

**"ONE OF THE FIRST" NO-TILL PLANTERS  
AND OTHER "TRANSITION" MACHINES**

## Early Inventions From Veteran Reporter's Files

Veteran farm reporter C.F. Marley, who has been writing and photographing new farm inventions for more than 30 years, recently pulled a few "vintage" ideas from his extensive files. "These three machines were developed at a transition point in agriculture by farmers who were ahead of their times. Now we take their ideas for granted but at the time they were on the leading edge," says Marley.



### "Whole Corn" Harvester

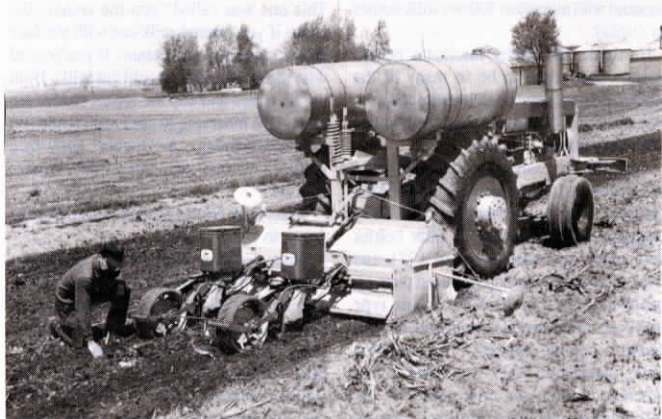
In the early 60's, Wayne Best and Vince Meisner from near Raymond, Ill., were always on the lookout for new ideas. As farmers started looking at making the switch from picking ear corn to harvesting shelled corn, some unusual machines were built.

Although some farmers simply pulled a picker and sheller unit together through the field, others - Best and Meisner among them - decided to put the entire cornstalk through a conventional small grain combine. Since there were no cornheads available yet as we know them, farmers experimented with other ways of cutting the stalks and getting them into the machine in an orderly way.

For several years, Best and Meisner used

a conventional grain head fitted with tall rotating tubes equipped with retractable fingers that pushed stalks into the feeder auger. (Their header attachment, shown in the photo, was made by Hesston).

This idea worked fine but there were drawbacks. Putting whole stalks through the machine required more horsepower and having the excessive amount of stalks in the machine complicated and slowed down the cleaning and separation process. Some farmers handle the extra horsepower demand by mounting a second engine on their combines, which is what Best and Meisner did on their Oliver.



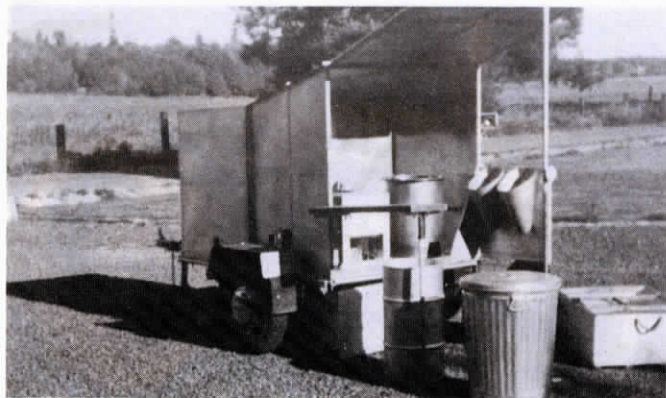
### Early No-Till Planter

In the late 1960's, Illinois farmer Neil Hilvety of Moweaqua built one of the first one-pass, "no-till" planters in the country, along with his late father Owen. Unlike today's streamlined, precision-engineered machines, the machine the Hilvety's put together was a somewhat bulky affair.

The till-planter consisted of a large rototiller pulling two John Deere planter units and two large chemical and fertilizer tanks.

To provide the strength and power needed to handle the heavy rig, The Hilvety's designed and built a tractor just for the job. It was fitted with a Rockwell Standard truck gear and powered by a 671 GMC diesel engine.

The Hilvety's also built large "Big A" floater-type fertilizer spreaders before commercial rigs came on market. Owen ran a machine shop and son Neil still does.



Schmidt's self-contained processing trailer contains scalding pots, kill cones, mechanical chicken plucker, and cutting boards.

### "I DO ALL THE WORK AND I TAKE MY MESS WITH ME"

## Traveling Chicken Plucking Business

"It's a great sideline business," says Ernie Schmidt, Olympia, Wash., who operates a traveling chicken plucking business in his spare time, traveling to farms within a 50 to 100 mile radius of his home.

Schmidt got the idea when he lived in Ohio and saw mobile butchering operations for hogs and cattle. He has raised small numbers of chickens since he was 12 years old (he's now 37) so he was pretty sure other small-time poultry raisers would welcome a clean, efficient dressing out operation that would come right to the farm.

Several years ago he built his self-contained processing trailer out of aluminum and stainless steel. It contains scalding pots, kill cones (you stick chicken in head first and cut off head letting blood drain out), a mechanical chicken plucker, and cutting boards, all within its compact 4 by 6-ft. frame. He loads all feathers and offal into 55-gal. barrels and hauls them away.

"Believe me, that's something my customers really love. I don't leave any mess behind at all. The birds go right from the

trailer into the freezer," says Schmidt, adding that when a state health inspector saw his trailer he said it was "a little jewel" and passed it with flying colors.

Working mostly on weekends and holidays, Schmidt charges \$1 a bird and can process about 25 birds per hour. "Most customers have 50 to 100 birds. When I started I advertised locally I got so much business by word of mouth that I never had to advertise again. There's a tremendous demand out there for this type of service and I'm sure that's true all over the country."

Schmidt, who hopes someday to get into farming full-time, has had to cut back on the amount of time he has for chicken plucking. In fact, he's interested in selling his complete trailer and business and has put together a manual explaining the entire process and would be willing to train anyone interested in purchasing. He's asking \$6,500 for the entire system.

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### Roadbank Mower

The late Darrell Edmunds, Taylorville, Ill., was a man ahead of his time when he built this hydraulically-controlled roadbank mower in the early 70's.

Today such hydraulically-controlled road mowers are commonplace but 20 years ago there was nothing like it. Edmunds built a frame to mount on the side of the tractor which would flex at the side of the tractor

while the weight of the extended power and frame would be carried by a pair of small steel wheels. A rubber wheel at the outer edge of the mower deck held it at the correct cutting height.

Mower blade was belt-driven by a Wisconsin engine mounted on the side frame. Hydraulic cylinders raised and lowered the mower deck and also the side mower arm.