



Only 2,000 Stihl tractors were built, between 1949 and 1963. Randy Longnecker owns this model 381S built in 1962.

Who Knew Stihl Made A Tractor?

Randy Longnecker has been a Stihl dealer for 45 years, but there's one Stihl not likely to ever leave his showroom floor. It's a Stihl tractor, one of only 6 known to be in the U.S. and one of only 2,000 built between 1949 and 1963. It is a model 381S built in 1962.

"When I bought it 20 years ago, it had been nearly fully restored," says Longnecker, J & I Power Equipment. "The only thing missing was the Stihl emblem on the front end."

On a dealer trip to Stihl headquarters, a company engineer surprised him with a replacement emblem and a historic connection. The daughter of the original owner worked for Stihl. Her father was still alive at the time, and Longnecker discovered he still had the original owner's manual for the tractor.

The tractor had only left Germany a few years before Longnecker purchased it. Bill Byers and his wife Angela, from Wasilla, Alaska, purchased it during a trip to Germany in 1966. Three years later Longnecker bought it.

"The other Stihl tractors known to be in the country are also at Stihl dealers or distributors," says Longnecker. "When people see it, they ask what it really is. They don't believe Stihl ever made tractors."

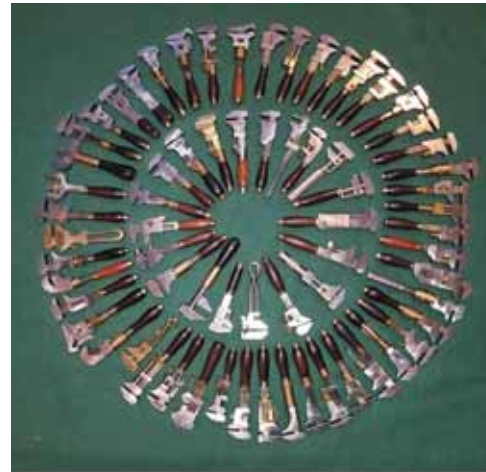
The 2-stroke diesel still works fine. This past summer Longnecker loaned it to David King, owner of the King Agriculture Museum, Centralia, Wash.

"We hadn't run it for about 10 years, but David fired it up and got it running," says Longnecker. "He took it to a couple of tractor shows and ran it in a parade."

For more photos and details of the 381S, see the March/April issue of Antique Power magazine (www.antiquepower.com). West Coast editor Candace Brown did an in-depth and well researched article on the tractor and its history.

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Randy Longnecker, J & I Power Equipment, 3729 Pacific Ave. S.E., Olympia, Wash. 98501 (ph 360 491-2022; randyl@jnipe.com; www.jnipe.com).

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Hilary Klein made 4 1/2 to 5 1/2-in. detailed replicas of rare and unusual wrenches from as early as the mid 1800's.

Farmer Left Legacy Of Amazing Miniature Wrenches

The precision and detail of the miniature adjustable wrenches made by Hilary Klein of Granville, Iowa amazes wrench collectors across the country. Klein, who died in 2016, made 4 1/2 to 5 1/2-in. replicas of rare and unusual wrenches, from as early as the mid 1800's. There were plenty for Klein to choose from as more than 4,000 wrench patents were filed between 1830 and 1930.

"Each one of Klein's wrenches is a piece of artwork, highly finished. A majority of them have polished wood handles and each wrench sold comes in a felt-lined walnut box," says Leslie E. Williams, a wrench collector who created a booklet about Klein and his wrenches. Williams knew Klein through the Missouri Valley Wrench Club.

Klein was a mechanic and farmer and had his own machine shop where he could repair and fabricate farm equipment parts. In retirement he focused on making miniature wrenches based on scaled down measurements from antique wrenches. After making a prototype he replicated it to make as many as 16 copies, all hand-machined.

"He had the ability to make almost exact copies," says Williams, who purchased most of the wrenches in his 70-piece collection from other collectors.

Klein's wrenches continue to be popular with collectors and sell for \$250 to \$1,000. They are easily identified by the HK in a diamond stamped on every wrench.

Klein's mini wrenches occasionally come up for sale along with other collectors' full-size wrenches at auctions the Missouri Valley Wrench Club holds every spring and fall. The next event is Oct. 25-26, 2019, at the Troy, Ohio, fairgrounds. Check out the club's website for contact information and how to join the club (www.wrenchingnews.com).



Quarter coin shows just how small the wrenches really are. Most have polished wooden handles.

Another club member makes miniature wrenches to continue Klein's legacy. In addition to adjustable wrenches, the auction includes agriculture wrenches used on specific pieces of horse-drawn and tractor equipment.

Williams invites anyone interested in a free PDF of his booklet on Klein and his wrenches to contact him.

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Leslie E. Williams (lew112@aol.com) or the Missouri Valley Wrench Club, Dan Gaier (ph 937 773-6940; dgaier1@woh.r.com).



North Dakota collector James Grosz spent 7 mos. restoring this Allis-Chalmers front-unloading manure spreader.

He Restored Rare Manure Spreader

Only 1,500 Allis-Chalmers front-unloading manure spreaders were made in the 1950's. So when Allis collector and restorer James Grosz saw one advertised in Edgeley, N.Dak., he purchased it right away. That was 2009, and the retired sheet metal worker stored it until 2016. After about 7 months of restoration work, he had it ready in time for his town's parade during the Corn Palace Stampede Rodeo in Mitchell, S.Dak.

"Very few people have seen a spreader that unloads out the front," Grosz says. "The chain carries manure to the front and three beaters throw it out each side."

He's not certain why Allis came up with that design, but speculates that it was because it puts more weight on the tractor.

His sheet metal experience helped him make shields and guards to replace those that were missing. He completely disassembled the frame and replaced all the rusted bolts (\$180 worth). Then he had it sandblasted before painting it.

"I didn't have any patterns, and getting the wood to fit was a challenge," Grosz says.

Rough-cut oak boards were planed, then pieced together to make the sides and floor. He stained and coated the wood with polyurethane and painted the metal parts with premium quality Allis orange paint.

"I was going to put new tires on it, but we broke one down and the tube looked good yet," Grosz says. So, he kept the 24-in. implement rib tires that came with the 1956 spreader.

Altogether he spent about \$4,000 restoring the spreader. It fits well with his collection of other Allis equipment - 38 tractors and about 75 implements. The front-loading spreader attracts interest because it is so rare.

"I had it at an old irons association event and no one had ever seen one," Grosz says.

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, James and Jeanie Grosz, 25751 Hwy. 37, Mitchell, S.Dak. 57301 (ph 605 996-8604; groszjj@santel.net).