

Smörgasbord



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The Party's Over!

Thanks to all of you who wrote or called to congratulate FARM SHOW on our 10th birthday anniversary. Our "birthday issue" was mailed the first week in January and many readers, remembering the staff photo on the cover, picked our editors out of the crowd at the fifteen major farm shows we covered during January and February in search of latest new products.

Here's a sampling of the many nice comments we've received from readers:

Ken Winans, Binghamton, N.Y.: "Thanks for the picture on the front cover. Now we know what everybody looks like. Also enjoyed the history of FARM SHOW, and the issue itself. It was great. I started my tire-recycling business about the same time you started FARM SHOW. Good to live in this great country where, if a guy gets an idea, he can act on it."

John Weber, Rt. 1, Box 89, Anchor, Ill.: "Congratulations on your 10th year for FARM SHOW magazine. I have read every one of them. Our Weber Weeder was a featured new product in the charter issue of FARM SHOW ten years ago. It is still being made and we have sold close to 5,000 of them since your report. At farm auctions, they're selling for about three-fourths of what they sold for new 10 years ago.

"We now have an exciting new product called the Mow and Spray. It's a self-contained, compact spraying system that attaches to the rear of garden tractors and riding lawn mowers, including the new zero turning radius mowers. It's 'boomless' and sprays either fertilizer or herbicide the width of the mower cut as you mow. It's also available with a hand sprayer for use where only a few weeds are left and entire lawn coverage with herbicide isn't needed."

John Blum, Union Grove, Wis.: "Congratulations on your 10 years of having the best farm magazine that ever came through the post office. Keep it up. You're doing great!"

William Tytler, Orillia, Ont.: "Putting your staff picture on the cover was a good idea. Now we feel we know who we are talking and listening to. Thank you for keeping us informed on all the new ideas."

Wesley Russell, Seaforth, Ont.: "I enjoyed the picture of the FARM SHOW team. Maybe you could send a spare copy of the issue so I can cut out the cover picture to hang on the wall. Don't want to mutilate my file copy. I've taken FARM SHOW from the start and have all the back issues except one. Many thanks and keep up the good work."

"Swede Talk" On Fishing

Using only names from the Minneapolis telephone directory, advertising executive William J. Hanvik, Minneapolis, penned the following essay on fishing which, when read aloud, has a definite Swedish accent. See if you can figure it out:

Fish Fried: *Friday Hvass Nice Day So Smith Andes Friend Jones Wendt Tew Lake Furr Fish. Bothum Werr Eager Fishman. Smith Lyke Bass, Jones Tink Pike Best. Dey Pack Flies, Wurms, Grubbs, Leech, Menne Bates, Creel, Nett, Hooks, Rod, Boots, Musch Mohr Gearin Car.*

"Letts Getter Going, Auld Wahroos," Smith Say. "Fisher Reddy Fore Catchings."

Awn Way, Frenz Made Wager: Furst, Most, Larges Fish. Smith, Aulwes Kidder, Mock Jones Chance.

"Eichen Ketcham Mohr Fast," Smith Bragg. "Heaps Ovall Kinden Waite. Isle Getti Lotti Ure Cash."

Atwater, Both Fishman Cast Fromm Rock. Nuting Bittner Hooks.

"Heck," Jones Whimper, "Letts Baskin Violet Rase. Noe Fisher Takin Holdahl Day. Eye Kvittem!"

Sadd Sack Jones Restad. Jones Gott Sun Berndt. Fisher Smith Cast. Smith Catcher Weed, Break Line.

Poor Tripp. Beddor Luck Tammaro, Boyce.

Nebraska Tractor Test Lab Struggling To Survive

It appears that farmers will be the big losers in a political battle that threatens to put the University of Nebraska's world-famous Tractor Testing Laboratory out of business. "We hope to survive by branching out into other areas, such as running performance tests on farm equipment for shortline manufacturers. But it looks like we've come to the end of the road for tractor testing," laments Dr. Louis Leviticus, chief engineer of the \$2 million laboratory which he feels has been "let down" by the farm equipment industry it has monitored for the past 67 years.

The laboratory was testing right at 45 tractors per year until 1986 when the number dwindled to 16. "We haven't tested any tractors so far this year, nor do we have a single one booked for testing," Dr. Leviticus told FARM SHOW two weeks ago.

Since 1919, Nebraska law has mandated that no tractor can be legally advertised or sold in that state (the only one with such a law) unless a representative model is officially tested. The law exempts tractors under 20 hp and crawler-type tractors sold or advertised for non-agricultural use. Because so few tractors are being sold nowadays in Nebraska (1,325 tractors, representing only 1.2% of the total sold throughout the U.S. in 1986), some companies have elected to bypass the state to avoid having to pay the testing fee, which runs about \$10,000 per tractor, not counting the cost of shipping to and from Lincoln, Neb.

Another problem for manufacturers is that tractors made and sold overseas have to conform to standards of an international network of 24 test stations known as the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD). The two tests are similar in many respects, prompting tractor manufacturers to question the need for two tests.

The key turning point came last year when the Nebraska legislature, with the blessings of tractor manufacturers, passed a law which, in effect, says tractors can now be sold in Nebraska if they are either Nebraska or OECD tested. The thinking behind the bill was that the U.S. Commerce Department would then make the Nebraska lab the official OECD test center in the U.S. The anticipated "smooth transition" has been bogged down in a sea of broken promises. The sponsor of the bill maintains that he had received pledges from Deere and Case-IH officials that they, personally, would take responsibility for getting the Nebraska lab designated as the official OECD testing facility in the U.S.

The U.S. Department of Commerce reportedly has turned to the Farm and Industrial Equipment Institute (FIEI), headquartered in Chicago, to determine when and if an OECD testing facility should be established in the U.S. for the relatively small percentage (only 15 to 20%) of tractors made in the U.S. Along that line, FIEI recently invited the Nebraska lab, as a candidate for possible selection as the official OECD test station, to submit a proposal on fees and testing procedures. However, their proposal was "shot down" by tractor

manufacturers who felt the proposed fees were too high, running about twice the going rate for having tractors tested in foreign countries where testing costs are generously subsidized.

FARM SHOW has learned that Case-IH plans to bring an OECD-approved test engineer from PAMI (Prairie Agricultural Machinery Institute) in Canada -- a government-funded program which aids farmers and manufacturers in the design and selection of agricultural machinery -- to its Steiger factory in Fargo to supervise in-plant performance testing of five new Steiger tractor models. The OECD-approved tractors would then be eligible for sale in Nebraska -- presumably at considerably less cost than shipping the big tractors to Lincoln for a conventional Nebraska test.

"I personally don't feel that a manufacturer, or a trade association, should be responsible for performance testing their own products. What good is performance testing if it has no credibility?" asks Dr. Leviticus. He's hopeful, but not overly optimistic, that the Nebraska lab will be designated the official OECD test facility for the U.S. and that he and his co-workers will soon be back in the tractor-testing business.

Safety Of ATV's Debated

"All-terrain vehicles are small motorized contraptions with fat tires. People ride them for fun. But the ATV's have been carrying many riders, especially children, to injury or death.

Sales have boomed in the past five years, swelling riders' ranks to an estimated five million. At the same time, however, more than 600 people have died in ATV accidents and some 275,000 have been injured -- some crippled for life. Nearly half the casualties involve children under 16.

Such grim statistics have stirred one of the biggest product-safety debates ever -- and prompted hundreds of suits against ATV makers, plaintiffs' lawyers estimate. Critics charge that the makers have produced inherently unsafe vehicles and promoted their use by practically anyone not wearing diapers.

The major makers -- all Japanese -- are Honda (which brought out the first ATV, in 1970, and accounts for about 60% of the market), Kawasaki Heavy Industries Ltd., Suzuki and Yamaha Motor Co.

ATV's have bedeviled federal officials and produced strange actions. In December, the federal Consumer Product Safety Commission, after spending 18 months and \$2 million studying the matter, publicly voted to request -- but not require -- makers to stop producing ATV's for children under 12, and to improve safety standards.

The commission's decision outraged critics of ATV safety. Some state regulators were so upset that they discussed banding together to take the unprecedented step of trying to ban ATV sales in their jurisdictions, says Herschel Elkins, the head of the consumer-law section of California's attorney general's office. Simultaneous to its public action, however, the federal commission voted in closed session to take a far tougher stand. By a vote of 2 to 1, it declared ATV's an "imminent and unreasonable risk" to the public -- and backed a mandatory refund program that could result in makers' having to repurchase hundreds of thousands of ATV's from owners. It also voted to require new public warnings about ATV dangers and free training programs.

The repurchase would cover all three-wheeled ATV's and four-wheelers used by owners' children under 16. It is estimated that more than half of the roughly 2.3 million ATV's in use are three-wheelers. (Excerpted from the Wall Street Journal.)

Two backpackers stumbled upon an irate, and obviously hungry, bear. "We'll never outrun him; we'll have to fight," surmised the first hiker, looking for a weapon of any sort. He then realized, to his amazement, that his cohort had pulled a pair of tennis shoes from his pack and was calmly removing his heavy hiking boots in favor of the lighter footwear.

"You don't seriously expect to outrun that bear?" asked the first hiker in undisguised astonishment.

"I don't need to outrun the bear," the second hiker replied calmly. "I only need to outrun you." (Bill Gnatzig in Dairy.)