

By Sarah MacWhirter  
Staff Writer

Have a tractor, escalator or great lengths of cable to sell?

Call John Orser of Orser Equipment Ltd. on Vermilyea Road north of Belleville. He loves sales and he might be able to help you out.

Orser first planted roots in the machinery business in 1952. For almost three decades he was partner of Hadley Equipment, which he sold his shares of on Oct. 31, 1980.

Three days later, Orser was back in business again. This time it was the wrecking and used-parts business, and Orser — at the age of 74 — is still strong at it.

"We've sent things to Africa and we've sold to Jamaica," Orser says.

His grandsons work with him. Orser runs almost all angles of the business, but, he admits with a smile, "I don't change any tires."

From the time he was a young'un, Orser has been a wheeler-dealer.

"I've bought most everything that's here," he says.

And, although he sometimes does,

Orser doesn't have to go far to find a sale.

Recently, the CN Tower called him asking if he was interested in buying and reselling used cable (which the Tower replaces periodically regardless of condition). If he was 10 years younger, he says, he would have accepted the challenge.

Also, a Toronto airport called to see if he would buy and sell an escalator. Orser told them he was not interested.

Like an old time barbershop, Orser does a steady business in local news as well. Old friends drop by and fill Orser in on all the latest happenings. Over his many years in the farming business, Orser has seen much change.

"A tremendous lot have gone bankrupt in the last few years. ...Farm credit is to blame for some of this," he says. In the past, farmers were encouraged to borrow to buy large farm equipment, only to lose it to the bank. In the early 1980s, when interest rates skyrocketed, farmers had 40 per cent more tractor power than they needed, he says.

Orser laments sometimes that equipment ended up at his yard

John Orser leans on an old John Deere which sits and waits for a new owner in the yard at Orser Equipment.

looking for a new owner.

He has witnessed another trend potentially harmful to farming.

"Farmers have made a terrible mistake with their sons. They don't want to give them anything until they're gone. The sons go off and find something else to do."

His grandsons already have shares in his business, he says.

Also, he noticed farmers in the past failed to make arrangements to pay for their taxes.

"I always said you had to be a good friend with your insurance company, your banker and your lawyer. Go ahead of time and talk it over and that makes a big difference," he says.

Specific to the used farm equipment business, Orser noticed older farmers are happy with equipment that works. Young farmers are not so easily satisfied — they want

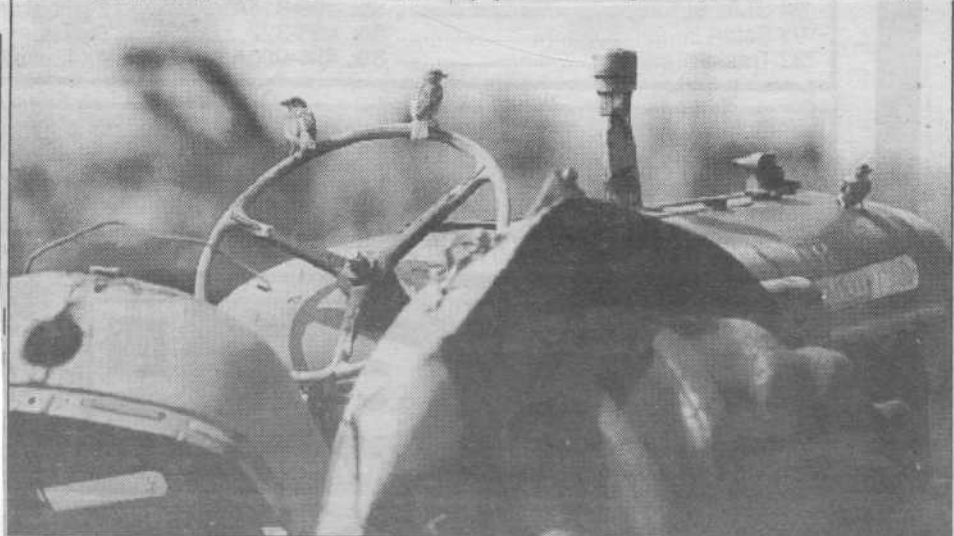
equipment that is "modern-looking."

Orser sells antiques as well. Recently he sold a late '40s or early '50s John Deere to a collector in Quebec for \$2,500.

"We sell a lot of parts. We don't get enough money to get labor (costs) out of it, but that's our advertising."

Whether you are looking for bolt for an early model David Brown or a friendly conversation about the history of farming, Orser Equipment is the place to be.

This plow is the same kind John Orser bought at an auction for 25 cents when he was in his early teens.



An old tractor is rarely used by anyone but the birds enjoying the afternoon sun



Even if it is the most obscure of parts, chances are you will find it at Orsers.

Orser Equipment Ltd. *Whittemore, Oct. 20/95.*