

Hooper's New Facility Designed For Efficiency, Communication

MIDDLETOWN, Del. — The impressive new facilities to house the growing Hooper Equipment, Inc., Case IH dealership was the backdrop for an open house Tuesday as company officials, farmers, and suppliers gathered to celebrate a show of optimism for the busi-

ness of farming.

In 1982, the Charles Hooper family purchased White Bros. in the area. At that time, 15 people were employed. Now sales have increased 10 times and the dealership has 53 employees to run the business. That's why the move

four miles south on Route 301 was necessary.

"We planned this move for two years," Charles Hooper said. "And it took a year to build. We acted as our own general contractor and used some of our labor, so we have a facility that cost less than the

banks said it would."

Designed by the employees for efficiency, the building, which measures 32,000 square feet with a total of 41,000 square feet of space, features easy communication between the departments. As you enter the building, the display area, the parts department, the service areas, and the sales offices are all visible from the receptionist's desk.

"Communication is critical when you are dealing with a service business," Hooper said. "This building was designed to make communication easy. In the old building, the receptionist always needed to get on the phone to find anyone in the building. Now she can see everyone from her desk.

"Efficiency and communication have been designed into the service work areas, too. With 15 mechanics at work, if I can save seven-tenths of an hour per man per day, I can pay the mortgage with the savings from the new efficiency. And now we have room to hold equipment inside while we wait for a part to come in.

"But I don't want to give the impression that facilities make the business," Hooper said. "People make the business. It has been our good employees who have made our business successful in the past. And if it is successful in the future, it will be because of people as well."

The Hooper business has two main divisions: agriculture equipment and commercial lawn tractor and mowing equipment. And the new location provides ideal access to both these markets. The agriculture business comes up from south Delaware, Maryland, and Virginia. And the commercial lawn and mowing business draws customers from the urban areas around Newark, Wilmington, and other nearby population areas.

"Manufacturers have changed their marketing strategy in the last number of years," Hooper said. "They are looking for larger dealerships to handle their business. We want to be part of their plans. That's why we have designed our operation to accommodate the larger farm operators at both our Intercourse, Pennsylvania, location and here at Middletown."

The major ice storm that blanketed the area Tuesday made air arrivals late and caused hazardous driving conditions that reduced the number of attendees to some extent. But more than 800 persons managed to attend.

Suppliers and company officials were talking of a good year for agriculture in 1994.

Herman Kosten, Case IH vice president sales, North American division, said future growth of the industry depends on satisfying the more sophisticated needs of the farmer. He said, "Today's customers look for support after the sale almost as much as the original price of the equipment."

Dennis Schwiager, Case IH vice president marketing, North American division, said the new facilities at Middletown show the Hooper commitment to agriculture and the local community. The farm economy looks better than in 1993 and the good operator will be successful just as in the past.

Robin Killian, Case IH regional manager, said the new international trade agreements have helped U.S. farmers to have a more level playing field and, given this opportunity, will be able to compete very well.

Harold Bower, Case IH area sales manager, said the outlook for 1994 is more steady given the good grain prices. He said we are heading in the right direction and the good feeling in the company covers everyone from company chairman Mike Walsh down to all the field people.

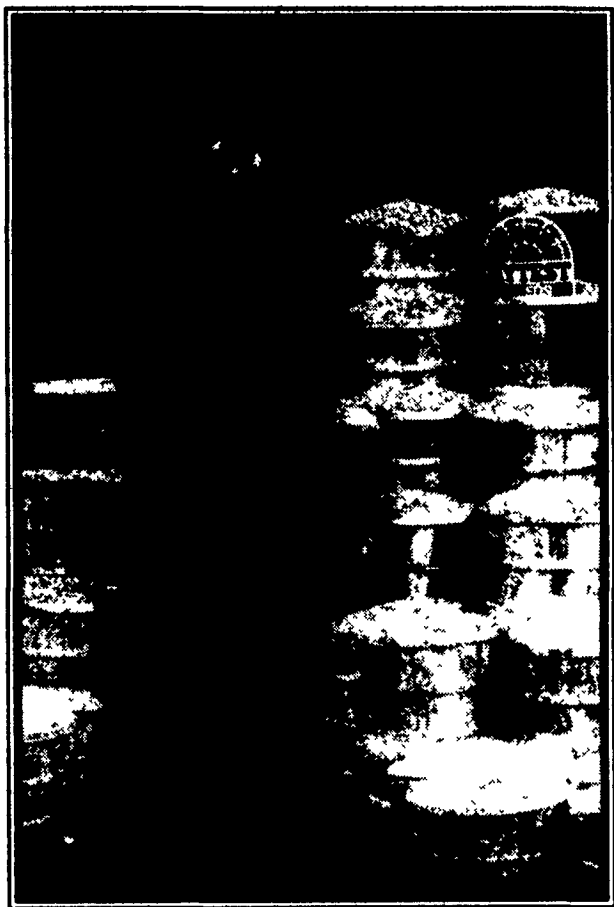
Earlier this week, Tenneco Inc., the parent company of JI Case, released earning figures that reported operating income nearly doubled in the fourth quarter. And credit was given to the JI Case division as the leader of the companies' rebounds.

Dennis Hann, regional sales manager, Case IH, recognized this turnaround in 1993 and said it was because commodity prices improved, customer attitudes improved, and, even in spite of some drought areas, we finished 1993 very strong.

"Now in the first quarter of 1994 the equipment market is much stronger than 1993 started," Hann said. "For example, we are completely sold out of combines from the factory out through April. If a



At Hooper Equipment new dealership facility are from left, Dennis Hann, Charles Hooper, Chuck Hooper, and Harold Bower.



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