

FARM EQUIPMENT

From: Rodney Newell 14380 Downing Rd. Croton, OH 43013 740-893-3513

I am a 73-year old farmer. I wanted to farm as far back as I can remember. I purchased my first tractor in 1957. It was an Avery A with a 2-bottom 14" plow and cultivators with an Armstrong lift. It had a starter, lights, no PTO, and hand brakes. When I quit farming my largest tractor was a White 2-180. The 2-180 had ten times the horsepower as the Avery A. During time our operation grew from 9 crop acres to over 1,000.

Since retirement I started researching the B.F. Avery story and collecting equipment. My collection consists of 1 General GG, 1 A with hand brakes, 2 A's with foot brakes, 1 R and 1 Avery crawler tractor painted red with Avery decals. I believe it may have been built in Cleveland and sold by Avery. I donated my model V to a local farm museum but it is close by.

My Avery equipment includes a 2-bottom plow mounted, 2-bottom plow pull type, one bottom plow mounted, disc, 2 -row cultivators, mower, PTO rake, manure spreader, corn planter and a set of wrenches. I also have AC-WD45, J.D. B 4 bolt un-styled, JD 730, JD 820, MM G 706 4WD and a MM G1355. The JD 730 and MM G1355 are still used on the farm. The General and Avery's are used on occasion. I just like to see old steel at work.

I do not recall the serial number of that first Avery. It was used regularly into the early 80's and did all the cultivating until a JD 730 was added to the lineup. Once we got a JD 730 with 4 row cultivator the Avery was mostly retired. It became too small to pull the loaded wagons; a job it easily did until the wagons got too large.

When I was young we grew entirely vegetables. I grew up in the same house with my mom's parents. Dad worked nights for the post office and was a National Guardsman. He served through WWII and the Korean War and stayed with the Guard until mandatory retirement age. He was gone a lot. Granddad was a school janitor who worked the evening shift. Between the two of them and myself and sisters we managed to do the farming. Nine acres of sweet corn, peas, green beans, squash, melon, and tomatoes, not to mention everything else, is labor intensive.

We used two walk-behind tractors; model C Blackhawks, and I have one in my collection. I spent much time walking behind them. For plowing and ground preparation we used a JD B owned by a cousin or a Ferguson TO - 20 owned by a neighbor paid for with all the fresh vegetables they could eat.

Half our acres grew edible peas for a local cannery. These were planted with a drill, mowed, raked and loaded on wagons with a hay loader, all done with horses belonging to another well fed neighbor. When I showed an interest in farming, Dad gave me the sweet corn crop for my FFA project. I did most of the work and got to keep ½ of the income. At 14 I was a farmer.

I saved the money and convinced Dad that we should have our own tractor. He didn't object and soon I was the proud owner of a used Avery outfit. We added a disc, MM drill, and a Mansour (JD) planter. The following spring we discovered a problem. The Avery wouldn't pull 2-14 in our soil. I had to "eat crow" because I told the neighbor boy that our Avery would do anything their Ferguson TO-20 would do. Dad fixed the problem. He took a steel saw blade and cut off the second bottom, readjusted the plow, and away we went.

In the fall of 1960 the family sold the home place and purchased 120 acres about 30 miles out of town along with an AC-WD and three bottom plow. We left vegetable production behind. That's when the Avery really went to work. It did all the planting, cultivating and hauling. It even had to pull our NH bailer that weighed twice what it did and a wagon. When my younger sister, who could hardly reach the clutch, let it out the front of the Avery would lift off the ground, jerking the whole line of equipment. By the time the wagon was loaded the little Avery was pawing at the ground but it always made it across the field. We did have flat fields. My younger sisters, brother, and several cousins learned to drive on that Avery.

During fall harvest the Avery hauled the crops from the field to town and worked ground to plant wheat. The WD was doing the combining and picking. I recall when we purchased two large gravity wagons. The Avery had trouble getting them out of the field.

Time passed and our operation grew to the point that the Avery wasn't that important. One summer it must have busted an oil ring and would go through several quarts of oil a day. It was parked in the barn lot and after growing weeds for several years was eventually sold for scrap. As I grew older I regretted that we let it go.

Each piece of old farm equipment could tell its own story. The General I own came with a history. About 25 years ago I was driving near Lexington, Ohio and spotted a tractor sporting a "For Sale" sign and a mower. It was painted gray and at first I didn't realize it was an Avery. I turned around and drove back. The owner was home and I purchased the tractor. It was purchased new by the government to mow the army depot grounds nearby during WWII. Of course, the army had to paint it gray.

The tractor has an external belt driven hydraulic pump and permanently mounted 7' cutter bar mower. The gentleman who sold me the tractor informed me that his father-in-law bought the tractor at public auction when the depot closed. I am the third owner. The International mower has never been removed from the tractor. The tractor shows no draw bar wear and the throttle notches are like new. It starts and runs like a new tractor. It has to be a low-hour tractor. It's a showpiece, though brush painted gray over yellow, has faded and peeled a little. I use it to mow up close to fences and around things where I can't get my bush hog mower. That keeps it in operating condition.

When I purchased this tractor I started thinking of my teenage years and how labor-intensive farming was then, especially vegetables. It came to mind that all the neighborhood kids would ice skate on a pond about a half mile off the road in the winter. I would take our wagon and the Avery and haul everyone to the pond with firewood and bales of straw to sit on. Sometimes we roasted hot dogs. Great fun for teenagers back then.

The neighbor who belittled me often that my Avery was only a one-plow tractor decided the ice was thick enough he could take the Ferguson on to it. He was wrong. The front wheels broke through just as the rear wheels go on the ice. He was scared to death of what his dad would do when he found out. To my knowledge he never did. The neighbor walked home, got a chain and a sledge to break away the ice around the front of the Ferguson. The Avery was able to pull him to dry land with the help of everyone pushing. Nothing was ever said to his dad and he never brought up my one-plow Avery again. The Avery redeemed itself!

I came down with the disease known as "Avery Fever". We made acquaintances with several Avery collectors and fever has gotten worse. Here in central Ohio it's not too hard to find an Avery here and there. I would drive that first Avery to school now and then and parked it alongside all the cars. I did attract a farm girl. We have been married 50 years this year. Collecting Avery's and driving around the country looking for equipment and parts is something we can do together.

