

# 1936 Deere Wins "Oldest Operating Combine" Contest

FARM SHOW salutes Bob O'Neil, Almira, Wa., winner of our contest to find the oldest operating combine.

The upcoming season marks the 55th consecutive year that Bob or his dad have gone to the field with "Old Faithful" — a 1936 Deere Model A pull-type that Bob's dad, and his uncle Frank, bought new for \$5,000, which included an RD-6 Caterpillar to pull it.

"It's a little slower than the new models but it does as good a job," says Bob. He revamped the hydraulics so the Cat "skinner" can adjust the header from the driver's seat. "I'm tempted to reverse the changes and go back to being the 'header puncher' so I can ride on the combine instead of the Cat. I like being able to hear what's going on. I can tell by the sounds if there's a problem."

Bob has a junked combine which he cannibalizes for parts to keep "Old Faithful" running. Three self-propelled combines handle the bulk of his harvest, but Bob still manages 7 or 8 days of harvest with his favorite machine. "Operating it," he says, "is pure pleasure."

Here are other proud owners of "indestructible" combines that earned honorable mention in our "oldest operating combine" contest:

**Rick Danielson, Grantsburg, Wis.:** "I use it every year to harvest about 20 acres of soybeans," says Rick of his trusty old 1949 Massey Harris (Model 26 RT). It's powered by a Chrysler Industrial 200, 6 cyl. engine and is equipped with a 10 ft. grain head. As far as I know, I'm the third owner. The motor was overhauled 15 years ago."

**Ralph Lawler, Linton, N. Dak.:** Ralph expects his 1952 John Deere Model 55 to last "at least another five years with a minimum of maintenance. It was purchased in 1952 for \$6,200. I bought it in 1983 for \$1,000. I'd estimate it has harvested well over 16,000 acres. It still has the original Hercules motor which has been overhauled twice. The machine has spent the majority of its life being shedded. Almost every part has been replaced or rebuilt over the years. The challenge now is to find new parts. In the 7 years I've owned it, only one day was lost in harvest due to down time."

**Albert Remme, Dennison, Minn.:** "I've owned my Case 120 self-propelled since 1965. It must have done a lot of work before I got it since the tires were recapped. I used to combine 100 acres a year with it but now only use it on about 20 acres of oats and wheat. I have a 1973 Massey Ferguson 760 that I use to harvest about 200 acres of corn and soybeans each year."

**Kenneth Albinger, Saukville, Wis.:** "My father has an IHC 127 SP combine, purchased in 1953, with a 12 ft. grain head. Dad, who is 80 years old this year, usually runs the machine. It did about 300 acres per year until 1980 and is now used on about 50 acres annually. It starts up just like it was brand new. Neighbors can't believe that the grain is cleaner than what the new machines are doing."

**John Ruff, Logan, Kan.:** "With the exception of a few design changes, I wish I could buy a brand new one exactly like it," says John of his 1958 IHC 151. "Last fall, it finished its 33rd consecutive year of use.

I've run it for 28 of those 33 years.

"The 151 isn't an easy combine to operate. Its controls are poorly designed and located, and it's dirty to run (I still haven't put a cab on it). But it has an incredible appetite for straw.

"The only major modification I've made was to have the cylinders and concaves rebuilt by St. John Welding, of St. John, Kan. That change made an entirely different combine out of it.

"A new 151 sold for \$6,000 to \$7,000 when they first came out. Manufacturers tried to build combines which most farmers could afford to buy and pay off in a few years. It's been a long time since that type of machinery has been available.

"I honestly don't know how much longer my dependable old 151 will keep going, but I hope it's a lot more years. I've never seen a combine I like better. It has given exceptional service and has probably been the difference between profit and loss on my wheat for several years."

**Dan Stone, Deckerville, Mich.:** "I have a still-operating 1959 Deere 45 with a grain head and a 210 corn head. I didn't use it in 1990 but harvested 40 acres of wheat and oats with it in 1989, and plan on using it on at least 20 acres of wheat in 1991."

**Mark Rathbun, Maywood, Mo.:** "I have a 1962 Gleaner E that still goes through about 500 acres each year. It has even been turned upside down twice, yet is still going strong. As for repairs, I could rebuild the combine from front to back with my eyes closed. It doesn't have an hour meter but I would estimate it has been around the world and back in the last 29 years."

**Walter Slinger, Woodstock, Minn.:** "I bought a Massey Harris Model 72 pto combine in 1962 that I still use each year to harvest my oats crop. It does as good a job as newer \$100,000 machines, only not as fast. This combine has never been in a shed. The original bearings are still operating. I farmed for 54 years and now just hobby farm 160 acres. So, this is my last combine — I think."

**Lee Hayes and Rodney Tracy, Otis, Colo.:** "Our nomination for the combine that's logged the most hours and still goes to the field when harvest time rolls around is our 1951 Massey Harris Super 27 with a 14 ft. grain head. We bought the combine, one of the earliest self-propelleds with chain-driven wheels, at a farm sale in 1985. The following year we bought a Massey Harris 90 SP to cannibalize for parts to rebuild the 27. In our 5 years of harvest we have gone through about 1,300 acres of wheat. Our 40 year old Massey is still going strong and stands ready to cut our 1991 harvest. Total field repair in five years has consisted of 1 chain, 1 pitman stick and rewelding a broken exhaust pipe."

**Richard Wormley, Newton, Iowa:** "We purchased our Oliver 535, equipped with a 30 in. 3-row corn head and a 15 ft. grain head (to take 6 30-in. rows of soybeans) in 1966. We've had the usual repairs of belts and bearings over the years, and in 1974, because of a fire, replaced the Chrysler engine with a 453 Detroit diesel. The original hour meter in the cab now has 9,200 hours on it. This combine has been used on corn and soybeans every year and is ready

for still another harvest this fall."

**Howard Johnson, Vermillion, S. Dak.:** "I harvested 35 acres of soybeans with it last fall and it still does a great job of producing a clean sample, with virtually no shatter loss or cracking," says Howard of the dependable 1964 660 Case which he purchased in 1984 from the original owner. "In its 26 years, it has combined approximately 7,000 acres. The engine has been overhauled once and I put in a new clutch, a new set of straw rack arms, and a few new bearings."

**Dale Wheeland, Cogan Station, Penn.:** Dale still harvests about 75 acres a year with his Case 600 which he bought new in 1964. "I did custom work with it the first 5 years, averaging about 450 acres per year."

**Frank Pochap, Atwood, Kan.:** "We're still using the Allis Chalmers combine that we bought new in 1964. It's been a very good machine. I would say it has cut around 400 acres of wheat and milo every year. We put a cab on it in 1968."

**Robert Saathoff Jr., Easton, Md.:** Robert's happy with the 1966 Gleaner A11 he bought used 7 years ago. "I've harvested 100 acres of wheat, barley and soybeans every year I've owned it. It has never had an engine overhaul or major breakdown. Does a good job of harvesting and cleaning my grain."

**Gene Bireline, Adair, Iowa:** Gene does his crop harvesting with two 403 IHC combines, one built in 1966 and the other in 1967. "I run one and the hired man runs the other. Both machines have floating cutters, dual wheels for hillside work, and pickup reels with the new plastic fingers on them. In soybeans, they'll run all day on only 13 gals. of gas each per day."

**Walter Reich, Downs, Kan.:** "I have a 1965 Baldwin that still goes to the field every year to harvest wheat, milo and corn. Repairs I've made include new sprockets and chains, clutch, hydraulic pump, new tires and new cylinder bars."

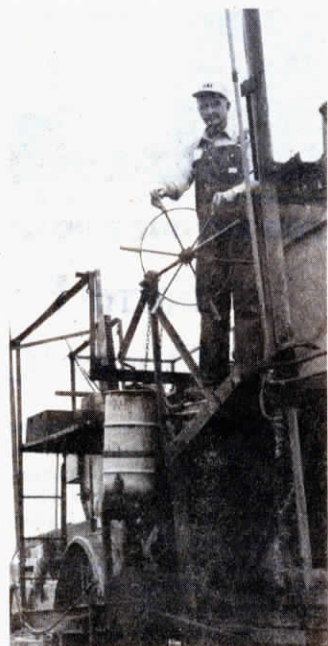
**Richard Roth, Morton, Ill.:** "It's been a good one," says Richard, proud owner of a 1967 self-propelled 525 Oliver. "We use it every year to harvest 50 to 80 acres of soybeans. The motor has been rebuilt once. Some of the bearings are still original."

**Robert Schultz, Canton, Mich.:** "I don't think we have any more breakdowns with this combine than other farmers have with newer ones. But we do go over it thoroughly each winter," says Robert of his 1967 IHC 403 that has logged 6,787 hours on its meter. "This has been a very tough, rugged machine and it still does a good job. Handles 200 bu. corn with ease. Had hard valves put in the engine so we can burn unleaded gas. I appreciate the efforts of Case-IH to keep parts available for these older machines."

**Garfield Gillis, Point Prim, PEI, Canada:** "We got our New Holland 975 new in 1969 and have run it about 6,600 total hours. The gas motor is a Ford 300. We've used STP in it since day one."

**Herman Calvert, Newton, Ill.:** "During the 25 years on my farm, it's never had a major overhaul — just routine maintenance, belts, bearings and chains," says Herman of his "still operating" 1965 Case 900.

**Paul Phillips, Woolford, Md.:** "I'll soon



**Bob O'Neil's contest winner - a 1936 Deere Model A pull-type that's still going strong.**

be 73 and I don't plan to buy another combine. This one will last until I'm 80," says Paul, owner of a Gleaner combine he bought used in 1975. "I don't know its age but the serial number is A12746. In 1982, I bought another Gleaner with a bad motor to give me a supply of parts."

**Mrs. R. A. Sanford, Bradford, Ariz.:** "My husband plans to retire this machine — a 1963 International 303 — when he himself retires in 14 years. It has harvested 250 to 400 acres of soybeans and wheat every year for 28 years and is still going strong."

**Irwin Nolt, East Earl, Penn.:** "We're still using a Minneapolis Moline S-24 Uni-tractor (1963 make) with an LA combine unit (1955 make). The machine requires very little upkeep. We take it out of the shed each year to harvest our 10 acres of wheat, which takes about 15 hours."

**John Elliott, Jr., Bridgeville, Del.:** He's still using the Gleaner E his father bought new in 1965 for \$8,395. John estimates it has logged 8,000 to 10,000 hours. The engine, a 226 cu. in. 4 cyl. Allis, has never had more than routine maintenance.

**John Saeli, Geneva, N.Y.:** "We bought it used in 1978 and it's still going strong. Must have close to 6,000 hour on it," says John of his 1969 Case 1665 "corn special." "I've never had this combine stuck. When it won't go forward any farther in the mud, it will always back out. I've threshed all kinds of crops and the grain is so clean coming out that we're able to save some for seed and not have to clean it. Most parts are still available from Case. Sometimes a parts person will tell you a part is no longer available. But when you prod them to check further, they often discover it's available under another number."

**Rick Loganbill, Tipton, Mo.:** "I have a 1980 New Holland TR85 with 6,200 hours on it. I've been running close to 600 hours every year for 10 years. Not many combines are still going strong after that many hours."