

Vintage Combines Part Of A Huge Deere Collection

"I own 8 Deere combines dating back to the early 1950's. We recently had them all running in a field at the same time, and that really slowed traffic on our road," says Wisconsin farmer and Deere collector Bob Cooper. His bean harvest that day was part of a special working event for the Wiota John Deere Collector's Club, which Cooper and 5 neighboring Deere aficionados started 13 years ago. Today their club has more than 150 members, some outside the U.S.

Cooper says the harvesting exhibition went really well, except that the soybean crop was too good. "The beans were tall and thick, yielding more than 70 bushels an acre, which was way more than the older machines were designed to handle. We had to drive at a snail's pace." The machines that he used from his personal collection were a motor-powered Deere model 12a, pto-models 25, 30, two 42's, 45, and self-propelled models 55, 3300, and 9550. The pull-type models were all handled by Deere tractors from Cooper's collection, which he's been building since he began farming in the 1970's.

Nearly 50 years later his collection includes more than 45 tractors, each one with a story and memories. "I started with my dad's 1946 Allis, have my grandpa's tractors, and all of mine. Over the years I've bought others direct from farmers or at auctions and they all came with a story. That's the fun part of collecting," says Cooper. "Some people are very nostalgic when I buy a tractor, and I tell them they always have visiting privileges because I'm not going to turn around and sell yours for a profit."

In addition to the combines and tractors, his sheds are home to 35 pull-type plows, numerous corn planters, and the first self-propelled sprayer built by Deere. "Everything that I own works or runs, although some of the machinery isn't re-painted or restored," Cooper says. "It's pretty much a full time job maintaining the collection, although I do help tend the cattle and crops on the farm." He also has a collection of more than 1,000 antique tools, 1,000 toys, and assorted memorabilia.

Nearly every day Cooper is answering phone calls from people who want to sell him equipment, are looking for equipment, or need parts. "Sometimes there are two or three calls a day, sometimes just a few a week, and sometimes people drive in and end up spending two or three hours," he says with a laugh.

Cooper is happy to show people his collection and really enjoys sharing stories. "I've only sold two tractors over the years, one by accident at a consignment sale when I wasn't paying attention to the bidding. The other was a 730 Case which was really tough to start, especially in the winter. I had no intention of selling it, but a fellow came by when I was milking on a cold January day and wanted it in the worst way. I told him no, but he offered me a good sum if the tractor started. I said okay, thinking it wouldn't start, but darned if it didn't fire right up. I couldn't go back on my word at that point," he says.

The lifelong collector adds that he wouldn't have been able to accomplish any of his collecting without the support of his wife Pat, his children and family members who



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attend shows, auctions and help him transport equipment. "I do this because I enjoy making memories and honoring the past, to share the heritage of agriculture so it isn't lost,"

Cooper says.

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Robert Cooper, 6060 Spring Brook Road, South Wayne, Wis. 53587 (ph 608 482-4479).

Hanging Harness System Makes Hook-Up Easier



Harness is swung manually over horse and then lowered on its back.

Harnessing a draft horse is not an easy job. Jennifer Watchous of Newton, Kansas, enjoys her draft horses and takes them to local parades. Harnessing always required help, which she wanted to get away from. Her harness maker came up with a unique solution called the "Harness Hire".

The harness maker and his local machinist designed an electric-operated crane that mounts on the wall of Watchous's horse barn. Made from 2-in. sq. tubing, the crane extends about 15 ft. from the wall and supports a 4-ft. horizontal bar that has 3 hooks mounted it to support the harness. The crane is lowered to the floor, then a harness is connected. There are hooks for the hame strap, back pad, and the spider ring. Hooking up the harness to

all 3 points balances the load.

"The cord on the winch is long enough so I can stand by the harness to operate the winch. I then lift the harness and swing it manually over the horse, and then lower it on his back," says Jennifer. "The hooks are designed to easily release the harness once it's in place. They're adjustable to accommodate various size harnesses and even saddles.

"I can't believe how easy it is to operate. I can harness the horse all by myself, and I can do so more often since I don't have to bother anyone for help."

She says she's willing to put people in contact with the manufacturer, where the Harness Hire can be purchased for about \$1,100.

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Jennifer Watchous, 8101 S. Woodlawn Rd., Newton, Kan. 67114 (ph 316 259-5850; jennifer@ppiks.com).



Electric-operated crane extends 15 ft. from barn wall and supports a 4-ft. bar, which has 3 hooks on it to support the harness.

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