

Seeing Ourselves As Others See Us

We not only see ourselves differently than others see us, our memories of disputes also usually differ from the memories of those we've disputed. This message from the Jewish Theological Seminary of America may bring us all a broadened vision and a shared perspective.

Things happened. We both experienced them. You saw them your way -- colored by experiences in your past, or by resentment or impatience. I saw them my way -- colored by fear, by pride, by the fact that I am myself and not you.

So our memories of what hap-

pened were very different from the start. And then, before we knew it, memories hardened into myths and myths into dogma. Now we find ourselves divided. We stare across the chasm, but we don't see each other.

Wife, husband. Child. Parent. Friend.

Race. Nation. Religious group.

I'm tired of being alone on my side of the chasm. I'm using up so much energy fearing and resenting you. Sometimes I wish each of us could crack the dogma, peel away the mythology, shed our own recollections and trade memories. What would it be like if we could see each other's pictures of the history we share? If we could see each other?

What we need here, you and I, is a little humility and a lot of housecleaning.

Humility: to say, only God sees

history whole and knows the whole truth. All I have is my perception. It's valid, it's precious, but it's fragmentary. Maybe I ought to try seeing as God sees, from all the angles.

Housecleaning: Memory is selective, and I'm carrying around years of slanted, narrow memories. I can't see past them. It must be the same for you. What we need to do is let some of them go. Trade a few. Listen.

Maybe, if I ask you how things look to you, between us we'll see something we never saw before.

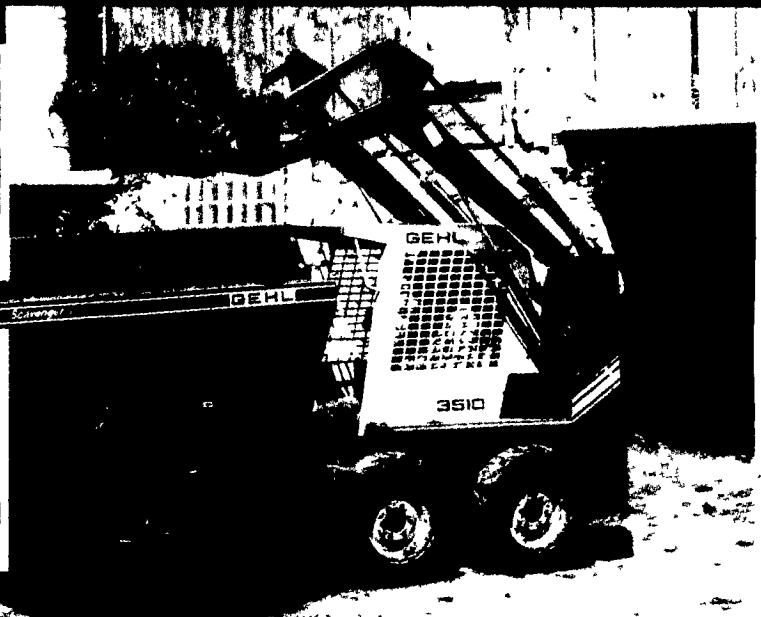
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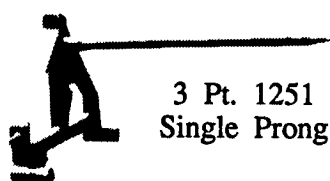
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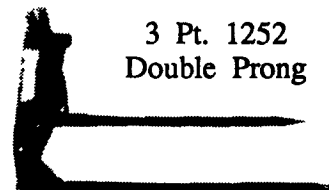
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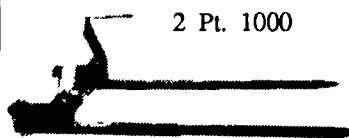
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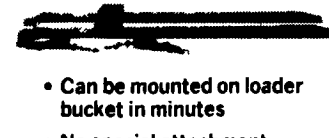
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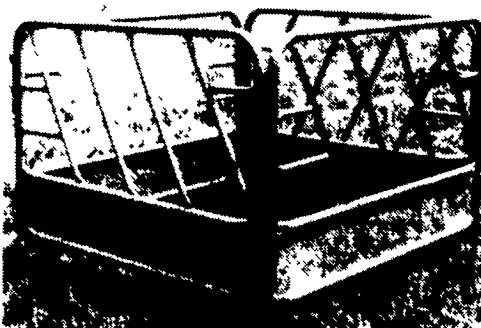


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