

COLLECTING And The Younger Generation

The Rusty Acres Approach
by Dan Peterman

Awhile back, I was at our local Two-Cylinder Club meeting. There are close to 300 members in the Club, but the regular meetings tend to draw an attendance of about 70. I found myself drifting away from the subject at hand, and instead was looking the members over, one after another. I'd guess their average age was close to 60. Nothing wrong with that, but I can remember when it was probably a decade younger; that was a decade ago. I wondered, where are the young people; those 30 and under? Then I drifted back in thought to my youth; perhaps others weren't as fortunate as me...

I was in the eighth grade that year, it was Christmas, and I got the best gift of any kid in the world; an old hunk-of-junk 1944 tractor that didn't run and looked terrible. I was on cloud nine. For the first time ever, I couldn't wait for Christmas vacation to end so I could get back to school and tell my friends. Kids can be unkind, and I remember that the biggest share of them laughed at me. Call that a favor, because it inspired me to do one heck of a job on that tractor. Dad was always there to provide guidance or give me a hand with the toughest stuff. This was father-son bonding at its finest, and were days I will never forget.

As I look at school-age kids today, it saddens and concerns me that this busy world has relegated so many of them to self-service. Pressures on parents have been like a twitch on a horse's nose; the daily grind is all they can think about. Meanwhile, recognizing the eager and absorptive minds of young people, all too many of them are left to learn about life through osmosis, accumulating what knowledge and interactive behavioral traits they can from friends.

I see more hope and potentially effective family strength with the participants of this hobby than any other I can think of. There's no rush to get a tractor done, because Junior isn't going to be driving it on a date anyway. It's a one-piece-at-a-time project that teaches diagnostics, analysis, evaluation, numerous mechanical skills, responsibility, and accountability. One of the glowing rewards is personal pride.

With intermittent input, parents can be supportive of the project, and Junior can go on about his business of amassing knowledge and gaining experience and maturity that will propel him right past the kids who are absorbed by video games and the Internet.

Young people don't need to seek the rare and expensive tractors. A styled "B" or a gear-clanky "60" will work just fine, as long as there is a willingness on the

part of the parents to help with occasional rough spots in the project's budget. The teen that bags groceries at the store obviously can't afford a "720" Hi-Crop, but nosing around may get him a stuck late-styled Model "A" for \$700.

I previously wrote an article about judging FFA tractors at the Iowa State Fair. You see all kinds of workmanship at these events, but believe me when I say I'd rather award 1st Place to a kid that did his own work with occasional help than to one who had a perfect tractor but only occasionally did some of the work.

We need to get young people involved, or this hobby will inevitably fade away within a few decades. And, I wouldn't have admitted this even a few years ago, but those individuals in the hobby who bash New Generation Tractors are just hurting themselves in the long run. I'm not saying that you have to add one to your long-standing two-cylinder collection, but I am saying that I've seen way too many opinionated, negative remarks come from people who have never even operated one. The New Generation Tractors are not necessarily the future of the hobby, but they are *part* of the future of the hobby. Everything from the Waterloo Boy through the Two-Cylinder Era, New Generation, and now even the first years of Generation II, are fair game. Uncalled for prejudice against any part of the lineup only polarizes the participants, and serves no good purpose whatsoever. Want to drive the younger folks away? It's easy; just demonstrate to them that we're fighting amongst ourselves. How doltish is that?

A neighbor who is in college helped me at the shop last summer. He had never worked on tractors before, but his interest has grown so much that he even helped out again during his Christmas break. Before he departed for college last summer, he mentioned that someday he'd like to get a tractor to restore for himself. I had an old, stuck, hand-crank 1944 "A" that I gave to him, and he's so happy with it he told me it would be the last thing he'd ever sell.

We're just an encouraging word or helpful gesture away from inviting others into this enjoyable and rewarding hobby. Take the next step and welcome someone new, as it is them who will add new vitality and carry on the legacy. ☺

John Deere Tractor Field Service Bulletins

FSB 184-S, published October 1951, contained indispensable information on correcting the problems of Model "A" and "B" Tractors sliding out of gear, as well as some common sense on evaluating the serviceability of used parts. The two key pages of the bulletin are reproduced on pages 56 and 57.