

ROGER COOK'S FERGUSON TE-20

STORY AND PHOTOS BY BONNIE SITTER



ONTARIO CONTRIBUTOR, BONNIE SITTER ONCE AGAIN, CHRONICLES A VANISHING WAY OF LIFE IN WHICH A 1947 FERGUSON TRACTOR, STILL PLAYS A MAJOR ROLE IN THE OPERATION OF THE ROGER AND ELAINE COOK FARM.

In 1947, Roger Cook's parents bought a new Ferguson TE-20 from H. (Herb) J. Wittig. His business was called Ontario Motor Service and it was established in Stratford, Ontario. The tractor did not have to travel far to find its new home. The Cook farm is located close to the city known for the world famous Shakespearean Festival. It is north and east of Stratford in the County of Perth. Their new Ferguson was the first rubber-tired tractor on their farm. An amazing twenty-three horsepower had arrived. The tractor came with a cultivator, 2-furrow plough, a sickle mower to cut the hay, plus a seed drill. Unfortunately, all the attachments for the Ferguson are long gone. A blacksmith made the front bumper modification and the drawbar hitch. Roger pointed out to me that although the tractor was built in Britain, the Continental engine was made in the USA. People who have gotten to know and respect the model TE-20 over the years, have fondly referred to this tractor as the "Little Grey Fergie."

Roger's father envisioned a trailer that could be hitched to his Ferguson. Roger is not sure if the axle came from a used car or truck but the trailer was custom built locally. He remembers cattle being transported when the wooden sides were added. These days the trailer is often used to haul firewood and can handle up to 12-foot limbs and 1 & 1/2 tons of firewood. The



sign at the farm gate advertises "Firewood for Sale."

The 12-foot limbs are cut into various sizes with an antique, belt driven, circular buzz saw that could be taken to the bush to cut larger pieces. This past year the trailer hauled all the fencing and fencing equipment for the Cooks as they installed a new fence at the edge of their farm property.

Generally, the TE-20 starts on the first try. Roger sings its praises for being very maneuverable. This feature is especially handy in his woodlot. During the winter, when there is considerable bush work to be done, the Ferguson handles snow conditions well. Roger added that, "I use 15W40 oil in the summer and 5W20 oil in the winter."

The paint on the Ferguson remains the original grey. Roger smiles and chuckles as I ask questions about his Ferguson tractor and when I asked him if the tractor still had the original paint he said, "Yes, it



is original, what's left of it."

A few years ago, Roger was doing some repair work on the Ferguson and had purchased a new radiator that did not fit quite the same as the old one. That meant the original grille would not fit over the radiator, so he fashioned a new grille out of expanded metal which he cut, bent and shaped to fit. The replacement grille seemed to work pretty well. At the same time, he replaced the fuel tank

and the sediment bowl. Luckily, Radford's Farm Machinery Repairs in Londesborough, Ontario had the antique parts that Roger needed. This repair shop has since closed. Timing is everything. The engine has been overhauled once and that was about forty years ago. The steering ball joints have also been replaced.

As Roger and his wife Elaine reminisce about their fifty-one years on the farm, they both



smile when they talk about the TE-20. They married in 1970 and took over the family farm. Both their children loved learning to drive the Ferguson with Roger's help. Once they knew how to drive the Ferguson they were able to help with the hay production necessary for the Cook's dairy herd.

Many tractor and wagon tours have been given around the farm. The Cooks have hosted Open Houses to show and demonstrate the antique, but still operating sawmill. The Ontario Woodlot Association conference members enjoyed a tour of Roger and Elaine's woodlots. Roger drove the

Ferguson and pulled a wagon with seats made from bales of straw. Sometimes it is just a group of good friends who take a tour to the bush to look for spring wildflowers and migrating birds. The Ferguson TE-20 isn't the only tractor on the Cook's farm but it is considered the most special.

THE PERTH AGRICULTURE MUSEUM WALL OF FAME

The Cooks bought the family farm in 1970 and were involved in the dairy industry for twenty-seven years but their real devotion has always been as stewards of the land. The Cooks developed

many practices which helped to improve stream and ground water quality for humans as well as for fish and wildlife habitat. That includes 100% retention of liquid and solid nutrient waste. Their initiatives regarding trees and woodlots started in the early years and they have planted over 12,000 trees on their farm as windbreaks, shelterbelts, stream buffers and block plantations. Tree planting is an annual event for the Cooks and is a cornerstone of their environmental awareness. This has led to three decades of community tree plantings and stream restoration initiatives along with thirty neighbouring families and friends as part of the Upper Avon Conservation Club. This group has partnered with the Upper Thames River Conservation Authority and Roger is the lead scout for these tree planting projects.

This passion for forest health, productivity and profitability has led to Roger's involvement with the Huron/Perth chapter of the Ontario Woodlot Association. Roger is a long-time director, has been president for several years and he was chair of this spring's two-day conference. Other organizations that have benefitted from the Cook's time and expertise are 4-H clubs, Girl Guides, nature groups, the Avon Trail, Perth County Milk Committee, Perth County Federation of Agriculture, the Woodland Towers Store and many schools. Roger has also helped with the Stratford and District Agricultural Society, the Mitchell Pioneer Club and area plowing matches which included sawmills and cross-cut displays. In 2018, the Perth Agriculture Museum Wall of Fame inducted Roger and Elaine Cook. *LQ*

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