



Garrison "Doc" Brown restored this rare 1943 model International Harvester I-9 Special to its "like new" condition. Painted Air Force blue, the I-9 was used by the military during WWII for towing vehicles, supplies, and explosives.



Exhaust system has a water bath to capture sparks because the tractor towed equipment carrying explosives.

Restored IHC Model I-9 Special Had WWII Service

By Lorn Manthey, Contributing Editor

"I've collected tractors and gone to tractor shows for more than 40 years and have never seen an International Harvester I-9 Special like the one I finished restoring in 2023," says Garrison "Doc" Brown. He found the rare tractor that was used by the military along with a parts donor sibling I-9 Standard entirely by accident in the early 1990's at a New Jersey farm.

"I rode with a friend who was seeing the farmer about a horse," Brown says. "When we got there, I asked to walk around the farmyard and noticed two old rusty tractors sitting in tall grass. The farmer said he'd acquired both of them from a nearby New Jersey air base. After a short discussion, I bought them both, and I don't recall if my friend bought a horse," Brown says with a laugh.

The two Internationals joined Brown's stable of more than 70 other tractors at his property near the far end of Long Island, more than 100 miles down the expressway from New York City. "I was raised on a farm out there driving tractors and carried that interest forward while I was a practicing veterinarian for 40 years," Brown says. Eventually, he closed his practice in New York and moved, along with his entire equipment collection, to a farm on the southern end of the Del Marva Peninsula, northeast of Newport News, Va.

"The IH tractors sat for several years, and occasionally, I'd search the internet for information on the I-9s," Brown says. Eventually, he bought a manual for the I-9 Special produced by the U.S. War Department. "It's more than an inch thick and has very detailed specifications and directions, including how to destroy the tractor with sledgehammers and burning to prevent the enemy from using it if it's captured," Brown says.

He started the frame-off restoration in 2021, removing the tractor's hood, fenders, and original four diamond tread rear tires, which still held air. Each one weighed 465 lbs. and was filled with fluid. Brown says, "The ballast was necessary because the I-9 Special, which weighed 10,340 lbs., 4,000 lbs. more than an I-9 Standard, was used as a tow vehicle by the military to pull or push heavy equipment. A rugged underframe extended the tractor's length by nearly 3 ft. It carried a large winch in front of the grill and a heavy-duty push plate."

Brown rebuilt the double capstan Gar Wood winch that's powered by the tractor's crankshaft. He says one man could use the winch for towing or lifting up to 8,000 lbs. by winding heavy-duty rope on the capstan.

Brown disassembled the locked up and rusty engine, tore apart the transmission and brakes, and then rebuilt them all using parts from the I-9 Standard. He fabricated parts for the exhaust system that extends across the hood and down into a water bath spark arrester. Excellent details were shown in the manual. He says the exhaust was built that way, so the tractor was safe for hauling fuel and trailers filled with explosives.

The tractor also carried a Bendix-Westinghouse air compressor so it could tow equipment with air brakes. The compressor is mounted on the right chassis support channel near the engine. A V-belt from the tractor's crankshaft pulley powers the two-stage compressor. Engine oil lubricates it, and liquid is circulated from the tractor's water pump to cool it. Brown says an air governor controlled the pressure at 100 to 105 psi, which the operator could see on the hood-mounted gauge. Air lines run through a control valve on the steering column and then to the rear of the tractor.

"The I-9 Special was indeed 'special' because three people were needed to operate it," Brown says. "Two of them hooked and unhooked equipment and air lines. They had seats on top of the fenders that covered both of the dual wheels. The operator was always at his seat to drive while controlling the throttle lever or foot pedal to maintain air pressure."

As Brown cleaned and sandblasted the tractor, he found three coats of old paint. The original was IH red, followed by industrial yellow, which was topped with Air Force



Brown bought this I-9 Standard and the I-9 Special at the same time and used the Standard as a parts donor while restoring the Special.

blue, the color he finished his restoration with. His tractor, built in September 1943 at the IH Milwaukee Works, carries serial number 4441. The sibling I-9 Standard, built in February of the same year, has serial number 3698 Y14.

"It's interesting to think back on what those tractors were used for and where they traveled to," Brown says. "They were built the year I was born, and I do know that mine were used at McGuire Air Force Base in New Jersey. Others were shipped to different bases

around the country."

Brown's rare tractor now has a busy schedule because he and other members of his tractor club participate in at least 10 parades and shows during the summer. "We have many different models and colors, most built in the 40's and 50's. They create a lot of smiles and waves from wide-eyed spectators," Brown says.

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