed astounding sales increases of 35% to 45% over the past three years, and Rick says that 75% of their sales are of the firm's air foil chaffer. Their Stueckle design "perfect circle" concaves make up another 20%, with the rest of their parts line, including feeder chains, filler plates and back beaters, accounting for the remaining 5%.



Kuchar's new stripper beater for 9000 Series Deere combines (above) is designed to prevent back feeding over the cylinder, comb out slugs, and control flow of material going onto the straw walkers for better separation. He says his progressive lighting kit (below) for platform augers (fits any combine) provides more even feeding of crop material into feederhouse and reduces shattering. The lighting is more widely spaced than conventional lighting and is spaced progressively further apart the closer it gets to the feederhouse. The lighting is also angled differently so that the entire width of the lighting helps move the crop, not just the outer edge. Kuchar also recommends slowing auger down to 120 rpm's.



Rick attributes their growth to good people, a no-questions-asked unconditional guarantee, and parts that work and are built stronger than original. "We have to build them better, otherwise there would be no incentive for farmers to buy from us," he says. "A factory air chaffer, for example, might last 500 hours. Ours typically last 3,000 hours."

A hard-nosed attitude toward combine performance is also being observed by St. John Welding & Mfg., St. John, Kansas, which remanufactures combine components and has become the largest concave re-builder in the U.S. Terry Welch, company president, notes one big advantage they have in reconditioning parts is that they can see how they stand up in actual use, and make modifications to boost performance and service life. "Our remanufactured concaves, for example, are better than new, cost a third to half the price and will last twice as long," Welch says.

Whether because of the pioneering work

of Ray Stueckle or because today's farmer is a new breed of manager, parts suppliers like Welch say the days are over when a combine's performance is taken for granted. Owners today, they say, are demanding more efficiency, and are more willing to do whatever it takes to push combines a step closer to perfection.

For more information, contact:

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Stueckle Publications, Arline Stueckle, President, P. O. Box 1323, Caldwell, ID 83605, 208/459-1507.

Harvest Services Corp. P.O. Box 222, Craik, Sask. S0G 0V0 Canada (ph 306 734-2601)

St. John Welding & Mfg., Inc., Terry Welch, President, Box 175, U.S. Hwy. 281, St. John, KS 67576, 316/549-3282.

"Beware The Combine Guru"

Reprinted from "Combine Talk", a company bulletin sent to Deere dealers.

Don't let your customers be misled by the "combine guru" experts that promote and sell after-market parts that supposedly improve combine performance. Be aware that independent test organizations have shown non-Deere after-market components can actually reduce the performance of a Deere combine.

Our investigations indicate most combine gurus address problems which can be remedied through proper adjustment or replacement of worn parts. Replacing badly worn or misadjusted parts can make any-

one look good. Don't let the gurus steal your business. Seek out, listen to, and respond to your customer's needs. Also insure that they are aware of the many optional attachments we provide to enhance the field performance of our combines.

Help make sure Deere combines continue to deliver the performance for which they were designed. Take advantage of your own combine experts. Keep your customers satisfied by promoting John Deere parts and adjustments, and suggesting they "beware the combine guru".