

Collector Specializes In “Low Hour” Deere Tractors

New York farmer Kevin Sykes is an enthusiastic collector of low-hour Deere tractors from the late 1960's to the early 1990's. His collection began with a 3-year-old Deere 4455 with only 2 hrs. that he bought in 1994. The tractor was too nice to use or sell, so he kept it as an investment.

“It's extremely rare to find a 3-year-old tractor that's hardly been used at all,” Sykes says. “After finding that tractor, I decided to concentrate on building a low-hour collection.”

He started scouring farm papers and going to auctions across the country to find tractors. In recent years the internet has made searches easier, but the gems he's looking for are still hard to find.

“I look for tractors in original condition,” says Kevin. “I nearly always find that what's advertised isn't what it turns out to be. Some are fitted with aftermarket parts. Others are listed as having original paint, but on close inspection it's obvious that's not true. A dead giveaway on some Deere 40 series tractors is that the tiger stripe on the hood decals never lines up with the front of the side screens.” Despite the challenges of finding well-maintained, low-hour tractors, Sykes, and his brother, who has a partial interest in some of the tractors, have built a strong collection of models.

For example, the serial number on his late model 1977 4430 shows that it was one of the last 100 built. It has a cab, air, power shift transmission, and less than 3,000 original hours. His 1972 4020 has low hours, a bright-as-new paint job, clean decals, and the original muffler, still black and unrusted. Even the shiny red fuel tank cap looks brand new.

Sykes and his brother own a pair of open station 4240's with power shift. Less than 300 of them were built. Further down his lineup is an open station 4040, extremely rare because less than 400 were built in this configuration. Other models in his collection include a 4000, a 4020, a 4320 and a 4230. All of them are low-hour and in original condition.

A 4055 built in 1992 had only 238 hrs. when Sykes acquired it. Equipped with triple remotes, power shift, all of the original weights, and a clean-as-new cab, it was a

rare find. “Only 1,700 were built with this equipment,” says Sykes, “and this one was extra special because of its low hours.”

In addition to holding tractors in his own collection, Sykes buys and sells 20 to 40 Deere tractors a year to customers across the U.S. and in other countries. He always looks for quality, low hours and unique options. He brings the tractors to his farm where he and three full-time employees work at restoring them to near original condition.

“We use all OEM parts, and even fix things that don't need to be fixed or didn't leak,” says Kevin. “Many times we do complete engine overhauls, which includes balancing the motor, reworking the transmission and the brakes. We're taking the tolerances to the tight side of everything that Deere required.” Their goal is to restore machines to near original condition, including paint quality. Well-know auction observer Machinery Pete says Sykes has a great reputation across the country and beyond.

Another rare model in Syke's collection is a 1982 4440. It's a power shift model with 1,400 hrs. that he bought from a Minnesota auctioneer in the late 90's. “We had one of those on the farm that was a real workhorse, so we sold that one and kept this one with the lower hours,” says Kevin. In 2010 he and a friend saw a similar 4440 with 47 hrs. sell for \$59,000 at an Illinois auction. He and his friend are certain that Kevin's 4440 is in better physical condition. “The paint on that Illinois tractor wasn't as nice as mine,” Sykes says.

In 2012 Kevin sold the 4455 that he bought with only 2 hrs. on it to start his collection in 1994. He listed it for \$150,000, almost \$100,000 more than what he paid for it. “I got a call the day after I put it on the internet from a large farmer in Mexico,” says Kevin. “He didn't quibble about the price, gave me a \$5,000 deposit and said he'd have the money wired in a day or two.” Less than 24 hours later Sykes received a call from a Canadian collector who said he'd pay \$175,000 cash for the 4455. He was so convinced he would prevail that he flew to New York in his private jet with cash in hand to convince Sykes his offer was real. “I told him thanks for the generous offer, but I'd already made a deal



Despite the challenges of finding well-maintained, low-hour Deere tractors, Kevin Sykes and his brother have built a strong collection of models that includes this 4320 with 2,543 hrs.

and I was sticking to it.”

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Remote-Controlled Seed Box Opener

“It lets you open and close seed boxes from a distance, keeping you safe on the ground,” says Shane Hogan, Clarks Ag Supply, Clarks, Neb., about his company's new remote-controlled seed box opener. “Works great for filling seed tenders as well as planters and drills.”

The self-contained EasiLoad seed system uses an electric actuator to open and close the slide gate at the bottom of the bulk boxes. The actuator is powered by a rechargeable 14.4-volt battery. It weighs just 15 lbs., making it easy to move around.

“It eliminates the need to climb up a seed tender, forklift or tractor so there's no risk of falling,” says Hogan. “It's built strong. The actuator that opens and closes the box has 400 lbs. of force. You can be sure that when you attach it to the box, it'll stay there.”

A safety cable can be manually hooked



Remote-controlled seed box opener uses an electric actuator to open and close the slide gate on bulk boxes.

onto the box's slide gate or lock handle. The seed box opener sells for \$995 plus S&H. Check out a video of the seed box opener at www.farmshow.com.

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Collector Restored Rare French Farmall Diesel

In 2004 John Boyens imported a rare French-built 1953 Farmall Super C diesel from Belgium. It came with a spare engine and extra parts.

“Opening that shipping container was like opening the best Christmas present I could ever imagine,” says Boyens.

His quest for a Farmall Super C with the rare French diesel began in 1997 when he met John Hammink, an IH collector from Holland at a Missouri Red Power Show. Hammink told Boyens about an IHC Show he'd been to in Germany where he saw a Super C with a French-built diesel. Boyens said he'd heard about them, but figured he'd never see one. “I casually mentioned it sure would be nice to bring one of them to Iowa,” Boyens said.

A year later Boyen's friend Hammink passed away in Holland and he acknowledged the death by sending a memorial along with a note to Hammink's wife Ria. About 6 months later he received a note from a friend of Hammink's, who wrote “anyone who cares enough to send a memorial overseas should know about a 1953 Super C Diesel for sale in Belgium.” Boyens acted fast, and within weeks the tractor was on its way to Iowa. “I got a crash course in international

trade in a few weeks,” said Boyens. “I needed a certificate of cleanliness, bills of lading, inspection certificates and other documentation. It took 9 weeks for the container to arrive in Canada from the Netherlands, then a few weeks more for a rail trip to Chicago and a truck ride to Iowa.” The brokerage fees, shipping and certificates cost him about \$800.

Boyens unpacked his rare Farmall and soon realized that restoration would be quite a challenge. “Everyone I called for parts said there's no such thing as a Super C Diesel,” Boyens says. “Most of the numbers came up ‘not for domestic use’. Over the next 4 years Boyens used parts from the spare engine to rebuild the one on the tractor. His son meanwhile found a website in France that sold antique tractor parts. They bought a head gasket, decals, a horn button and headlights. “It was a long, drawn out process, but we finally got everything we needed,” Boyens says, who completed the restoration with help from friends.

The French Super C was known as a “vegetable tractor” because of its high clearance and narrow front. Wide front versions were known as “vineyard tractors.”



John Boyens imported this rare French-built Farmall Super C diesel from Belgium and restored it to mint condition. “It always grabs a lot of attention at shows and parades,” he says.

Boyens' tractor has a 3-pt. hitch that doesn't exist on tractors of that vintage built in the U.S. He says that in Europe they used the 3 pt. to pull a 2-way 2 bottom plow, which is why his restored tractor has weights up front. The 123 cu. in. diesel weighs 3,695 lbs.

With his restoration complete, Boyens is happy to drive the smooth-running 23 hp.

tractor any chance he gets. He's put more than 1,000 parade miles on it since completing the restoration. “It always grabs a lot of attention,” Boyens says, “so I spend a lot of time answering questions.”

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