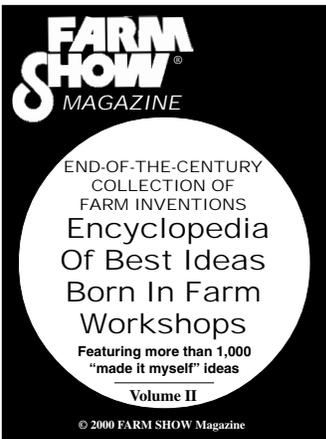


## Editor's Notebook



**Mark Newhall**  
Editor &  
Publisher

This 350-page Encyclopedia of Best Ideas features more than 1,000 "made it myself" stories from past issues as well as hundreds of shop tips and maintenance ideas.



## Good News For You From FARM SHOW!

We're excited to announce publication of our new "Encyclopedia of Best Ideas Born In Farm Workshops". It's a 350-page collection of the best "made it myself" ideas from the past 5 years of FARM SHOW.

Now at the printer and soon ready for mailing, it features more than 1,000 best ideas. You get the full story on each item, complete with how-to details and photos, plus the inventor's name, address and phone.

Even if you're a long-time subscriber to FARM SHOW and have saved every issue, you'll still want a copy of the encyclopedia for yourself, and gift copies for friends and relatives. All 1,000-plus items are indexed and cross-referenced, making it fast and easy to find individual "made it myself" stories. No more wasting time paging aimlessly through a mountain of back issues.

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## Rubber Track Pioneer Worried About Future Of Tracks

Dennis Wilkinson probably knows as much as anyone in the world about putting rubber tracks on farm equipment. So when he points out problems with some of the tracks on the market, people pay attention.

Wilkinson's company, Omnitrac, makes a variety of tracked undercarriages to fit virtually any piece of farm equipment - powered or non-powered.



This pile of defective rubber tracks behind Omnitrac's manufacturing plant keeps getting bigger.

"Omnitrac has been in the rubber track business since 1995. We started out using Goodyear tracks but they left us when Goodyear started supplying Deere and Case-IH.

"We joined forces with Firestone and for about two years, Firestone and Omnitrac worked on a large number of projects, from a track system for Deere combines to skid steer tracks and systems for center pivots. The relationship was beneficial to both parties until track failures started to develop, including soft guide lugs, carcass separation, and loss of tread bars. You name it, it started to happen.

"Omnitrac tried very hard to identify the problems and work with Firestone to improve the product. Some improvements were made, but the managers of the track department resisted adamantly and denied there were problems, even though their own engineers told them there were. Finally, a new track version was made available in early 1999. Unfortunately, the new tracks are already starting to fail after only a few hundred hours - or less.

"Meanwhile, Bridgestone Engineered Products (BEP) has since taken over Firestone's track department, making statements that they're not going to develop any more tracks for any company unless they have long term testing programs. But low and behold, we discovered Bridgestone has already provided several sets of rubber track to a first-time rubber track manufacturer, without even questioning the design.

"The rubber track industry is seriously being damaged by the Bridgestone/Firestone program. Their policy is to ignore customers with failing rubber tracks, which causes major damage to the industry.

"Omnitrac has developed a large number of rubber track applications and we've made our share of mistakes, but we've always accepted responsibility for our undercarriages. That's what Firestone and Bridgestone need to do with their tracks.

"After dealing with virtually every rubber track manufac-

turer in the world, we can overwhelmingly endorse Caterpillar and Goodyear tracks - they have the best technology today. These two companies are the leaders in rubber tracks.

"Rubber tracks are the wave of the future, and the transition from rubber tires to rubber tracks will be greater than the transition from steel wheels to rubber tires. However, if companies like Firestone and Bridgestone aren't responsible, the future of rubber tracks will be seriously delayed due to the negative feedback. It threatens the future of rubber tracks not only for Omnitrac but also Caterpillar, Goodyear, New Holland/Case, and Deere, plus all the other developers working in the rubber track marketplace."

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Omnitrac LLC, Box 520, La Grande, Oregon 97850 (ph 541 963-0139; fax 0768).

## "Why I Bought A Caterpillar Combine"

Rick Heintzman is one of the most successful farm entrepreneurs in the world. Over the past few years he has developed a huge market for his edible Omega flax crop, which he sells direct to consumers as Dakota Flax Gold. Omega



Heintzman's Cat 485 combine is fitted with a custom-built header that picks up two windrows at a time.

flax has been proven to lower cholesterol and has anti-cancer properties.

He has a 100,000-name customer database that includes about 300 hospitals and clinics. "They demand a high quality crop. I provide it at a premium price, getting about \$350 a bushel for my flax. To do the best job harvesting possible, I wanted the best equipment in the world. So I bought a



Heintzman's 42-ft. Honey Bee header for small grains converts to a swather, which he mounts on a Ford New Holland Bi-Directional tractor for cutting his food-grade flax crop.

Caterpillar Lexion combine."

Heintzman bought his Cat 485 combine in June of 1998. He says his 485 was the first one imported into the U.S. from Germany. Cat recently opened a new combine factory in Nebraska, but Heintzman's machine was built in Germany.

Heintzman equipped the 485 with a 42-ft. Honey Bee draper header that was custom designed by Greg Honey, Frontier, Saskatchewan.

The 42-ft. header can also be used as a swather, mounted on a Ford New Holland Bi-Directional TV-120 tractor.

The Cat 485 has tremendous capacity. "This fall we ran it against our Deere 8820 with a 25-ft. header. The Deere maxed out at 1.3 mph in the crop we were harvesting. With the Cat, we traveled at 4 mph and did a better job. That's the kind of capacity I need because it's important to get a food grade flax crop off the field in a hurry," says Heintzman.

He runs an 850-bu. grain cart pulled by a Cat Challenger 55 tractor and unloads his Cat combine's 350-bu. hopper on-the-go.

Heintzman has learned to appreciate the tracks on his combine. Last fall, his area received 7 in. of rain just when he was getting ready to harvest sunflowers. "There were times when I was harvesting sunflowers with the tracks when I was spinning. I kicked in my rear wheel assist and away I went. I just went through the water, right through the mud, and never left a sunflower head standing."