

Grasshopper Johnny rides the range again

(Editor's Note: Following is a letter written by Russell Weidman, R1 Bernville, Berks County, about a beloved member of his family -- Grasshopper Johnny. It is written to a Korean War buddy, Bob Runner, who lives on a 13,000-acre ranch in the Sand Hills section of Nebraska, nestled in the corner of the state bordered by South Dakota and Wyoming. The letter is written by Weidman as if it were penned by Grasshopper Johnny, who will become easily recognizable to many area farmers.)

Hello There:

I would like to introduce myself as a member of the Russell Weidman family that you have not met. My name is Grasshopper Johnny. My owner, Russ, talks a lot about you as good friends, so I thought you would like to know all about me. Russ and Dawn are so busy, though, that I decided to write to you myself; so here is my story, beginning with my birth:

TIME -

Early Summer 1936

PLACE -

The Waterloo Tractor Works
Waterloo, Iowa

They rolled me off the assembly line, and pushed me into the paint shop. When I came out, I was nice and shiny green with yellow wheels. Next I remembered that my crankcase was filled with oil, my radiator filled with water, and my fuel tank filled with gasoline. Then some big guy came over to me, pulled my choke and gave me flywheel a spin. That's when I came to life as a John Deere Model B tractor.

The following morning the shipping clerk came out of his office, called for Joe, and pointed his pencil to me. Next thing I knew, Joe was putting a shipping tag around my steering shaft. My destination was to Stanley A. Klopp, Robeson, PA. I didn't know it then; but I was in for a very long ride.

I and six other tractors were put on a railroad car, banded, and our wheels blocked. Standing next to me was a Model A tractor. By the way, that Model A is one of my big brothers. Looking around at the tags, I saw we were not all going to the same dealership. Early the next morning, a Rock Island engine backed up to our car, snapped in our coupling, and we were on our way.

After leaving the yard, I thought I would just relax and enjoy the ride. Before long, we were out of the city and heading into farming country. Seeing other tractors along the way, I knew I would be working in the fields. I, recall, going through Chicago, through the cornfields of Indiana, and then on to Ohio where we got soaked in a day of rain!

Our last stop for water, (that tender sure held a lot for that steam locomotive), was when I heard the engineer say; "This Pennsylvania country sure is nice." That's when I started to get excited, I knew my tag said Pennsylvania. After taking on water, we were rolling along once again. We

saw lots of mountains, but before long we were back into farming country.

Finally, we pulled into a station and the sign said Robeson. I knew this was the end of the line for me. They unhooked our car and the train continued on. Someone working there yelled to the station master, "Telephone Klopp at Bernville to tell him his car is in."

About 8:30 the next morning, a Model A truck backed up to the side of our car. I had a feeling I'd be the first one off. The truck driver started cutting my bands and removing the blocks against my wheels. Later one, I found out his name is Woodrow Weidman, but everyone just calls him Woody. By the way, he turned out to be my present owner's dad.

Woody took me to the dealership in Bernville. There he put wheel weights on my rear wheels, checked me out, and cleaned me. I was dirty from that long ride, mostly coal dust. That same afternoon, standing there in the shop, I heard Stanley Klopp tell Woody to deliver me to Harvey Moyer in Rehersburg. That's when I was put to work.

I worked very hard for Harvey. I pulled the plow, harrow, and did all kinds of chores. I, recall, a few runs to the end of the lane for the mail. Sometimes Harvey would call Woody for my repairs and give me my tune-ups. I was always glad to see his puddle-jumper come in the lane. "What an unusual name to call your pick-up truck!"

In 1958, my owner, Harvey, retired from farming and sold me on a public sale. Standing there behind the barn, in a long row with the plow and harrow I pulled each year, the auctioneer yelled, "Sold", snapping his cane against my tire. This was a sad day for me.

My new owner was William Derr. Later that afternoon, William drove me, about four miles, to his farm at New Schaeferstown. William had a very small farm and life was easier for me.

I am not sure of the year 1962 or 1964, I was having trouble with my lungs. Later I found out, they call them valves. William drove me to Bernville for repairs. I heard him talking to a mechanic; complaining that I had poor power and hard starting. That mechanic turned out to be present owner, Russ.

I could tell Russ like me; he did a real good job of repairing me. He removed my cylinder head, refaced my valves, and narrowed my seats. When William drove me home, I was as good as new.

Coming to the year 1970, Russ heard that William Derr had an old unstyled Model B for sale. "Old B", I like that; he had a lot of nerve. Looking me over, I heard Russ ask William, "What's the price?" William said, "I should have fifty dollars." Russ said, "Okay!" I knew Russ was pleased, for I seen a smile on his face as he was leaving the shed.

The next night, Russ was back and winched me on a tilt-bed truck. My engine didn't start, but that didn't

worry Russ. After a short ride, I arrived at my new home, the Little C-Bar. For ten years I was standing in his barn. Sometimes pigeons would fly around in the barn, you think he would have put a canvas or a cover over me; I think you understand why. After the tenth year, I got the feeling maybe I would soon be in tractor heaven.

This is the part of the story I like. One day Russ said to his wife, Dawn, I am going to completely rebuild Grasshopper Johnny (remember that's me). By this time I needed more than just new paint. He took me all apart, piece by piece, and cleaned each piece as he completely disassembled me. Russ rolled my front-end away, removed my engine, and split my frame from my main case. Next he removed my rear wheels and my differential housing. Bob, I tell you, this guy didn't give up until he had me stripped down to the bare case. I got the feeling that maybe I would be sold as used parts. Some people, who saw me all apart, said that tractor will never run again.

I was all apart for a long time. Russ said he didn't have time to work on me; something about a rec-room in the basement. I'm sure he will tell you all about it in the near future.

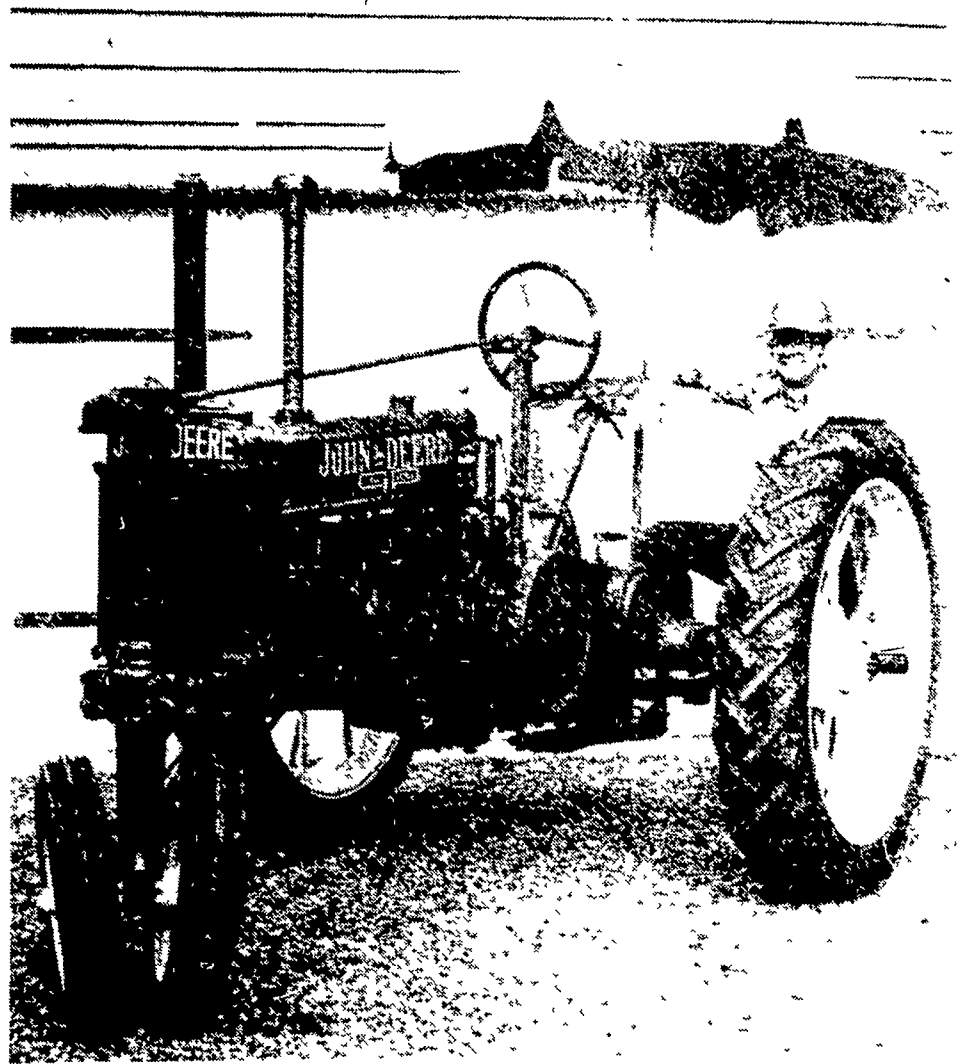
I was feeling very low until one day; Russ and Dawn had a visit from some friends. This couple, Mr. and Mrs. Leiss, were talking about their big dog, a New Foundlander. Mrs. Leiss said her husband, John, was so close to this dog and she asked him sometime ago, "Who comes first me or the dog?" John said, "That's a dumb question, you should know the answer!" Mrs. Leiss said to this day she still doesn't know if the dog or her comes first. Russ said in his life, his wife, Dawn, comes first, but his Model B is very close behind. That gave me hope again.

Early one morning, Russ washed out my main case and started to reassemble me. It took him quite awhile in his spare time, but it was because he's so fussy. He did a better job than the first time I was assembled at Waterloo.

Finally the big day arrived. Russ told Dawn to telephone his dad, so he could start me. Russ thought it would be nice; since his dad was the first person to start me when I arrived in Pennsylvania.

I remember, Russ cranking me over with my spark plugs removed; until he heard his dad say my oil gauge was moving. Russ wanted my oil pressure up before he started me. After installing my spark plugs, putting gas in my tank, and water in my radiator, Russ told his dad to start Grasshopper. My improuse snapped in my magneto, and I came to life again. You should have seen the smiles on their faces.

Russ said he was going to put me to work once in a while, just for exercise, but most of the time I'd be like a \$100,000 race horse put into green pastures for the golden years of my retirement. He also said sometimes he would run me



on kerosene or fuel oil just to see me smoke.

I heard Dawn tell Russ that he should write their friends in Nebraska a letter, and tell them about me. She also said she had a few recipes for Jane, and that she wanted to find out from Bob when the Lancaster Farming subscription runs out. The Lancaster Farming

is a yearly gift enjoyed by the Runner family.

Well, that's my story. Maybe I should have been on the T.V. show, "This Is Your Life". "Ha Ha."

On your next trip to Pennsylvania, you'll see me hopping around in the grass of the Little C-Bar. I'll be taking life easy, so look for a big yellow umbrella. In

closing, I'll say here's to smoke rings in your eyes, especially if he runs me on kerosene.

If you need me on your small ranch for a chore or two, let Russ know, I'm sure he would agree with me.

Enclosed you'll find a photograph taken of my better side.

Nice talking to you,
Grasshopper Johnny

Farm women present memorial clock

LITITZ — The Lancaster County Society of Farm Women recently presented a Hamilton Headmaster's Clock in memory of Mary Alice Gregory, former president of the Society, to the Lititz Public Library.

"Knowing her love for your library, we felt a clock was most appropriate to give," Mrs. Opal Ruhl, Farm Women president,

said during the presentation Tuesday. Accepting the clock on behalf of the library was head librarian Jean Lannigan.

The inscription on the clock, which now hangs above the card catalog in the main room of the library, reads: "In memory of Mary Alice Gregory, County President (1975-1977),

Lancaster County Society of Farm Women."

Also participating in the presentation were the Gregory family and the following Farm Women: Mrs. Dorothy Johnson, past president; Mrs. Ann Diller, past president; Mrs. Naomi Spahr; Mrs. Edna Buckwalter, County secretary; and Mrs. Mary Alice Fyock, chairman of the Memorial Committee.



Mrs. Opal Ruhl, president of the Lancaster County Society of Farm Women, presents a clock in memory of former president Mary Alice Gregory to Jean Lannigan, head librarian at the Lititz Public Library. The late Mrs. Gregory's family, including husband Robert E. Gregory, and daughters Jane, Sallie and Martha, look on.