

A work horse to a pony cart?

Anyone who knows me well, also knows I'm a traditionalist.

I really find it difficult to deviate from the well-trodden path, following in the proven footsteps of my forefathers most of the time, especially when it comes to making decisions regarding the farm.

I seem to be afflicted by the old "Well, we didn't do it that way 40 years ago and it still worked well..." approach.

Consequently I sometimes find it challenging to 'update' my methods.

This past Saturday, I had some hay laying in the field, ready to rake and be baled. (Another of my 'quirks', I cut my hay, laying it out flat, rather than in a windrow like other farmers. Although it requires raking, years ago my dad and I found it dried faster when flat on the ground compared to being in a windrow.)

My custom baler said he'd be at the farm around noon, so I had to get the hay raked before he arrived.

At 10 a.m., I checked the hay's moisture. It was ready to rake.

I headed back to the driving shed to get the tractor and rake. The tractor I generally use for raking is an open-style tractor which was new in 1972. It's a fine old tractor to drive.

But it had the large mower mounted on it, which takes more effort to unhitch, 'specially when it's hot in the shed.

I didn't feel like using the loader tractor, as the loader clangs and bangs whenever I hit any little bump in the field.

That left the big tractor.

Okay, at 75-horsepower, it ain't exactly 'big' by most farmer's standards today. But it's 'big' in my driving shed.

I hitched the rake to it, thinking it was overkill to use a 75-horse tractor for a job a much smaller tractor could easily handle.

But this tractor has an ace in the hole—it has a cab with air conditioning.

Out in the field, the diesel motor was no more than a quiet drone in the background, running at a fast idle of 850 RPM, as it 'played' with the rake behind.

It was something like hitching a work horse to a pony cart.

Ted Brown



The air from the a/c lofted down over me, drying the sweat on my brow. I tuned the radio to Q107 and caught a great interview with Joe Walsh of the Eagles.

Later, I took in some good old rock and roll. It being Rolling Stones 'weekend' on 'Q', there was a load of good tunes bouncing off the walls in that tractor cab.

Not only was the cool air filling the cab, but there were no bugs or hayseeds blowing around, that usually stick to my face.

I thought back to when I was a kid, when the concept of having a tractor with a closed cab, especially equipped with air conditioning, would have been considered nothing more than a dream.

And pulling a hay rake with 75-horsepower? Back then it would have been deemed ridiculous.

I finished raking and climbed out of the cab, realizing how hot it was outside.

I must give some credit to The Sidekick, for me buying that tractor with air conditioning.

In 2010, as the calendar was creeping up on my 60th birthday, she insisted it was 'time' I had a tractor with a good cab.

Since I do much of my work before and after office hours, I find I'm facing the elements, both hot and cold, to get the work done. Having a tractor cab equipped with heat and a/c makes that job so much easier.

And remember- she 'insisted'. And far be it for me to refuse...

Yes, the 'old ways' of farming are still quite precious to me. They always will be.

But one thing's certain.

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