

COMMENT

The Way We Were



As the country celebrates its 150th birthday in 2017, Canada's Centennial year was full of special events and ongoing displays of patriotism. This photo from 1967 shows Dominion Seed House lit up with the Centennial symbol, which was designed to represent the 10 provinces, with one for the territories, forming a bold maple leaf.

Photo courtesy of Equestrian Historical Society/
Text courtesy of Heritage Halton Hills

From our readers



SEEING THE LIGHT

Sean Murphy shot this photo of St. John's United Church early one Sunday morning. George Kennedy, whose family founded Georgetown, was on the building committee that raised \$8,000 and built the church on Guelph St. in 1880.

Have a photo you want to share?

Email — with details please — to cvernon@metroland.com.

A date with a skid steer

The morning before I wrote this, I had to move a round bale into the barn.

It happens every three days. I have a date with the skid steer.

That skid-steer loader is the most valuable piece of equipment I have on the farm.

When it comes to farming, I adamantly adhere to my basic mantra: muscular power should only be used when it's impossible to utilize hydraulics.

Translation: I don't move anything by hand that I can move with a front-end loader.

It's a simple premise — why kill your back when you have a tractor and loader?

Being a member of the 65-plus club, I'm pretty careful what I lift with my back.

Yet I find myself easily moving things that I would have never even considered years ago.

And how do I do it?

A skid-steer loader — you know, one of those little four-wheel drive jobbers that landscapers and construction companies use to clean up with or move material like stone or soil.

It's not huge, but it's mighty.

Only 25 horsepower and a little four-cylinder diesel engine, it's so compact it fits through a 50-inch door.

When people say to me "Wow, you sure must work hard on the farm," I'm sometimes a bit embarrassed to say "Well, not really."

Mind you, I quickly explain I couldn't do what I do on the farm if I didn't have my skid-steer loader. During the winter I use it to move a round bale of hay into position to feed it to the sheep every three days.

A while ago, I was talking to a guy who wasn't familiar with farming.

During the conversation I said I had recently moved some round bales into the barn.

We're talking those big bales of hay one sees out in the field, measuring four-by-five

feet. Because of their sheer size, most folks have seen them.

This guy was no exception. He knew what I meant when I said round bales.

But his next statement blew me away.

"Man, I'll bet you really felt that the next day..."

I assumed he was joking.

He was serious.



TED BROWN

After I regained my composure and apologized for laughing, I explained that round bales weigh a half ton or more — a bit more than most folks could lift by hand.

I think he felt a bit silly.

Of course, that's only one of many jobs my skid-steer loader tackles.

I don't own a manure fork.

I refuse to clean out sheep pens by hand — my back couldn't take that abuse. Every

pen in the barn is skid-steer accessible.

I clean out the pens with the skid steer, push the manure outside and my loader tractor takes over. I pile it, ready to be spread on the fields — all without raising a hand or breaking a sweat.

Hydraulics rule!

The skid steer sometimes cleans up snow, moves bags of feed and I've even used it as a work bench by setting the bucket at the desired height, then lock it in place while I work on a project.

I've mixed concrete in the bucket then drove it to the forms (no wheelbarrow needed) and when I'm finished, I use the pressure washer to clean it up.

I often state that The Sidekick is my right-hand man, er, partner.

But I also think that if I had to choose between her and the skid steer — well, I'd have to ponder for a moment. (Okay honey, just kiddin'...)

I might not fire it up every day, but when I need it, that skid steer is the tool that allows me to do what I do on the farm.

On top of that, it's kinda fun to operate.

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