

Aussie trip was full of firsts



Featuring a truck engine and differentials and a homemade cab, this tractor was built from the ground up by the Pietsch family.

horse," he grins, noting that, in addition to rounding up sale animals, small herds were brought in every couple of weeks for worming.

Although minibikes were also an option during roundup time, High preferred the more traditional transportation. "I liked the horses better because you didn't have to watch where you were going."

But Tom admits that motorized transportation did come in handy at times. The nearest town from the Landis farm was Kempsey, numbering only a few thousand, and some 50 miles distant.

Americans planning to drive in Australia, however, had better review the the traffic laws carefully. "They drive on the other side of the road over there," Tom says, pointing out that, "the first couple of times it was pretty

scary."

"We went to town once a week, usually during the week, when the shops were open. I guess you could call that our entertainment," Tom smiles. His busy six-day work week was spent fixing fences, riding the range, building a cattle yard and generally helping out with property maintenance.

After four months with the Landis family, High returned to the Pietsch operation for two months before returning to America. Ironically, Tom spent very little time working with sheep, Australia's number-one livestock industry.

"One of the sayings over there is that 'Australia grew on the sheep's back,'" Tom says, adding that the country's sheep and lamb population tops 140 million head. About three-fourths of this number

are purebred Merinos. Though primarily valued for their fine wool, they're a welcome source of mutton when their wool production drops. The Merinos adapt well to the arid, less fertile conditions found throughout much of the country. Coastal areas with good rainfall are devoted to market lamb production, and Australia's annual lamb exports average about \$61 million.

As might be expected, lamb is the country's number-one dish, and Tom had to travel the whole way to Australia before experiencing his first taste. "We ate a lot of it over there, and I learned to like it," he says.

Though Tom admits that he never would have considered raising sheep before his Australian trip, working with a small number of them on the Pietsch farm has changed his mind. "When you work with them a little bit, it makes a difference."

But whether the product is hogs, beef cattle or sheep, Tom hopes to own a livestock operation some day. For the present, his plans include working for his father in the building trade and lending a hand on the farm's 55,000-bird broiler operation.

He's also hoping that the future holds a second chance to experience more firsts in "the land down under".



Though minibikes were available for driving cattle...



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