

Dave Shoop

Tired Iron of the Ozarks: How I Got Here

On Sunday, September 12, 2004, I became a member of Tired Iron of the Ozarks. It was a gift membership largely from Sherry Hyde and Jim Caldwell. I had no tractor, no engine, not even a decent set of tools. I do remember the thrill of the day as I saw machinery I had not seen since I graduated from high school in May, 1960. How I loved those old tractors!

Just a little of how I got here. I was born in Lincoln, Nebraska to Willard and Alice Shoop, two very fine people from the heartland of the country. The date was February 17, 1942. Japan had launched its attack on Pearl Harbor just two months before, and Dad wondered what he was doing bringing a child into a world as uncertain as it was. Dad had been born and raised on a farm midway between Pratt and St. John, Kansas, and Mom was born in a small Kansas town, the daughter of a poor Presbyterian minister.

Dad had graduated from Sterling College, Sterling, Kansas, with a degree in chemistry. Mom also graduated with a degree in home economics. When the war came Dad's services were sought after first by Dupont Corporation and then in December, 1943 by the Sun Oil Company in Toledo, Ohio. He was one of those employed in a strategic industry and so was not drafted for military service.

We lived in the city of Toledo from that time on. My earliest recollection was living in a three room apartment. After my brother Dan was born in November, 1945 we moved to a four room apartment. The great highlights of those days was boarding a train for Kansas where we spent time on the Shoop farm visiting my grandparents. My grandfather farmed two or three quarter sections, not big by today's standards. He had a Ford 8N but nothing was as exciting as that old 1936 D and the pop, pop, pop of that old two-cylinder engine. I pestered my grandfather to let me ride with him while he was in the field, and "Please, Grandpa, let me drive it." He would sit me on his lap and hold my hands on the steering wheel. Not good enough. I wanted to drive it by myself. It's a good thing he didn't listen to me.

We made three trips to Kansas. The last before my grandfather passed away was the summer of 1951. Each time I went down to the old machine shed where the old dirt floor was saturated with grease and oil spilled over decades of time. The smell of machinery with grease oozing out from bearings, bushings, and seals; the fragrance of oil dripping from usual spots like the rocker arm cover gasket, man, I loved that smell! When we left Grandpa was getting his tractors ready for auction. He retired from farming that year. It was a sad thing to think we'd never see those old tractors again.

In May, 1953 our family moved east of Toledo to an acreage out in the country. There was land that was ours we could walk on and I know Dad was thinking of tilling the soil. I was all for it for that meant a tractor.

Our first tractor was a little '39 International A, not much tractor but I loved it. We had it around for a few years before Dad sold it. He later bought a Case VAC. It had a block cracked internally between the cylinders but we ran it anyway. I was surprised that it pulled the neighbors' two fourteens in second gear without much trouble, and that in heavy clay. Dad sold that tractor. Probably didn't get much for it with that cracked block, but that little VAC sure had my respect.

The neighbors had tractors that were of interest. Next door the neighbor had a '36 Allis-Chalmers WC and an F-20. Another neighbor had an Allis-Chalmers B; another a John Deere GP; and still

another had a John Deere BR. These all kept my interest in tractors alive, but none of them had the same attraction as that old '36 D of my grandfather's.

By the end of high school I was distracted with other things, going to college, getting married, and so on and tractors moved off my radar screen. It wasn't until I moved to Siloam Springs that my interest was reawakened.

A lot of water had run over the dam before Judy and I moved to Siloam. We were married in Toledo, Ohio, July 13, 1963. I eventually went to work for the Sun Oil Company like my dad in December, 1965 and worked there fifteen years. Meanwhile we started our family and had three children by March 22, 1973 when our last child was born. I worked and went to school and eventually finished my BA in history in 1977. I wanted to do something more with my life and so with Judy's firm support we left the Sun Oil Company in May, 1980 and went to Dallas where I enrolled in Dallas Theological Seminary.

Going to a grad school like seminary was tough with a family but the school allowed me to cram the required four years into five, and I graduated in May of 1985. Opportunities for college teaching were plentiful overseas while there was a glut in the teacher market in 1985. So we applied and were accepted by the Africa Evangelical Fellowship (AEF) for service in Zimbabwe. We arrived in Zimbabwe in January, 1986 and eventually moved to Rusitu Mission in May of that year.

Rusitu Mission had been started by three young men from South Africa in 1897. The Bible school that later became Rusitu Bible College was started in 1953 and continued until AEF evacuated all mission personnel in 1977 due to civil war and the level of hostilities in the Rusitu area. Judy and I were the first missionaries back to Rusitu after nine years.

Many of the buildings were in ruins, but over the next eleven years, funds from many of our supporters were instrumental in not only rebuilding the damaged and destroyed buildings on the campus, but new buildings were added. Along with the rebuilding of the campus we needed to upgrade the syllabus of the school to reflect the new emphasis on education in Zimbabwe. We had a lot of learning to do having to learn the culture and the questions the culture was asking before developing the curriculum. I didn't know there was so much involved in schooling, but when we left the school in November, 1996 we had a curriculum in place, administrative tools developed, and a modest endowment. God was really good to us.

Upon our return to the USA through a number of events we ended up in New Jersey. This was the last place on earth we thought we'd settle. Our New Jersey time was marked by some very large events in our lives. First, our fathers both passed away. For me, my dad's death was a real blow. Losing one's father is a huge personal event especially if one's looked to him as the strong person in the family. Second, Judy and I were both working in lower Manhattan on Tuesday, September 11, 2001. I've chronicled our experiences elsewhere (www.thinkagainpastor.com). Needless to say, it was an event that changed us, as it did many others.

In March of 2002, we received a call for ministry at Siloam Springs Bible Church. We arrived in Siloam Springs and began work June 3, 2002. This move marked the beginning of a very pleasant experience with the people of this church, and it was through them that I was introduced to Tired Iron of the Ozarks. My very first Christmas parade was December, 2002. I can hardly tell you my excitement when I saw three or four old two-cylinder John Deeres passing by. I'm sure one was Charlie Lacey's A.

In February, 2005 one of the men of our congregation took me out to lunch on my birthday. As we drove to the restaurant, he asked me what I would like to do for recreation if I had my choice. Without hesitation I told him I'd like to have an old tractor to work on and I preferred a two-cylinder John

Deere. Conversation moved to another topic but we did stop by Countryside John Deere because my friend wanted to show me the tractor he wanted to buy. Wouldn't you know that sitting in the northwest corner of the yard was a styled John Deere B and a '53 model 60 that needed some tender loving care. I looked those tractors over but paid little attention to them. Little did I know that something was afoot.

Quite unbeknown to me this man contacted the men in the congregation asking them for a donation to purchase that 60. He wrote my brother who was working with ARAMCO in Saudi Arabia at the time for some help. Altogether these men put together enough money which along with the very stout negotiation skills of my friend persuaded Gary Harrell, the owner of Countryside, to part with the 60 at a great price. (I don't know what the price was.)

On Sunday March 13, 2005 as I preached I noticed that the windows of the auditorium doors were papered over. I thought that strange. I was told to stay briefly after the service because Jim Caldwell wanted to say something. We were voting that day whether to call a man to be youth pastor so I thought Jim's announcement had something to do with the election. Boy was I surprised when he presented me with the John Deere 60 that sits in our shed on the show grounds, a 3/4 end wrench, and a John Deere cap. Meanwhile the men cranked up the old Deere, and I exited the auditorium to hear the familiar John Deere chug. Since then I've not only worked on the 60 but I've had the chance to work on my brother's 1949 G which we keep in the shed. Recently I've been working on the old D which you saw at our last show. I have quite a ways to go on the D, but it's running.

The best part of working on these old tractors is the people that I've gotten to meet since I became involved in this hobby. I've gotten to know Matt and Sherry Hyde and consider them among my closest friends. Matt has helped me considerably, and I've learned much from him. I think we make a good team. I could mention several other members of this club I've met and gotten to know, but I'd sure leave someone really important out. There are great people here, and I appreciate them very much. Now that I've retired, I look forward to spending more time getting to know the folks of Tired Iron of the Ozarks. That's the best part of this hobby.