

Old tractors never die...
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Every farm needs a tractor and now mine has one. I farm with a 1958 John Deere Model 620 tractor which used to belong to my dad. Actually, my grandfather bought the tractor and a plow new in 1958 for \$4600. He used it for plowing, planting and harvesting the 320 acres of cropland he farmed. He only had one other tractor, a very small Case model VAC. In those days, in east central Minnesota, the 45 horsepower general-purpose 620 was one of the largest tractors in the area.

When my grandpa retired from farming in 1973, my dad bought the tractor for \$2350. The 620 fit in the center of our tractor lineup. It was just the right size for many tasks on our farm. With it's mounted John Deere 227 corn picker, we harvested over 200 acres of corn every year. We also used it for chopping haylage for the cattle, grinding feed, and disking and harrowing the fields. Dad liked using it to pull the 4 row corn planter every spring. He found that he could hear and "feel" the planter better than being locked inside an air-conditioned cab.

For nearly 30 years, it has been in active, if not daily use on my parent's farm. Other than a 1980 engine rebuild, some new tires and a seat cushion, and manifolds, the tractor is all original.

The first time I used this tractor after nearly 20 years away from the farm, my wife laughed at the smile on my face as the engine came under load, increasing the throatiness of the "putt-putt-putt" coming from the 2-cylinder engine. This is not a parade tractor. Working the tractor as it was meant to be worked brought back so many memories to me. As the engine temperature rose to normal operating range, the sound, the feel and even the smell were reminiscent of the first time dad let me drive it alone, 30 years ago.

The point of all this nostalgia is to note that I'm using my Grandpa's tractor. It's 48 years old, and while I'm not farming 320 acres, the tractor is fully functional, contributing to the output of my farm. This significance grows when you think about what farming will look like 45 years from now. Will there be grandchildren of today's farmers involved in food production using today's modern tractors? Today's tractors are so large, will there be general-purpose uses for them 50 years from now? Is my generation the last that will be able to effectively use their grandfather's farm equipment for food production, or will small-scale agriculture be completely gone? Thankfully small-scale agriculture is coming back with a vengeance.

Old tractors never die, so hopefully the 620 will still be running then, and I won't need to worry. Until then, don't forget to support local, small-scale agriculture by shopping our farmer's market. Plant a garden of your own and learn all you can about food production, even on a small backyard plot. You never know, you may just start a legacy you can pass down to your grandkids.