

At 100, he's still promoting hybrid corn

MARKLESBURG — At 100 years old, Sam Garners says his blood pressure is as good as at 16-year-old kid's. And it must be. Garner has been an active DeKalb-Pfizer Genetics seed dealer for the last 45 years. He also is an avid camper,

having visited, since 1960, every state in the union, including three trips to Alaska and every province of Canada.

An advertisement in an Ohio farm paper 50 years ago spurred Garner's interest in hybrid corn.

"Hybrid seed corn hadn't been introduced into this part of the country at that time, and I wanted to try something different," Garner recalls. "It's like farmers who started using no-till methods a few years ago. Somebody's got to be first."

Garner introduced hybrid corn in the Marklesburg area from 1934 to 1938 by sponsoring annual corn shows for local farmers and Extension agents. "The Pennsylvania secretary of agriculture even came to one of my farm shows. I wrote to him and told him that if he could attend other meetings, he could come to mine. And he came."

Garner decided to become a DeKalb dealer after attending the Pennsylvania Farm Show in Harrisburg in 1939. "I got eight or 10 bags of DeKalb seed at the farm show to sell the first year," he says.

Breaking in something new is always a challenge, but Garner had an idea. "I picked some good farmers and asked them to test their corn against my hybrid seed corn by planting eight rows of their corn, then eight rows of DeKalb, followed by eight rows of their corn." If the 16 rows of corn yielded more than the eight rows of DeKalb, Garner didn't change the farmer for the DeKalb seed. But if DeKalb yielded more, the farmer had to pay him for the seed. Garner didn't lose any money on those deals.

"Getting new hybrids off the ground is real difficult, because



Sam Garner, 100 years young.

farmers hate to try new hybrids. That's as true today as it was 45 years ago. But you've got to be innovative and think of ways to get farmers to try these new brands."

"Sam has the tremendous ability to look forward," says Jack Litzelman, Canandaigua, N.Y., who was Garner's District Sales Manager for the last four years. "He's determined, energetic and extremely personable."

Garner thinks it's vital that farmers look toward the future and stay involved in agricultural organizations. "That farmer's the only fellow who's keepin' this country going, so he's got to be organized and willing to try in-

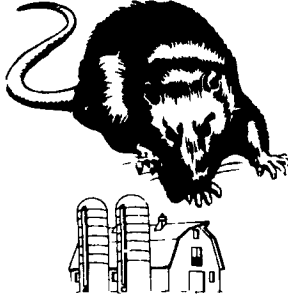
novative things," he adds.

"Sam may be 100 years old, but he sure doesn't think that way," says Leo Darnkroger, Associate Director of Training for DeKalb-Pfizer Genetics. "He is active, attends nearly all dealer meetings and provides service to farmers in his area."

Garner looks at life like a ladder. "You know, life's like a ladder. You climb up 50 rungs, and then you start climbin' down. Some people fall off real quick after they start climbin' down," he says.

"Me... I'm just about down to the bottom, and I've been lucky enough not to fall off yet."

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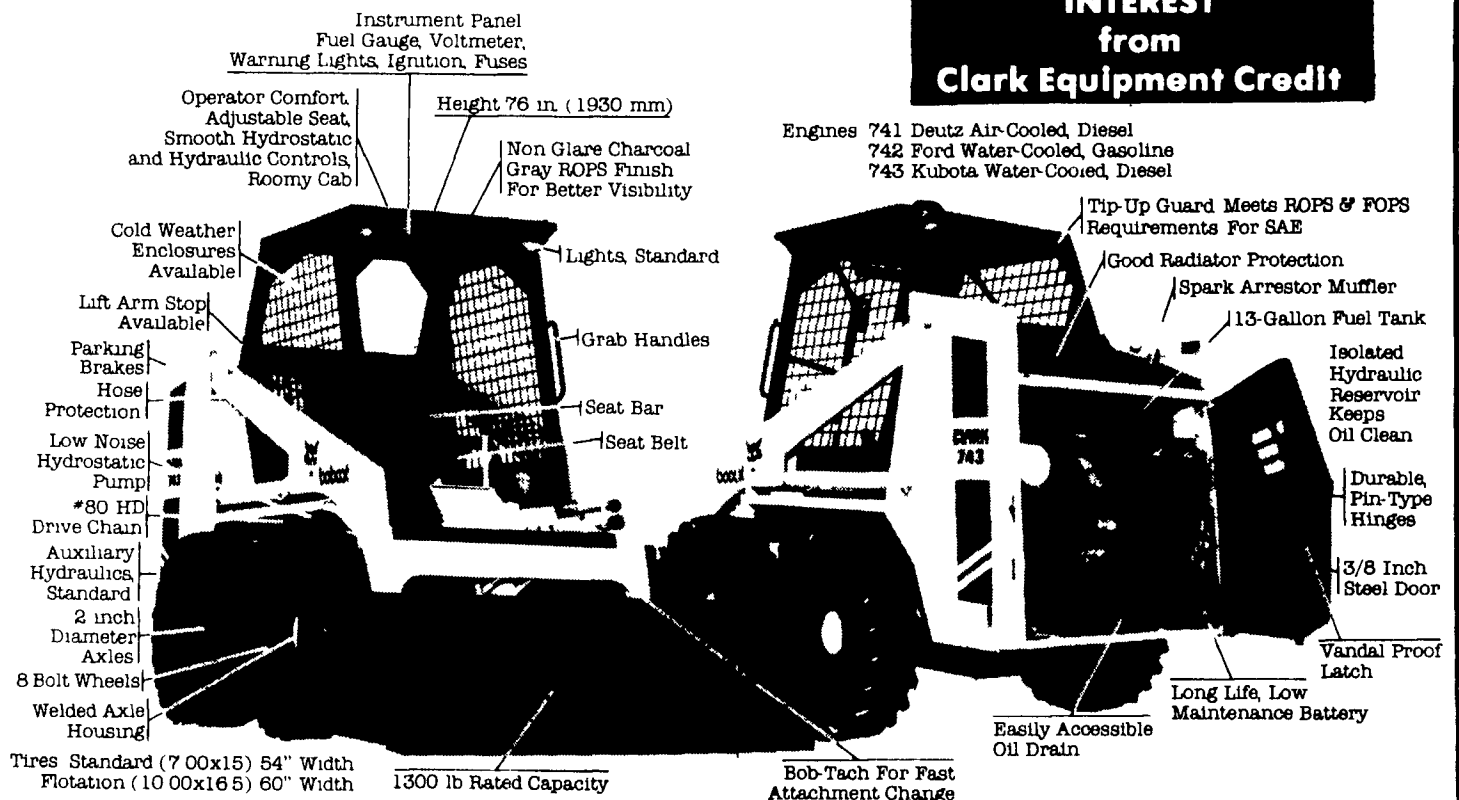
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