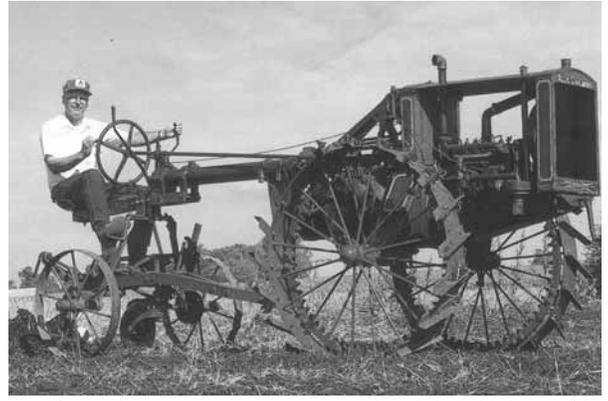




Over the years Norm Meinert has acquired more than 65 Allis-Chalmers tractors. One of his oldest and rarest is this 10-18, which was the first tractor the company ever made.



His AC collection includes every model built from 1914 to 1959. This 6-12 model is also one of the oldest and was called a Motor Cultivator.

By Lorn Manthey, Contributing Editor

AC Parts And Collecting Are His Lifelong Passion

Norm Meinert grew up in the 1940's and 50's on an Illinois farm that had Deere and Allis-Chalmers tractors. When his interest turned to collecting tractors, he saw many people going green and he figured someone had to preserve old AC models. "I started with a WC and then restored a 20-35 Allis, which was made in 1928. Then I looked for the rare ones, like the 6-12, and I had a friend who knew where a 1914 model 10-18 was in Wisconsin. It took me 7 years to make a deal for that one," says Meinert.

Over the years Meinert has acquired more than 65 AC tractors, including every model built from 1914 to 1959. His collection includes WC models first built in 1933, B and C models from 1940, the CA models from 1950, a WD model from 1948, and the WD45 from 1953. The oldest and rarest are the 10-18 and the 6-12, which were called Motor Cultivators. He acquired the 10-18 in a straight up trade for an International 15-30 Flaming Four, which was built in 1920. "I bought that tractor in New York and had it at my place about 4 hrs. I called the fellow in Wisconsin to get the 10-18, which was the

first tractor AC ever made," Meinert says. "We were both winners in that deal, because he'd never been able to buy a 15-30."

Meinert was trained as a tool and die maker so he was able to reproduce and manufacture replacement parts that were virtually impossible to find. "When I started collecting there wasn't a market for replacement parts, so I was able to create one," says Norm. In the past 15 years that's been his fulltime business. Norm's Antiques is the country's largest supplier of replacement parts, carburetors, and engine overhaul kits for AC tractors.

Meinert spends countless hours a week producing manifolds, valves, clutch parts, piston rings, sleeves, wrist pins and bushings. He has a friend who rebuilds water pumps for him and another who makes radiator cores. Gaskets are reproduced by a state-of-the-art laser cutting facility. Reproduction emblems and decals are made to the OEM specifications by a U.S. supplier. "In recent years we've shipped parts to Australia, New Zealand, the Netherlands, the UK and all over the U.S. and Canada," Meinert says.

Because of his experience and knowledge,

Meinert is often asked to build extremely rare parts. "I've got parts quotes out that range from \$3,500 to nearly \$10,000," Norm says. "I could work 12 to 14 hrs. a day for weeks on end and not catch up."

Meinert's real joy is spending time with his collection and attending shows. He's taken his tractors around the Midwest and to Washington State, New York and Florida. Meinert says his travel trailer has 375,000 miles and counting. On winter trips to Florida he tows the trailer and brings tractors along for shows in the Sunshine State. In September he always attends the Dalton, Minn., threshing show, where he tunes and operates several rare steam engines.

Although he's not actively growing his own collection, Meinert says "old tractors and equipment are a tremendous investment. If I see a good deal, I'll probably get after it. If not, there are plenty of other people who want to add to theirs." He tells the story about one transaction he would've liked to have made, back in 1959. "A neighbor offered my friend and me a Fairbanks Morse 15-25 tractor and threshing machine for \$100 each,

and we didn't take it because that was a lot of money back then. I decided to keep track of it, and a few years later it sold for \$675. In 1993 it sold for \$9,000, which I thought was a huge jump. That was nothing compared to the \$165,000 that it sold for in October of 2013 at an auction in New York. That's definitely one I would've liked in my collection."

Most of the tractors Meinert owns are in running condition, but not all are completely restored. He works on his own tractors when he's not busy making parts for customers, "which is only a few hours a month." About a third of his collection rides on steel wheels. He hopes to pass the collection on to his son, but he thinks the parts business may need to be sold. "I've got older milling machines and surface grinders, lathes and drills and I know how to work with that equipment. Younger people learn and have experience on different types of equipment."

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Norman Meinert, 10333 N. Davis Rd., Davis, Ill. 61019 (ph 815 865-5372).

Farm Plots Show African Farmers How To Improve Crop Yields

By Dee Goerge, Contributing Editor

A group of American professors and farmers have found a new way to help poor African farmers "help themselves" by setting up demonstration plots so they can see for themselves that modern methods produce more food.

The Companion Village Project (CVP) says results have been impressive since the first Tanzanian plots were planted in 2008 with half an acre each of corn and beans.

"The best yield for corn has been 130 bushels an acre," says Dr. Roger Blomquist, current director of the Institute of Agriculture at the University of Iringa in Tanzania, which oversees the organization's activities. "Farmers who use our techniques can increase their production from 3 to 5 times over previous yields. They grow white corn that they harvest, dry and grind into flour for their staple food source. They also raise edible beans. We're hearing stories of local farmers who now have enough crops to sell to pay for school fees and medical expenses."

That's a big improvement from the past, when a farmer couldn't even grow enough to feed his family.

The farmers use hand tools on their farms of between 2 and 5 acres, and follow the basic practices taught by the retired and active professors, and agri-business leaders who serve as volunteers and pay their own way to travel to Tanzania to teach at the 50 villages where the 1-acre plots have been established. Three Tanzanians with masters' degrees in agriculture, who studied for 16 months in

the U.S., oversee the plots and the program itself.

"It's been an interesting relationship that we've developed. Farmers tell us that when we first came, they didn't believe our farming practices would work. But after they see the demonstration plots, they understand how well they work," Blomquist says.

The demonstration plots prove to them that yields improve greatly by planting corn every 8 in. in straight rows 24 in. apart. They see the value of soil testing, using improved seed, adding fertilizers, crop rotation, minimum tillage and managing residue (instead of burning it).

Recently the CVP has developed relationships with Pioneer Seed Company, and Yara Fertilizer Company, in hopes of improving the availability of seed and fertilizer to remote villages.

The plots are organized through the local churches, because the pastors are often the most educated and respected person in the village. Plots are located next to schools or churches in high traffic areas to increase visibility. Field days and demonstrations are open to everyone.

The project has been rewarding, says Blomquist, and there is much more that can be accomplished.

People interested in supporting the CVP can sponsor a demonstration plot, travel to Tanzania to teach, or donate money to pay for expenses that directly relate to the plots. "We don't give money to farmers," he notes.



By setting up demonstration plots, a group of American professors and farmers have found a new way to help poor Tanzanian farmers help themselves.

"We give them education, and demonstrate how to use seed and fertilizer."

In the end, the goal is to yield a better future for farmers and their families.

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Companion Village Project, Institute of Agriculture Foundation, University of Iringa, 1900 7th St. N.W., New Brighton, Minn. 55112 (ph 651 636-9559); roger_bloomquist@comcast.net; www.tumainiag.org).



Demonstration plots prove to farmers that crop yields improve greatly with modern methods.