

"SOMETHING TO STIMULATE DISCUSSION" John Deere "Lemons"

By Michael Althoff, Freeport, Ill.

I'm sure that the title of this article has already grabbed your attention and some of you readers are already becoming irate. Let me preface my comments by saying that I was born and raised on John Deere tractors. My grandfather was a John Deere mechanic until his death. I have farmed for nearly 25 years with only Deere tractors and mostly Deere equipment. Also, my father and I own seven antique Deere tractors.

However, I have come to believe that many Deere enthusiasts believe that every tractor built by Deere was the result of divine intervention. If, however, you want to be honest with yourself, you should realize that every company that manufactures items — be it cars, airplanes, tractors or toasters — makes some products that are mechanically flawed, or the original concept of the product missed the target. John Deere is no exception.

I realize that for every "lemon" tractor I have listed, at least 50 people will say "I owned one of those and it was the best tractor I ever had." I am not writing this to upset anyone, rather to stimulate some thought. Perhaps some readers will write letters to refute my opinions, or others to concur with them.

Please don't write to me. Write to this publication (FARM SHOW, Box 1029, Lakeville, Minn. 55044) so everyone can share your thoughts. So, take this story for what it is — something to stimulate discussion. You don't have to agree with what I say, but you do have to respect my right to say it.

Model GP

A good, dependable, easy to operate tractor. I do, however, wonder why Deere did not use an overhead valve engine like the D which preceded it. Its biggest failure was the three row concept. The Farmall regular preceded it and trying to convince farmers to go three row rather than two or four was somewhat akin to sweeping back the sea. This attempt gave Farmall the sales lead for years to come.

Model H

Here again a good little tractor, but quite weird — the belt pulley runs backwards at half speed, only a three speed transmission, and I don't think I even have to mention the brakes to anyone who ever had to work on them. However, was a tractor smaller than a 14 hp B really needed? Deere at that time rated tractors as to how many horses they would replace; in other words, an A replaced four horses, a B replaced two horses, etc. What was the H to replace — foundered ponies? It would seem the only thing smaller than a B should be a pedal tractor.

Model A

The six volt or long hood model. My grandfather had one on which I spent many hours driving and cursing it when it wouldn't start. The agonizing, tortured sound of the starter trying to turn the engine over is a memory I will take to the grave.

Models A and B

The late models with the stamped steel frames. Deere should have quit advertising about ease of maintenance with these, as anyone who has worked on the engine will attest to. Also, you did not want to put a loader on them because the frame just would

not withstand the strain. I once saw one with the loader broken in two.

Model 70 Gas

Another well built dependable tractor which was basically a high compression G but it just did not measure up. The 13 by 38 tires hurt it by making it much faster than a G in the same gear. I worked for a man who had a 70 and a G with high compression pistons. We always used the G for the heavier jobs.

Model 2010

How could a company that just designed the 3010 and 4010 (possibly the best tractors ever built) come up with such a morphadite. It lacked the front mounted hydraulic pump and hydraulic brakes. Deere found out they could not make disc brakes work any better than anybody else. The steering was like an old Case DC with the chicken roost, only it was hidden. I have always said the 2010 was Deere's attempt at building a Farmall.

Model 3020 Gas

With Power Shift

A nice tractor to drive but it did not have enough power to get out of its own way. But one thing it did well was burn fuel. Had many of these been sold, our dependence on foreign oil would be much worse. My neighbor had one and it burned as much fuel per hour pulling 3 bottoms as my 4020 gas synchro-range pulling 5 bottoms.

Models 5010, 5020

Never has so little horsepower come in such a large package. It's a good thing for Deere that farmers were not worried about soil compaction back then. These tractors probably sold more 1206's and 1256's than any of IH's advertising. This series finally became what it always should have been with the 175 hp 6030.

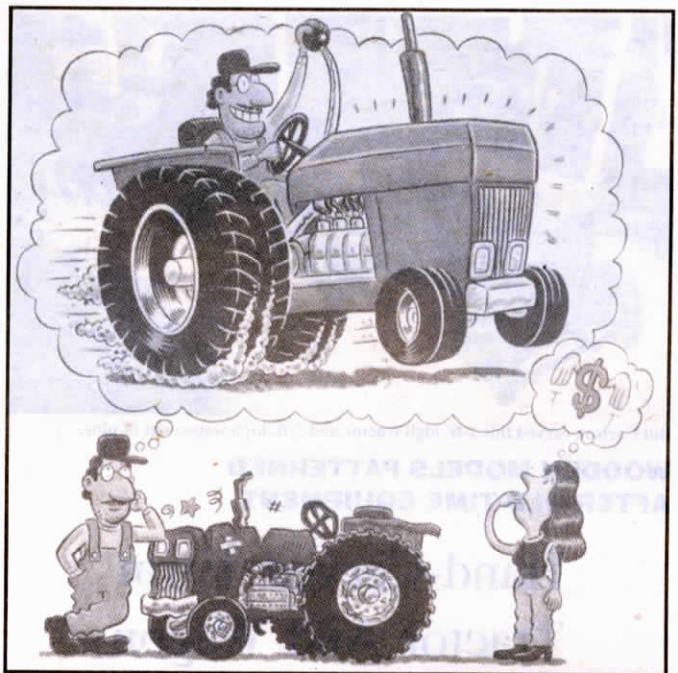
Model 4520

This tractor suffered the same problem as the 5010 and 5020 — too much weight for its power. The much lighter and more nimble 4320 with only 6 hp less was a much better buy. The increased power by inter-cooling in the 4620 somewhat remedied the problem.

4 Wheel Drive

Deere's success at building 4-wheel drive tractors has been checked at best. Its first offering, the 8010, was just ahead of the times. After dropping 4-wheel drive tractors for a while, Deere sold tractors made by Wagner. Then they began producing their own again. The 8630 model had much engine trouble. Deere re-engined these tractors at very little cost to the customer. Some farmers even re-engined them with Cummins. The 8850 is a tractor that probably would have bankrupted a less financially sound company. I bet Deere wished it had back the interest on the money it spent developing the V-8 engine. Then Deere had a deal sewn up to buy Versatile of Canada. But the government nixed the deal. This forced Deere to totally redesign a new line of 4-wheel drives which were quite similar in construction to Steiger and Versatile. Having only been out for a year or so, the jury is still out.

(Reprinted courtesy of Green Magazine, a great publication for Deere enthusiasts. For a sample copy, send \$1 to cover postage and handling to: Green Magazine, Rt. 1 Box 7, Bee, Neb. 68314).



FARM WIFE'S GUIDE TO HUSBAND'S SIGNALS

How To Tell If A New Tractor's On The Way

By Pat Leimbach

You can "smell" a new tractor coming two or three years ahead. The first thing a wife notices is that the thrill - of the old tractor, that is - is gone. He no longer fondles the fenders, caresses the hood. No more does he run in the face of a storm to get 'er under cover. A crumpled muffler may lean into the wind for months on end. The vinyl seat splits and he seems not to notice. Foam oozes from the rupture and is carelessly obscured beneath a feed bag. Gone is the pride that once moved him to slyly detour visitors through the tractor shed. It doesn't seem very important anymore who drives the old thing - the wife even gets a crack at it.

"Give you any trouble?" he'll ask casually at lunch. Then, as he chomps down on a cob of corn, he'll move into phase two of the buildup: innuendo and suggestion.

"Been startin' a little hard lately. Thought maybe you'd notice... Shifts a little rough, don't you think?" You can agree or disagree. The psychological workup is in progress. The seeds of disturbances have been sown.

"D'ja notice how much oil that tractor's been burning?" he'll say to his son one day, making sure you're within earshot. Then early some morning he'll interrupt his book-keeping by walking into the kitchen (ostensibly for something to eat) and remarking, "Guess how much we spent for repairs on that tractor last year?" And then he'll go on to name a figure half again as high as the household budget.

"What?" you shriek. "On that new tractor?"

"That new tractor is ten years old?"

"You're kidding."

"I am not kidding. We bought it the year the willow tree fell on the outhouse. Remember? I'll tell you how long we've had it. We've had it so long it's paid for."

The next thing you know, there's a tractor dealer coming by on trumped-up charges, hanging around the gas pump, leaving slick, four-color brochures in your kitchen, "giving" your husband the kind of time he's charging \$10 an hour for back at the shop.

Some place in the campaign you'll be treated to the "poor lil' ol' me" routine.

"Russ and Chuck traded their John Deere's in on a couple a 4-wheel drive Cases two years ago. Don, Lenny, George, and Bob - they've all had a complete tractor turnover since we bought our machine..."

Then there's the scare technique: "Parts are gettin' harder and harder to locate for that tractor. Wouldn't surprise me a bit if they quit making them altogether."

About this time you'll find a list of figures on a scratch pad conveniently placed to catch your eye - over the sink next to the telephone, on the back of the john. You think at first it's an inventory of all your holdings.

"Is this anything you want to keep?" you ask.

"Oh, that - that's just something the tractor dealer jotted down for me. Uh... some figures on a tractor - and a plow. New tractor takes a new plow. Says he'll take my old tractor on trade and give me just what I paid for it 10 years ago. That takes 'er down to about fourteen thousand."

"Fourteen thousand dollars! Holy cow! We don't want to buy the business. We just need a tractor!"

You suddenly realize that it's all over.

Reprinted from "All My Meadows" by Pat Leimbach, available direct from her for \$7.00 at: The End O' Way, 8877 Bank Rd., Vermillion, Ohio 44089.