



GETTING READY — Norm Dorsch, front, and Larry Henry finish up the restoration on the 1936 Model B John Deere - Non Style. The tractor will be on display during the show.

Thresher shop is main hub

By Karen Krien

One of the first buildings to be seen when entering the Tri-State Antique Engine and Thresher Show grounds is the “office.” This unpretentious building looks like a large garage with a side entry and garage doors. However, it is the “hub” of the grounds and, without it, it would be hard to have a show each year.

A group of men, most of them farmers or former farmers, gather in the building shortly after the Thresher Show ends each year. They continue to meet there, winter and summer, where they restore, overhaul and repair equipment.

These men find camaraderie and, as Norm Dorsch, one of the men, said, it has heat and a bathroom — what more do we need?

The walls are lined with parts and belts. Some parts are in wooden bins, others are hanging on the walls while more line shelves. These men know what is in that shop and what they need to fix up any piece of old machinery.

You can get parts for almost any of this equipment, Mr. Dorsch said. That is, if you are willing to pay for it. Pricey parts are why, much of the time, they build their own — the pattern of the broken part is there and they are able to copy it.

With a little welding, they are able to reproduce it.

This past year, they repaired a 1936 John Deere B for Elmer Abler. The deal is, the men in the shop will repair the equipment, free of charge, but it is left on the grounds to be shown for the next 10 years.

They also renovated a 1936 Model B John Deere, non styled.

Both tractors are shiny green and yellow but, that is where the comparison ends.

The John Deere B looks like an older, restored tractor with big rubber wheels. The non-style has spoked metal wheels, the engine is exposed and the steering column runs across the top to the front wheels. The non-style is owned by Mr. Dorsch.

The shop generally has two projects going because, if they are waiting for parts on one, they can work on another.

This winter, they restored a Diamond T truck. It is new on the grounds this year.

It is a 2-ton truck but, when it was brought onto the grounds, it had no box or hoist. They found both a box and hoist that would fit and, today, it is a good looking, working truck.

Larry Henry, one of the men at the shop, said the Diamond T was one of the most powerful trucks.

The biggest restoration on the grounds is a Holt combine. It is a self-propelled, wooden 1922 combine with a 24-foot headers bar. It took 26 gallons of paint before it was finally done.

There are only two such combines, in working order, in the United States and one is at the Thresher Show.

The combine has a Caterpillar-type track drive and it takes five men to operate it. It is an amazing piece of equipment that draws people.

The oldest piece of equipment on the grounds is a McCormick reaper 1900. It was pulled by horses. Mr. Dorsch and Mr. Henry explained that as it rolled the feed out, a person would grab a bundle and tie it with a piece of straw.

It was slow work and no more than 2 acres could be reaped in a day.

The volunteers recently cut the wheat on the Thresher grounds. As it was put in shocks, it was taken to a building to keep it dry. One year, it was rained on and, when the show opened, it was too wet to use so there was no threshing.

This year, there were three rack loads and plenty to keep the thresher machine going in the afternoon. Mr. Dorsch reminded that the Thresher Princess, Dale Northrup, will be throwing in the first bundle each day.

Mr. Dorsch, who is the next generation of the founders of the show, said he remembers when the show started at the Kite farm, they put up 80 acres of wheat. He said they threshed the wheat all three days of the show and they had to thresh for almost a week following. That's the last time we did that, he said.

Featured equipment

Equipment featured at the show this year will be the Avery steam engine which is 100 years old this year and the tandem tractor built by Ernie Bressler. See related articles. The tandem tractor is also featured on this year's entry button.

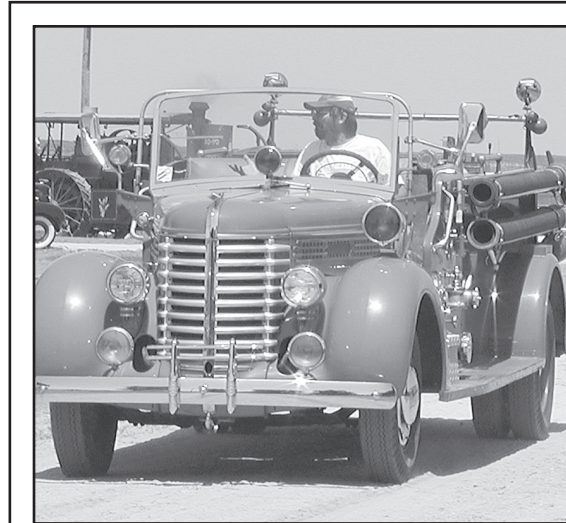
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