After 94 and 40 years, respectively, Dave Curtis and his Rite tractors are still going strong. One of the biggest tractors, nicknamed the Earthquake, will be on display this summer at the Half Century of Progress Show in Rantoul, Ill. It’s one of 38 200 to 750 hp tractors built by the D.L. Curtis Co. since 1973. The last one was built about four years ago, according to Curtis.

“We built 38 of them, and they are all still running,” he says.

Curtis and his brother Jack were first covered in FARM SHOW more than 36 years ago (Vol. 1, No. 3). Their Rite tractor was described as the first to offer an Allison automatic transmission, infinitely variable speed, mechanical transmission. The articulated, 400 hp Model 404 weighed 45,000 lbs. and measured 15 ft. 11 in. wide with duals.

“We used all standard components,” recalls Curtis. “People could order what they wanted. We used late model, low hour components to reduce costs, but added new technology as it was introduced. We had computers on the later models.”

The tractors commonly featured big Cummins diesels with Detroit or Caterpillar engines optional. They used Spicer drivelines, Clark or Caterpillar axles, Budd-type wheels and conventional or the then new clutchless transmissions. Over time, most were built with the Allison automatic transmission.

Years ahead of their time, the tractors allowed the operator to “dial” in the desired speed. The transmission shifted up or down to maintain that speed.

The Curtis Rite tractors featured custom cabs and Curtis designed transfer cases. Tractor cabs and hoods tilted out of the way for ease of service. They also had a patent on the hinge, which eliminated vibrations previously common in articulated tractors.

The Earthquake is one of a handful of 750 hp Rite tractors built. It later received a power boost bringing it to 850 hp. Originally purchased for use in Oregon, it’s now in Ohio.

“We’ve invited Dave Curtis and hope he can attend the show,” says Darius Harms, show chairman. “People will be able to get up close to the Earthquake.”

Though he currently offices at home, if Curtis is at the show, he will be ready to take orders for more tractors. The price will be a bit higher than the $171,000 quoted for the 750 hp tractor in that first FARM SHOW article.

“I’ve still got a good crew ready to build another one if someone wants it,” says Curtis.

Instead of buying hay to feed his beef cattle last winter, Bob Batey fed them a blended feed of corn, vitamins, minerals and 70 percent sawdust. The 85-year-old inventor/entrepreneur is patenting the easy and inexpensive method he uses to treat sawdust to make it into a digestible and nutritious feed, and he’s devising a plan how he can share it with others.

Between January and April he fed more than 50 tons of sawdust to his 40+ cows and bull herd at a cost of $1.40/day/cow. “My cattle gained weight through the winter,” Batey says.

“Grinding up tree limbs would be even better than sawdust. The cambium would provide more food value. It would have to be ground up fine and kept at high moisture,” Batey says. He adds that his treatment would also work on cornstalks.

While Iowa typically has plenty of feed, Batey says feeding sawdust – that is often wasted – is an option that would work anywhere cattle feed is in short supply. “I don’t plan to keep this a secret,” Batey says. He welcomes letters from people who are interested.

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Dave Curtis, 3401 5th Ave. N., Great Falls, Mont. 59401 (ph 406 453-7707; cell 406 590-7707; ritebycurtis@msn.com).

**Giant “Rite Tractors” Still Going Strong**

By Jim Ruem, Contributing Editor

**He Turns Sawdust Into Nutritious Cattle Feed**

“Grinding up tree limbs would be even better than sawdust. The cambium would provide more food value. It would have to be ground up fine and kept at high moisture,” Batey says. He adds that his treatment would also work on cornstalks. His method has attracted the attention of Iowa State University extension beef specialists who are working with cornstalks. While Iowa typically has plenty of feed, Batey says feeding sawdust – that is often wasted – is an option that would work anywhere cattle feed is in short supply.

“I don’t plan to keep this a secret,” Batey says. He welcomes letters from people who are interested.

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Robert Batey, 2841 Kentucky Ave., Mount Pleasant, Iowa 52641 (Robert@bateyltd.com).

**Is Your FARM SHOW Library Complete?**

You’ve probably noticed that over the past few years, we’ve built up a library of books focusing on specific topics from past issues of FARM SHOW. Most are the result of requests from readers. When we enter the holiday season this fall, you might want to keep them in mind when shopping for your favorite rural tinkerer. You can get more details from the order envelope enclosed with this issue, or at our website (www.farmshow.com). By far our most popular books are the two 482-page “Encyclopedias of Made It Myself Ideas”. They sell for just $14.95 apiece or $26.95 for both (nearly 1,000 pages of great ideas!) plus S&H. Thanks for giving us a look!”

**Lift Assist Kit For Pickup Tailgates**

“It eliminates the struggle of opening or closing a heavy tailgate when you’re holding something,” says Brandon Parks, inventor of the GateGlide II.

Like the gas spring that lifts hatches, Parks figured out how to use a gas spring to slowly lower a tailgate and close it effortlessly.

“It takes 90 to 95 percent of the weight off,” Parks says.

The employee of Geno’s Garage, a Dodge/Cummins parts distributor in Georgia, calibrated the gas spring to work on Dodge pickups (1994 to 2013). The $100 GateGlide II comes with directions where to drill two small holes in the tailgate and install mounting clamps on the truck bed’s side wall lip.

“I’m working on adapting it for other pickup models,” Parks says. “You have to get the gas spring right for the right weight of the tailgate and calibrate it to the pivot point.”

He shipped the GateGlide II to a wide variety of people in the U.S. and overseas. “It just make life easier for anyone who drives a pickup, whether it’s for work, travel or everyday use,” he says.

His other truck accessory also makes life simpler. The Excelsior Block Heater Bumper Plug is specifically designed for Dodge (Cummins) diesel trucks (1994 to 2012). Instead of having an engine heater plug hanging out the front bumper in the winter, Park’s $50 plug

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**FARM SHOW’s growing library of books each focuses on a specific topic.**

**Lift assist kit uses a gas spring to slowly lower pickup tailgate and close it effortlessly.**

Accessory mounts in the bumper with a flip-open, waterproof cover and a molded plug and cable that plugs directly into the engine heater. The plug is easy to access and hidden when not in use.

Both items can be purchased through Geno’s Garage (www.genosgarage.com).

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Excelsior Works, Inc., P.O. Box 902, Cumming, Ga. 30028 (ph 800 755-1715; valhallar813@yahoo.com; www.excelsiorworksusa.com).

Batey fed his cattle sawdust through the sludge runoff from a paper mill in Indiana. The farmer who owned the cattle was upset about it and told Batey he was thinking of suing the mill. When the farmer mentioned his cattle had been eating it for two years, Batey recognized an opportunity and suggested the farmer buy more cows instead.

Batey started experimenting and used nitric acid and heat to treat sawdust. In order for it to be digestible, the lignin that is wrapped around the cellulose of the wood has to be broken down. Once freed, the cellulose provides high food value.

Batey fed his cattle sawdust through the late 70’s but, when feed was cheap, he discontinued the project. Later, he built his own sawmill near Mount Pleasant, Iowa.

**Lift Assist Kit For Pickup Tailgates**

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