

Fond Memories Of The Pony Tractor Drive This Restoration Team

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— Coming home from hunting in the mountains one day, a Chester County equipment dealer noticed a rusting hulk that looked like an old Massey-Harris "Pony" tractor, with a "for sale" sign on it, wasting away in a farmer's field.

The dealer stopped and spoke to the farmer. Indeed, the old "rust bucket," according to Jacob "Jake" Dudkewitz, owner of S.G. Lewis & Son, Inc., equipment, was, indeed, a 1948 Massey-Harris Pony.

Turns out, the tractor was sold to the farmer by S.G. Lewis & Son back in 1948. At that time, the Pony sold for about \$650.

Jake couldn't resist regaining something that reminded him of growing up on his family's small farm in Delaware. He used an old Massey-Harris Pony, similar to the one that needed restoring, in his fields.

So Jake took the rusted tractor from the farmer's hands for a scraping \$900.

Sound like a lot? Well, not as much as it cost to restore it. The painting alone, according to Jake, cost \$1,200.

That same tractor appears on the cover of a DuPont Classic Farm Calendar (200 in all) issued by the S.G. Lewis & Son business in West Grove.

Jake purchased the tractor in 1990. In 1994, they invited DuPont Classic Tractor series representatives to take pictures of the tractor. A photographer arrived on one of the coldest days of the year, in February this year, to photograph the Pony, which appears in color on the calendar. He took 300 photos of the tractor on a neighbor's farm, according to Jake, and used a lot of photographic equipment to bring out the best picture possible.

It is that kind of devotion that drives a lot of people to collecting and restoring old tractors. Those who are in the business of purchasing old tractors and restoring them for show all want to bring back some of the fond memories of the past.

"We had some of these tractors on our farms and our parents also had some of the Massey tractors," he said. "Today, we still like them as a hobby."

Jake and son John "Jay" Dudkewitz have a collection of about 28 tractors. Jay has restored a 1948 Massey-Harris 55 diesel, a 55 (1955) Massey-Harris liquid propane tractor, and a 1957 555 diesel. Jake is in the process of restoring two other Ponys. Jay will be restoring a 444 diesel.

Back then, the smaller Ponys were for various light chores. They are quipped with a four-cylinder Continental engine, rated 10 horsepower on the drawbar and 11 on the belt. About 27,000 units were manufactured at the factory located in Woodstock, Canada.

"This size tractor was used a lot in the vegetable growing business," said Jake. "We sold a lot of them for the small farm that replaced the last team of horses."

The Pony weighs 1,500 pounds and could pull nearly 75 percent of its weight.

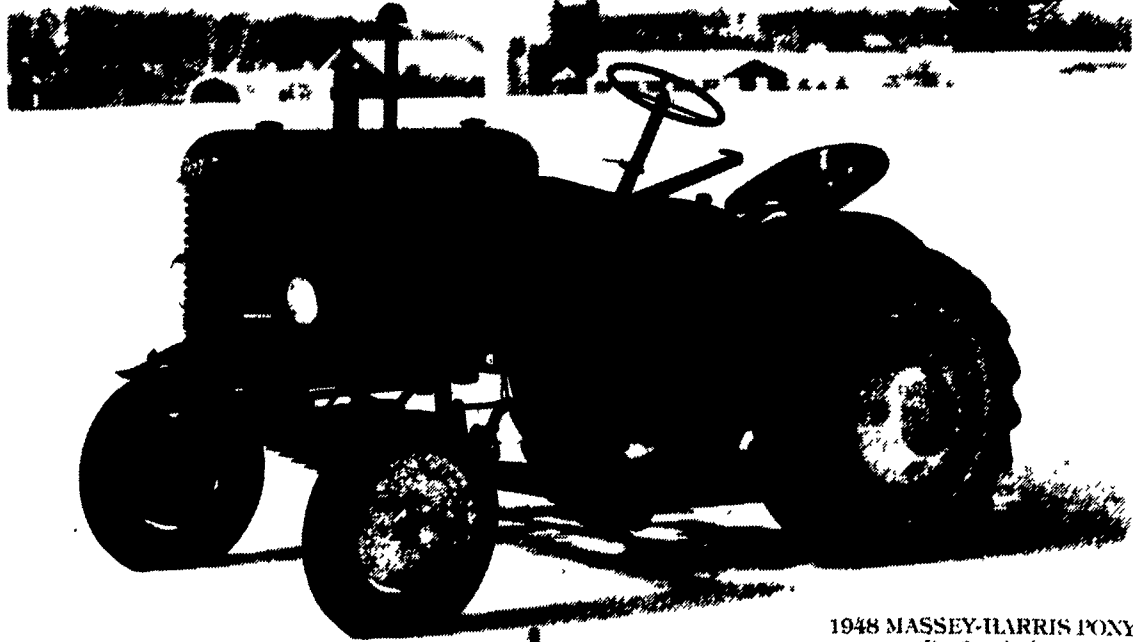
When they were manufactured from 1940-1953, they were affordable for the small farm. "Now they demand top dollar," said Jake, some going for as much as \$5,000 or more.

"I like these little tractors simply because I can load a couple of them up on the trailer and pull them with my pickup truck," said Jake.

Although he said he wouldn't have any idea what you could get for one now, it all depends on "just what anyone would be willing to pay."

CLASSIC FARM TRACTORS

1995 COLLECTOR'S EDITION - SIXTH IN SERIES



1948 MASSEY-HARRIS PONY
(Details on back)

This 1948 Massey-Harris Pony, built from 1948-1957, was once a tired old bucket of rust. The tractor was completely restored by Jake Dudkewitz, West Grove. It is featured, in full cover, on the cover of a calendar put out by the DuPont Classic Calendars series. The photo was taken on a neighbor's farm on the coldest day of the year, according to Jake.

One of the problems are missing parts. For many of the small tractors of the era, missing would be side panels, the toolbox, and air cleaner. The panels would be removed when damaged, and the toolbox would be taken out to replace the battery. Often, trees or posts would knock off the air cleaner. Those parts alone are often hard to find.

Fortunately, the Dudkewitzs have an additional Pony "parts" tractor to secure the items they need.

The family has a half a dozen Massey-Harris tractors restored, and the rest are in storage awaiting their turn.

Jake said that his family shows the restored equipment at various tractor shows throughout the country. They have also displayed the restored models at Rough and Tumble Engineers Museum in Kinzers, Lancaster County.

"Every young boy falls in love with a certain tractor — whether it be a Massey-Harris, or International, or John Deere, or whatever — thinking it's the greatest tractor there is," he said. "And we were no different — we always thought the Massey-Harris was the best."

According to Jake, however, those who are looking at restoring tractors for investment should be warned: this isn't a way to make a lot of money.

"It's hard to get all of your

money out of some of these things," he said. "It's just the pride in doing it and the fond memories you have of them. And I'm sure collectors of a lot of these farm antiques you see around the

country would probably say the same thing. They remember them as a boy or their father or uncle, they fixed them, and worked with them. They restore the tractors out of love."



Jay Dudkewitz has been restoring this Massey-Harris 444 diesel tractor, operated here by father Jake.



The sandblasting and repainting were some of the most extensive and expensive restorations done to this 55 liquid propane tractor from Massey-Harris.



Jay, left, and father Jake Dudkewitz have restored about seven Massey-Harris tractors, dating from the late 1940s to early 1950s, through the years. They also own and manage S.G. Lewis & Son, Inc., agricultural and industrial equipment dealers, in West Grove.



In October, Jay Dudkewitz lined up some of his favorite Massey-Harris tractors. From left to right, the 55, a 1948 diesel, refurbished last year; a 55 liquid propane, 1955, refurbished in 1991; and a 555 diesel, from 1957, restored in 1990.