

# A conspiracy theory?

Last weekend, I was certain there was a conspiracy against me.

I had great intentions to spend Saturday moving mountains around the farm. Since I had to cover Globe Productions' *Annie* that night, I hit the ground running.

After breakfast and chores, I headed to the shed to get out the riding mower to tackle the acres of grass. I fired up the mighty little John Deere, engaged the throttle and threw the lawn mower into gear. As the grass spewed out the discharge chute, I smiled to myself, thinking, "Take that you unruly grass..."

About 50 feet into it, there was suddenly a serene silence which drifted over the grounds of Brown Farm.

It had quit.

I spun the starter over a few times—nothing. Pulling open the hood, I saw the problem—a corroded battery cable had broken off the post. The clamp was shot.

Calm and collected, I jumped in the pickup and headed out in search of a new battery clamp.

The first place was closed. (Grumble, grumble..)

Next stop—Canadian Tire. Getting a battery terminal clamp wouldn't take long. But I didn't know about the topsoil sale. The parking lot was a sea of crazy horticulturalists, fighting to get their fair share of soil.

I tell ya, I've seen waves of seagulls at a french-fry stand exhibit more composure.

Barely escaping with my life, I emerged from the parking lot with two battery cable

## Ted Brown



clamps (I was covering myself) as well as some motor oil (on sale,) a tool for repairing tires, and a couple other things I didn't need but picked up anyway.

Got home, stripped back the wire on the battery cable, cleaned the terminals, and put it back together.

I turned the key of the little Deere and it fired up, ready for action. I pulled the mower into gear, and once again the grass clippings sprayed forth.

Seconds later, a hesitation, a sputter—total silence. Outta gas. (And it wasn't during a Cialis commercial.)

Fortunately, the designers of the John Deere 318 lawn tractor incorporated a 'reserve' lever on the gas tank. I flipped it over, started it up—back to the shed.

I filled the tank, and returned to the lawn, this time with a sense of foreboding. I finished the lawn and put things away and prepared to attend *Annie*.

Sitting in the midst of depression-era New York City in the world of Little Orphan Annie, an unsettling thought came to me.

Things usually happen in threes.

I'm still waiting for the third.

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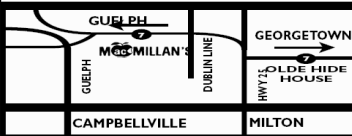
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