

Restored Oliver Spreader Looks, Works Like New

By Contributing Editor Lorn Manthey

Dave Ferrante's restored 1963 model 471 Oliver spreader would be a rarity anywhere but it's particularly unusual in Wyoming. "It's rare to find Oliver tractors and tillage equipment out here, and even more rare to find a nearly 60-year-old Oliver spreader," Ferrante says. "I looked a long time for one of these and eventually found one nearly 1,500 miles away in Kentucky. The size is just right for our needs, but quite a bit smaller than the big spreaders cattle ranchers have around here."

Ferrante says the 471 was "real tired" when he loaded it on his trailer for the long trip back to Wyoming. "I was a little skeptical at first when I saw the rusty beaters, bent paddles, twisted shields, and

loose-fitting side panels," Ferrante says. "However, I saw that the chassis, wheels, and drive shaft were in good shape and the original jack worked, so I bought it."

Ferrante started the 8-month restoration by removing and cleaning virtually all the spreader's parts and making new ones as needed in his machine shop. He ground rivets off all the paddles, welded the cracks, and drilled new 3/8-in. holes for stainless steel replacement bolts. He made 2 new shields, added new grease zerks, and made new bearing collars out of forged steel. He also rebuilt the beaters and beater drives. Ferrante says Oliver originally cast the bearing holders with a single slot, so he welded up the worn areas and rebuilt them so the holders he made



"I found an old Oliver brochure online that gave me the color scheme, so it's authentic."

would fit snug.

Ferrante sandblasted the parts before painting the implement classic Oliver green and white. "I found an old Oliver brochure online that gave me the color scheme, so it's authentic, including the special-made decals."

Ferrante says he could still use a plate cover for the bottom left side feeder gear and a left side replacement shield, which he hasn't been able to locate.

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Studebaker Trucks Get Lots Of Attention

By Contributing Editor Dee George

When automakers Ford and Chevrolet came out with their Ranchero and El Camino car-pickup hybrids, Studebaker had a better idea. They put a Lark car front on a truck frame to create the Studebaker Champ pickup. With only 20,000 built from 1961 to 1963, it's a truck many folks have never heard of, says Mike Ferguson, owner of a 1962 model, the last new truck design built by Studebaker. His Apache red pickup attracts attention at vintage auto rallies he attends.

"When I saw the pickup, I liked its lines. And there are very few around so that attracted my attention," Ferguson says, adding that he has a sentimental attachment to Studebaker. His first car was a \$200 1953 Commander Starlight coupe he purchased as a teen working as grocery store bag boy, and his father owned a 1961 Lark.

The Roanoke, Va., collector purchased

the Champ from the son of a Mississippi car dealer who had used it as a shop truck. Ferguson had the interior and wiring redone, and had a rear bumper cut down from a Dodge bumper, because replacements are almost impossible to find.

The Champ has some unique features. It was the first pickup to have a sliding rear window and it has a Dodge pickup bed.

"Studebaker bought the rights to make the Dodge beds in 1962. It's a long and wide bed; they were looking for hauling capacity. Studebaker had a history of vehicles taking long road trips and good mileage," Ferguson says.

He obtained his truck's build sheet, which confirms it has the original transmission and engine, a 259cu. in., valve-in-head, V-8 engine. The odometer reads around 49,000 miles, but Ferguson says it should be closer



Mike Ferguson's Studebaker Champ pickup alongside his Studebaker Transtar dump truck.

to 79,000 miles.

"It's a basic truck, 3 on the tree. No power steering. No air conditioning," he says.

But he enjoys driving it and preserving it along with his 1960 Studebaker Transtar 5E40 dump truck.

Though Studebaker shut down its South Bend, Ind., plant in 1963 (moving all

production to Hamilton, Ont.) it's important to Ferguson to help carry on the company's history, which started by building Conestoga wagons and military wagons for the Union army during the Civil War.

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He Has A Passion For Thieman Tractors

Although he wasn't raised on a farm and didn't drive tractors in his youth, Harold Boquist still gravitated toward tractor restoration.

"I traveled wide swaths of the country for my job and in my spare time I went to auctions and picked up a few old Olivers that a friend and I worked on," Boquist says. "But then he died and the Olivers got to all looking alike. I wanted to work on something unique, so I started looking for Thiemans."

Thieman tractors were built by a family of 5 brothers in Albert City, Iowa. Bill Thieman had the original idea in 1929 and the first one was sold in 1932. "Thiemans were really unusual because they were a 'kit' that arrived in a crate on a rail car," Boquist says. "The buyer had to scrounge for a Model A Ford engine, a driveshaft, and a rear axle. The kit had pipes for the chassis, wheel mechanisms, a seat, a steering wheel and other parts to assemble into a tractor."

Boquist bought 10 relic Thiemans over several years and brought them all into working condition. He'd salvage Model A 4-cylinder engines and even powered a few with flathead V-8's. Restoration required engine re-builds, radiator repair, finding new lights, and repairing carburetors, transmissions and drive trains. "They were real easy to work on and I enjoyed taking them to shows and other events," he says.

"A big part of shows is meeting people, answering their questions and maybe picking up a few tips on where to find other tractors," Boquist says. "I always enjoyed telling people that a basic Thieman kit sold for just \$185, without an engine, and the

buyer had to put it all together. If the kit had an engine the price was about \$500. Buyers could also get options for a few dollars more. The governor was \$15, a combination drawbar was \$9, an air cleaner was \$7, and a cultivator attachment was \$15."

The company sold 4,000 to 6,000 kits over an 8-year span. "The tractors worked great for light tillage and cultivating and had one key feature unavailable elsewhere. The electric starter was really popular because other tractors required hand cranking, which had to be done by someone with a strong arm."

Like many other tractor companies, the Thieman business folded as WWII began. "I probably had the largest collection of



Thieman tractors were a kit that shipped in a crate. The buyer had to provide the engine, driveshaft and rear axle.

Thiemans in the country, but now they're dispersed, and other collectors are enjoying them," Boquist says.

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