

He collects machinery in a small way

BY M. H. GITT
Staff Correspondent

MT. HOLLY SPRINGS — Bob Weaver has an inventory of tractors and farm equipment that would make any dealer green with envy. His lineup boasts over 100 tractors, both wheeled and tracked, and about 100 pieces of other equipment — combines, disks, plows, balers, and corn pickers, to name a few.

But, unlike other machinery dealers who would need acres upon acres to display this array of implements, Bob keeps his medley of machinery in his house — his equipment is of the miniature variety. You see, Bob is one of a growing number of people who collect and invests in toy tractors and farm machinery.

While toy tractor collectors are as yet an unorganized lot, Bob explained dealers get together every chance they can and hold shows to compare their best pieces and sell others. Recently, the collectors held a show in Beaver Falls with dealers from as far away as Florida, Iowa, and Missouri coming to participate.

The Cumberland County collector traveled to the western-Pennsylvania town with his toy display and managed to grab second place with a refinished Oliver '88' pedal tractor, complete with original decals and paint.

This particular tractor is unique because it is shorter than most pedal models. "It seems when they first manufactured these tractors, they found kids out-grew them too quickly," Bob remarked. "So they lengthened them by about six inches. If you see a pedal tractor that appears shorter than 'normal,' it's an older type."

According to Bob, who owns only five pedal tractors, these types of toy tractors are just beginning to gain in popularity among dealers. He explained these toys are difficult to come by in good condition because they are used hard by the kids who 'drive' them. And being in good condition is one of the three main factors that determine the value of a tractor.

"The other two factors are age and desirability," Bob explained. "Some people like a certain make of tractor because they are familiar with the 'real thing' so they try to collect the toy models of that brand. Pieces of Oliver equipment may not mean much to somebody else, but they mean something to me because I collect them."

Bob explains his affection for Oliver's was cultivated when he was a boy. His father was an Oliver dealer in Punxsutawney from 1940 to 1955 before becoming active in politics. Bob later drove and owned full-scale Oliver tractors — they still remain his favorite.

"The real Oliver tractor is rare and the toy is even more rare," he said. His most cherished toy is an Oliver OC-6, a bulldozer-like tractor that sports tracks instead of wheels. Along with the tractor, Bob also has an OC-6 poster adorning a basement wall, a sign from his father's dealership, an Oliver clock, and a porcelain sign advertising Cletrac crawler tractors.

Bob recalled how he began collecting toy tractors about seven years ago when his travels took him to various implement dealers. "I would be waiting around to see the owners and would start looking at the toys. I noticed some models were out of production and thought 'they ought to be worth some money someday.' So I started buying and put the word out I was interested in more toy tractors. A lot of dealers gave me leads."

The search for toy tractors is not always easy, as Bob explained. He said there is a feeling of despair when you look for months and can't

find the model you want. And just as you've resigned yourself to the hopelessness of the search — "bingo" — you find two or three.

Bob confessed his greatest satisfaction comes when he finds an old toy because they are so rare. In his quest for antique toys, however, Bob faces the competition of people who buy the old cast iron tractors simply because they are old or to add to their collection of cast iron articles.

But age isn't the only criteria that makes a certain toy tractor more 'collectible' than another. "When a company goes out of business, like Oliver or Minneapolis-Moline, the toys increase in value because you know they're not going to be making any more. Or when New Holland stopped supplying toy tractors, prices on these pieces went up fairly quickly," Bob observed.

Value also is determined by the material from which each toy tractor is constructed. According to Bob, metal toys are worth more than plastic ones. But, since plastic implements usually warp or break faster than metal ones, a plastic toy in good condition is hard to find and therefore valuable. In fact, Bob recalled the highest price paid for a toy tractor that he knows of personally was for a plastic implement.

Some companies have recognized the growing interest in collecting toy tractors and have produced 'special edition' runs on a number of mini-machines. Each of the limited editions bears its own registration number.

In one case, Bob recounted, a certain company made one tractor for each of its dealers. The prices for these collector's items went as high as \$200 at the start, but later dropped back down to \$75.

This same company also produced a similar tractor — with only the registration number missing — prior to mass-producing toy tractors with no registration box at all. According to Bob, these 'blank box' editions also are collectible and will hold their prices because they are, in a sense, a second special edition. Bob has one of these models in his collection as well as a model tractor that was produced during the Bicentennial — complete with stars and stripes.

As in any line of business, there are pitfalls and imposters in the toy tractor enterprise. Bob cautioned collectors to be aware of a specific case involving TruScale and John Deere combines, both almost identical except for decals. "TruScale was a toy manufacturer and patterned toys to scale, however they had no major tractor makers backing them at the start. Later the tractor people hired them to produce their toys, which is the reason the two combines (John Deere and TruScale) look alike. In fact the only difference is that one has a dent which kept the boom elevator in place during shipment."

"Some people will remove the TruScale decals, paint the combine green, stick on John Deere decals, and try to sell them for a higher price," warned Bob.

Another danger in the toy tractor collecting field is current manufacturing of models of tractors that were produced years ago for which there never was a toy model made. Some people are led to believe it's an old toy because the style of the tractor is old.

One clue to a tractor's 'credibility', advised Bob, is that new tractors generally have plastic parts and aren't as detailed as the old tractors. This compromise on parts is done to keep down costs and make them affordable for kids, he said.

But what about the price the 'big



Bob Weaver, Mt. Holly Springs, keeps his with still another 100 implements including farm machinery inventory on the shelf. His combines, disks, balers and others. collection of toy tractors totals over 100 pieces



Bob kneels next to his prize-winning Oliver shorter than most pedal tractors by about six '88' pedal tractor. This unique model is inches.

kids' have to pay for their collector's tractors? According to Bob, the miniature tractors still don't compare to full-scales in price. "Most of the small ones go for between \$20 and \$50, with few costing more than \$100."

Even though it's possible to tie up a small fortune in this mini-

machinery, the worth of these toy implement collections is perhaps realized more for their sentimental value — memories of countless hours of summer fun spent 'playing' caterpillar operator or farmer with little replicas of Dad's big tractor, or that death-defying first run down the barn-bridge hill

that tested the courage of even the bravest pedal-tractor pusher.

For Bob Weaver, his collection of metal, plastic, and steel is much more than just a hobby — it's childhood memories and a touch of the past all stored up in rows of toy tractors.

Maryland gains assistant director

COLLEGE PARK, Md. — Eleanor F. Young has been named assistant director for Home Economics in the Maryland Cooperative Extension Service headquartered at College Park, Md. She has been Extension textile and clothing specialist at College Park since 1971.

In announcing the appointment, Craig Oliver, director of the Maryland Cooperative Extension Service, said, "Dr. Young is well-qualified to bring leadership to the statewide Extension home economics program. In the course of her work during the past decade, she has worked with most of the 45 home economics agents located in all 23 counties and Baltimore city as well as the other Extension specialists officed at College Park."

A native of Detroit, Michigan, Dr. Young earned all her degrees at the University of Maryland beginning with the B.S. degree in home economics in 1955. She worked for two years in the homemaker testing service for General Foods Corporation.

She added the M.S. in textiles and clothing in 1958 and served for seven years in teaching roles in the College of Home Economics. After four years as director of the merchandising department of Marjorie Webster Junior College, she returned to the University of Maryland as Extension textiles and clothing specialist and continued her course work in the agricultural and Extension Education Department.

In 1976 she earned the Ph.D. degree with a dual major in

Textiles and Clothing and Agricultural and Extension Education.

Young is a member of the American Home Economics Association, the Maryland Home Economics Association, The Washington Fashion Group, The American Association of Textile Chemists and Colorists, The Maryland Extension Specialists Association, Omicron Nu and Phi Kappa Phi.

Young lives in Silver Spring with her husband, an engineer with Science-Management Resources. The couple has two grown daughters, one a geologist with U.S. Geological Survey and one a mathematician with the Syncon Corporation.

Young's appointment becomes effective October 1, 1981.