

Manitoba Agricultural Museum houses the one-and-only Big Roy tractor, built by Versatile in 1977 and now completely restored.



'Big Roy' Now In A Manitoba Museum

In 1977, Versatile built its one-and-only four-axle rear engine, Model 1080. The 30-ton, 30-ft. long and 11-ft. tall tractor had four-axle 4-WD and eight 30.5 x 32 tires. That design ultimately caused its downfall because the inline tires created massive compaction.

Big Roy was named after the company's President and General Manager, Roy Robinson. He was a large-statured 6-ft. 4-in. tall man who wore a Stetson hat, spoke with a booming voice and had a strong personality. He'd seen the emergence of Big Bud tractors for nearly 9 years, and he wanted a piece of that big tractor action.

Big Roy emerged from Versatile's engineering shop powered by a 600-hp. Cummins KTA-1150 diesel mounted over the rear wheels. The engine had two radiators, each holding 85 quarts of fluid. Two 28-in.

fans provided cooling. A 550-gal. fuel tank was located over the front wheels. In between was a spacious cab with doors on both sides. A 6-speed manual transmission allowed speeds from 3.7 to 13.2 mph.

While the cab was comfortable, the visibility was terrible. The operator could only see the ground 20 ft. ahead of the front wheels and couldn't see the implement being pulled behind at all. Engineering solved that with a dustproof closed-circuit vision system. A 120-degree camera mounted above the engine showed the implement action on a 9-in. monitor in the cab. That was cutting-edge technology in 1977.

Big Roy steered by articulating between the second and third axles, rotating 40 degrees left or right. The four tires on each side provided excellent traction but had huge

compaction issues. Versatile soon realized that was a major problem and produced the 475-hp. model 1150 with four dual wheels



Cab interior was completely refurbished during restoration. Above the console, a monitor in front of the driver showed the implement being pulled.

on two axles. Future 4-WD Versatiles were all configured that way, leaving Big Roy a stand-alone prototype machine.

Big Roy was donated to the Manitoba Agricultural Museum in 1987. In 2015, the tractor was restored by Versatile for the company's 50th anniversary. Restoration included mechanical repairs, new components, a new cab interior, a sparkling new paint job and new decals. At least one employee who helped build the tractor in 1977 helped with the restoration. The refurbished tractor debuted in front of an enthusiastic group of customers who'd bought Legendary Limited Addition tractors from the company. Big Roy toured major farm shows in 2016 and returned to the museum in Winnipeg, where visitors from around the world can see the restored masterpiece.

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Manitoba Ag Museum, Box 10, Austin, Manitoba, Canada R0H 0C0 (ph 204-637-2354; info@mbagmuseum.ca; www.mbagmuseum.ca).



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