

## 980 HP BIG BUD 747 PLOWS 70 ACRES PER HOUR

# “World’s Biggest” Tractor Returns Home To Work

We received a lot of mail a few years ago when we stated that a South African-built 4-WD ACO tractor was the biggest in the world (Vol. 19, No. 4).

Readers were quick to tell us about other tractors that have attempted to lay claim to the title, “World’s Biggest”. One frequently mentioned candidate was Versatile’s Big Roy, an 8-WD, 600 hp giant that was built as a prototype and is now on display at a farm museum in Manitoba. We also got an earful about the Big Bud “747” that was built 20 years ago in Havre, Mont.

The 4-WD Big Bud was built by Northern Manufacturing, in 1978. It measures 22-ft. wide by 29-ft. long with a cab that tops 14 ft. It’s powered by a 16-cyl. Detroit diesel engine retrofitted with the biggest injectors available to produce a total horsepower rating of 980. The tractor weighs 100,000 lbs. without fuel in its 1,000-gal. tank or ballast in its four specially built, 8-ft. tall duals.

The tractor was originally built for the Rossi Brothers in Bakersfield, Calif., where it was used to deep rip cropland to a depth of 30 in. with a 15-shank ripper built specially for the tractor. It worked 15 acres per hour at 6 to 6 1/2 mph, and it was said that when the ripper was pulled out of the ground at the end of the day, the points glowed red hot.

The big tractor replaced the three Cat D-9’s used to do the work before.

The tractor was used in California for 11 years before being purchased by Willow Brook Farms in Indialantic, Fla., where it was used for deep ripping until last year. Its engine and rear differential were overhauled while the tractor was in service at the farm.

When the tractor came up for sale last fall, two farmers near Big Sandy, Mont., acquired the tractor after officials from Big Equipment Co. (which services and sells used Big Buds) helped locate the one-of-a-kind tractor.



**The Big Bud “747” was built 20 years ago in Montana. When the tractor came up for sale last fall, Randy and Robert Williams (left and center) bought it, restored it, and put it to work on their farm. Ron Harmon, owner of Big Equipment, helped locate the tractor.**

Robert and Randy Williams were interested in the tractor for nostalgic reasons but they also wanted to put it to work on their farm. The tractor had about 8,000 hours on it, and the original Canadian-built tires had at least 50 percent tread left on them, says Ron Harmon, owner of Big Equipment.

The Williams brothers restored the tractor over winter. It was taken down to the original metal, repainted the original white color and decals were replaced. A few axle parts

also had to be replaced. Restoration cost \$15,000 on top of the \$95,000 purchase price of the tractor. The tractor will pay off, say the Williams, who use it to pull an 80-ft. Friggstad chisel plow.

“It works over an acre per minute,” says Robert. “You can do 60 or 70 acres an hour at 6 1/2 to 7 1/2 mph. It takes only two weeks to work 8,000 to 9,000 acres for small grains under optimal conditions. We put 300 hours on it this spring, no problems.”

The tractor uses two to three qts. of fuel per acre, a reasonable figure, they say.

As for ground pressure, that’s been measured at less than 5 psi’s, dry. Fully ballasted and fueled, it would exert only 6 or 6 1/2 psi’s, Harmon says.

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Big Equipment Co. LLC, 4040 First St. W., Havre, Mont. 59501 (ph 406 265-9554) or Williams Brothers, HC 76, Box 967 or 980, Big Sandy, Mont. 59520 (ph 406 386-2267).

## NEW “MONSTER” TRACTOR FROM JAPAN

# Million Dollar “Farm Tractor” Sports 770 Hp

Not too many farmers in the world are likely ever to shell out the \$1 million price tag on this giant new Komatsu tractor, but some California growers are willing to pay \$200 per hour to rent it.

Komatsu’s latest behemoth has a V-12, 1,861 cu. in. turbocharged engine. Designed primarily for use in construction and mining, the tractor weighs 120 tons.

Featuring 28-in. wide steel tracks that exert just 16.9 psi’s on the ground, the tractor uses about 35 gal. of fuel per hour from its 402-gal. tank.

It can be fitted with a 3-shank ripper that breaks up hardpan to a depth of 7 ft., says Tom Wurster, whose Fresno, Calif., ag rental company, Cal Star, bought the tractor last fall and has since used it to prepare 2,000 acres for fruit trees.

To adapt the tractor to agricultural use, Cal Star removed a big dozer blade and mounted a five-section, 30,000-lb. counterweight on front.

To transport the tractor from job to job, the tractor is loaded on a special 9-axle trailer,



Photo courtesy Implement & Tractor

**The 770 hp Komatsu tractor can be fitted with a 3-shank ripper that breaks up hardpan to a depth of 7 ft.**

one of only two in California that can handle the load, Wurster says.

Cal Star rents the tractor out for \$200 per hour with a 6-hour minimum.

“Generally speaking, on jobs larger than 500 acres, it’s more cost-effective than a smaller tractor because it rips to 7 ft. in just one pass. Other rigs need two passes to dig that deep,” Wurster says.

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Cal Star Rentals, 3035 East Malaga, Fresno, Calif. 93725 (ph 209 233-1041; fax 1271).



**In field tests, the 600 hp “Big Roy” easily handled a 118-ft. wide cultivator at up to 6 1/2 mph and a 20-bottom plow pulled 12 in. deep.**

## “Big Roy’s” A Big Boy

“Big Roy” was built in 1977 by the Versatile company of Winnipeg, Manitoba. It was named for Roy Robinson, the company’s biggest shareholder at the time.

Power limit for production tractors in those days was 350 hp, but Robinson instructed Versatile engineers to build a 600 hp giant.

The articulated, 8-WD, 28-ton tractor is powered by a Cummins KTA 1150-600 diesel in its rear section. The rear-mounted engine created rear visibility problems, so a closed circuit TV camera was mounted on back of the tractor and linked to a 9-in. screen mounted above the instrument panel in the cab.

In field tests, Big Roy easily handled a 118-

ft. wide cultivator at up to 6 1/2 mph and a 20-bottom plow to 12 in. deep, no problem.

But there were a couple design problems, such as the steering system and the pivot point for the articulated steering behind the cab.

Worse was the fact the tractor simply had too much power for the implements that were available in the late 1970’s.

Eventually, Versatile switched to developing a smaller, 470-hp version of the tractor.

Big Roy is now on display at the Manitoba Agricultural Museum in Austin, Manitoba.

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Manitoba Agricultural Museum Inc., P.O. Box 10, Austin, Manitoba, Canada R0H 0C0 (ph 204 637-2211).