



Ted Sipe rejuvenates "basket cases of tired iron." On April 6, Sipe is selling 30 of his restored antique tractors but keeping a few for tinkering.

Tinkerer Restores Vintage Tractors

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— Theodore (Ted) Sipe, who could probably be dubbed a "professional tinkerer," recently realized his collection of upwards of 35 vintage tractors, has finally outgrown their owner.

So he's letting them go the Saturday before Easter — April 6. He had put his heart and soul into restoring the rusty castaways and made them all operational, but now, at age 76, the widower and retired farmer is holding an auction of his prized collectibles.

He's keeping five, however, for sentimental reasons. Besides, "I gotta' keep something to play with," he said, grinning and looking somewhat impish about the metal hunks of "toys" arranged in several surrounding buildings.

The hobby that has spanned a quarter century, found Sipe over the years, rescuing the abandoned relics that previous owners simply left sitting where they had emitted their last chug. And, naturally, he bought them at sales.

On Saturday Sipe will bid his farewells to what once were his "basket cases of tired iron," like the 1925 Fordson, his oldest model.

His biggest model is the 1930 Minneapolis cross-motor tractor parked prominently, right inside the entry to his shop and garage

amid an acrid, but not altogether unpleasant, smell of mingled grease and oil. The gray crank-starter and its smaller counterparts, including a 1928 Caterpillar 10, once used in an apple orchard, are wall to wall with narrow passageways between them.

Sipe was fortunate to find one of the 800, rare 1930 Rumely's, in Ligonier, Westmoreland County.

Generally, Sipe had little problem hiring transport for the apples of his hobby's eye, when he scanned neighboring places for them. Except, for the 1940 Minneapolis model he found in Accident (Garrett County) Maryland. It fell that Sipe, himself, would have to drive it 50 to 60 miles to his home just off Route 281. The long journey was successful, but only because, Sipe and his brother, patiently added oil every few miles to keep the "basket case" moving along.

"I used to help thresh with the Minneapolis (model) when I was a kid," Sipe reminisced, about his youth.

There's a John Deer GP, the two Silver Kings — 1937 and 1938, a 1929 Farmall on steel wheels; an Oliver 60 and an Oliver 80 from the 1940s; four Allis Chalmers' including the 1930 Allis Chalmers 2540.

A fleet of John Deere tractors — eight — are parked in alternating forward and backward sequence, in respect of space. Of two other John Deere tractors, one

is styled and the other, a 1936, un-styled.

There's a Massey-Harris 33, F-20 and F-12 Farmall's, Ford 8 N and the Ford 7000 which isn't going anywhere.

"I'm keeping it," Sipe says. "The Ford is sentimental, I bought it."

His own 1948 S.C. Case tractor was spanking new, when Sipe bought it. "It was bought new on this farm," he said.

Looking around he espies a smaller piece of equipment, the Beaver sickle mower of interminate years. "God only knows its age," he said.

When his late wife, Eleanor (Meyers) had good health, she and Sipe did absolutely everything as partners. Eleanor was a petite ball of energy confined in a package of under five feet in height.

"My wife and I ran the farm all by ourselves," Sipe says. "I never touched a cow, I did the feeding. She stood on cement blocks (at milking time) because she was so short. She was wonderful with animals," he said fondly, adding that, after 52 wonderful years of marriage, she died in February 1995.

Their only child, a son, is a nuclear engineer whose home is in Connecticut.

It mattered little what job they were doing — driving tractor over the 250 acres that were Eleanor's homeplace, caring for the 40 Holsteins or dismantling another piece of tired iron — Sipe's favorite friend worked beside him, making his a rich life.

Haying season, especially, was enjoyed by Eleanor who worked with such vigor, the men had to hustle to keep pace with her. "She had a knack for unloading hay," Sipe said. "She could keep two fellows going in the mow."

"She was a go-getter. I was married to her for 52 years and I never heard her admit she was tired. She got tired, but she just wouldn't admit it," Sipe said.

However, they both took great pleasure in driving to church in the 1931 Ford Crown Victoria coupe that, with its original upholstery, is still in mint condition.

Unlike some couples where one



Ted Sipe stands with his largest antique tractor, a gray, 1930 Minneapolis cross-motor model.

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