

4-Tractor Hook-Up Predated Big 4-WD's

"For about \$4,000, we had the kind of horsepower you'd pay \$70,000 or more for in a big 4-WD tractor today," says Bill Trosper about a four-tractor hook-up that he and his father Corwin put together in the 1950's.

FARM SHOW reader Norman Smuck of Burr Oak, Kan., told us about the unusual rig.

The men originally hooked together two 45 hp LP-powered 1940's Case LA tractors in 1957, using a hinged trailer-type hitch welded to the drawbar and running up under the lead tractor's wide front axle. The steering arm was removed from the rear tractor and replaced with a shorter, 2-ft. arm running from the front wheels to the trailer hitch on the drawbar of the lead tractor so they would turn together.

In 1959, the Trosper's bought two more Case LA's and added them to "The Train", as it became known.

Along with hitching the tractors together and synchronizing steering, the men also had to find a way to get them to shift into gear together. To engage the tractor's hand clutches at the same time, the men ran a lever forward from each clutch to the front of the tractor, then a dog chain from the lever

to the clutch on the tractor ahead of it. The operator on the lead tractor would push in its clutch and pull on the chain to get all the tractors rolling together.

To stop, they ran a rope from the operator platform to the last tractor. It attached to a pulley mounted behind the clutch. A tug on the rope would disengage the rear tractor's clutch and the clutches on the two tractors in front of it.

The 50-ft. long rig packed about 200 hp, Trosper notes.

"We needed the power when our farm grew to 4,000 acres," he explains. "We planted 2,000 acres of winter wheat a year, pulling seven Dempster 8-row grain drills hooked together. We could plant half a section in a day. We'd burn 350 gal. of LP, which was 8 to 12 cents per gallon in those days, running 24 hours straight.

"We also pulled a 32-ft. chisel plow and three 20-ft. Deere F850 one-way disks hooked together.

"Turning wasn't a problem. You could turn as short, if not shorter, as you could with one tractor because the steering mechanism acted just like a 4-wheel trailer.

"It worked fantastic."



Photo, circa 1968, shows 50-ft. long rig pulling two one-way disks. It had the power to pull three of the disks at a time and could also pull a 32-ft. chisel plow.

Nevertheless, there were a couple problems with the rig, he jokes.

"I hated greasing it and changing the oil," he says.

The "train" remains intact on Bill

Trosper's farm but hasn't been used in years. His father passed away in 1987.

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Interior walls of straw bale houses like the Babbs' are typically covered with two layers of stucco, while exterior walls are covered with three layers.

THEY BUILT IT THEMSELVES

Iowa Couple Likes Their Straw Bale House

"It has all the style and comfort of a conventional wood framed house but cost much less to put up," says Julie Babb about the straw bale house she and her husband Ed built.

The Brighton, Iowa, couple began building their 2,000 sq. ft., single-story, three-bedroom house two years ago. They're still working to complete the interior.

The exterior walls of the house are built from 500 small rectangular oat straw bales bought from an area farmer. The two-string bales are a uniform 18 in. deep by 14 in. tall but vary from 36 to 42 in. long.

"It's recommended you find a supply of uniform-size bales to make construction easier," Babb notes.

The bales provide up to R57 insulation value in walls and also allow walls to breathe. Bales are covered inside and out with a wire mesh, Three layers of stucco are applied to the outside walls and two layers to interior walls.



Exterior of the house is typical Southwest-style architecture.

Metal roofing material resembling tiles rests on trusses. The roof is supported in part by metal rods running from the concrete foundation, up through bales to the trusses.

The Babbs plan to add a porch, patio and garage to the house when they've finished the interior.

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The "Corgi" has stubby legs due to a dwarf gene that stunts the growth.

Little "Corgi's" Make Great Herd Dogs

"It's a small dog that thinks it's big. They can really handle cattle and other livestock and they also make good guard dogs," says Robert Nesbitt, Portland, Ore., about the "Corgi" dogs he breeds.

The "Corgi" has a sturdy body but has extremely short legs due to a dwarf gene that stunts the growth of its legs. Nesbitt's full-grown Corgi's are only 11 in. high at the shoulder. Most males weigh only about 30 lbs.; females 26 to 28 lbs. They come in three different mixes of color - black, white, and tan; red and white; or sable which is red and white with darker hair scattered throughout it.

The Corgi was developed centuries ago as a herd dog in the British Isles. The name 'corgi' itself is derived from two ancient Celt words, 'cor' and 'gi', which literally mean 'dwarf dog'. Legend has it that Corgis were first used to transport leprechauns out of Ireland.

"It's a sensitive, highly intelligent breed, and its quickness and low profile protect them against flying hooves," says Nesbitt. "They stay close to the heels of

cattle, which kick right over the top of them."

Nesbitt uses his Corgi as a show dog to herd sheep in trials. "The Corgi has often been described as a dwarf German Shepherd. My dog has markings similar to a German Shepherd even though the body is much different. Corgi's are highly personable and they like people. They use their personality to make livestock pay attention to them. They herd differently than Border collies which sneak up on livestock. They make a very good house dog because they don't require a lot of attention. There aren't a lot of them around - in 1995 there were only 465 litters in the entire U.S."

A 12-week-old show puppy sells for \$600 to \$800.

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