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A Ted Bit It's like riding a bike— you never really forget

Last week I returned to the land— literally, as The Sidekick and I hosted the annual Halton Plowing Match and Conservation Tillage Competition at Brown Farm.

Hundreds of people converged on our front field to see which of the 25 competitors could plow the straightest furrow.

Established in 1891, the Halton Plowing Match has been held on various farms across the County, now Region, of Halton.

An army of organizers started setting up Tuesday as they measured the lands and drove stakes in the ground to show the competitors where they would be striking out their lands.

Then the tractors started to arrive. It seemed whenever I went out, I returned to find another tractor and plow had been dropped off. (Many of the guys have their tractors and plows brought in on a trailer, instead of driving them for hours on the road.)

In the farm's 187-year history, this was the first time a plowing match has been held on Brown Farm.

We had two horse plowing competitors— one with a walking plow and the other a riding plow.

Now I have the utmost respect for someone who plows with a team of horses. It's one thing to turn over a straight furrow seated on a tractor, but another thing altogether, when one is doing it with a team of horses— not only holding onto the plow, but the lines that control the horses.

I watched them as they plowed, and it occurred to me that it had been many years since horses had plowed on Brown Farm.

My sisters and I guessed it was more than 65 years— probably closer to 70.

One of the highlights of the day is the Politicians' Invitational Plowing Competition where local politicians climb aboard a tractor to see how well they can plow.

It is amusing— some of them are right at home climbing onto the tractor, while others have a nervous twitch as they settle into the seat.

Ian Break of Halton Plowmen's Association, supplied his Farmall Super A tractor, equipped with a two-furrow plow for the politicians.

Every politician had a refresher course from Ian, reminding them of how little

they had retained from the previous year.

MPP Ted Chudleigh, Halton Region Chair Gary Carr, Milton Mayor Gord Krantz, and Regional Councillors Clark Somerville from Halton Hills and Colin Best of Milton all tried their hand at the controls, along with local Ward 2 Councillor Bryan Lewis, who did himself proud.

There were some comments bandying about the numerous politicians visiting the farm— some suggested there would be a substantial increase in crop yields next year after all the politicians had publicly made their verbal claims.

When they were all finished, Ian Break looked in my direction. "So Ted, are you gonna to show them how it's done?"

The gauntlet had been tossed down. How could I resist?

The Sidekick beamed with pride as I climbed aboard the little red tractor, like some knight from ancient times mounting his trusty steed, ready to do battle in the arena.

It was me versus the land.

Ian explained which lever was for the lift and which was the draft control as I slipped 'er into gear, and dropped the plow into the ground.

The little tractor barked out in response, as I began plowing the field, the two furrows blackening the ground behind me.

It's like riding a bike— you never really forget. I looked over my shoulder as

I lifted the plow out of the ground at the other end— I knew I'd done okay.

The match wrapped up in the late afternoon. The competitors left in dribs and drabs, as the organizers packed up their signs and tents. Before long, only the strips of the plowed lands were left as a testimony to the 2013 Halton Plowing Match.

In a world where agriculture is fast paced, and the old ways are nearly lost, it's refreshing to see some old skills are still being passed down through the generations.

Later this fall, when I polish up the moldboards on my own plow in preparation of tackling the 'Six Acres' at the back of the farm, I know that I can still do it.

And the best part?

It's at the back of the farm, so if I really screw it up— no one will ever see it.

—Ted Brown can be reached at
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**TED
BROWN**

*'The Sidekick beamed with pride
as I climbed aboard the little red
tractor...'*