

Horse Teams to Horsepower: Caterpillar Tractors Lead the Way for 75 Years

DEKALB, Ill. (February 9, 2000) - A crystal ball may have been the only way to foresee all that would result when C.L. Best Tractor Co. and Holt Caterpillar Co. joined forces back in 1925, and few would have guessed that track technology would grow to serve so many industries. As Caterpillar marks its 75th anniversary this year, the company is celebrating its development of track technology throughout the years and is particularly proud of its agricultural heritage.

"From the early days of steel tracks to current rubber-belted track technology, we have continued to improve and refine our equipment throughout the years," says Bob Strube, president, Caterpillar Agricultural Products Inc. "As Caterpillar Inc. celebrates its 75th anniversary, we're especially proud of our roots in agriculture and our leadership in bringing new technology to the farm today. We know our experience is recognized by farmers when it comes to track machines in agriculture."

Tracks Debut in Early 1900s

As early as 1906, when the first Holt "Caterpillar" tractor with steel tracks was introduced, company engineers recognized the flotation benefits of the new technology.

By the time the two companies merged, they had collectively pioneered

track tractors and the gasoline-powered tractor engine.

"Non-adjacent fields and increasing miles of asphalt-paved roads caused a decline in the use of steel-track tractors over the course of time," Strube notes. "Mobility between fields became a huge issue - farmers couldn't drive steel tracks down paved roads."

Caterpillar solved that problem with the introduction of the rubber-belted Challenger(r) 65 tractor in 1986. Farmers then had the benefits of tracks-flotation, traction and reduced soil compaction plus the mobility needed to travel between fields over any type of road. Since then, the Challenger tractor line has expanded to range from the versatile 175-PTO-horsepower Challenger 35 to the powerful 410-gross-engine-horsepower Challenger 95E.

Machines Evolve, Ideas Endure

"From the beginning, Caterpillar has changed the way people think about farming. Our Challenger tractor line is the result of blending new technology with some of Holt and Best's original ideas that still make a lot of sense today," Strube says. "Their original agricultural tractors were based on a systems approach to solving problems and improving operational efficiency."

Strube lists diesel engines, front-end suspension and combined harvesting technology as examples of those

enduring ideas. "Holt and Best also were well aware of the fundamentals of tracks-flotation and traction and their importance in agricultural production," Strube says. "We continue to leverage those proven ideas

Caterpillar entered into a joint venture with German-based Claas KGaA to manufacture and market Lexion(r) combines, which offer the highest production capacity of any combine in the world.

handling products, including skid steer loaders, backhoe loaders and telescopic handlers, also serve the needs of the agricultural marketplace.

About Caterpillar Inc.

Along with its growing



with what Caterpillar has learned as a leader in other industries like construction, mining, forestry and power generation."

Caterpillar continues to invest in research as it sets the pace for others competing in the track technology field, Strube adds. "We are constantly looking for ways to help farmers lower their per-acre costs and increase profits. Our customers keep us in business, and we intend to help keep them in business."

Cat Ag Product Group Created

Caterpillar Inc. established an agricultural product group in 1990, with design and marketing responsibilities for the company's agricultural products. During the next five years, the Challenger tractor line was expanded to include both tillage and row-crop model track tractors. Caterpillar also developed the Versatile Flotation System (VFS) trailer, a rubber-track platform for grain carts, spray rigs and manure spreaders.

With the agricultural product group's continued growth, the company formed Caterpillar Agricultural Products Inc. as a wholly owned subsidiary in 1996. And in July 1997,

Today's product lineup includes seven Challenger tractor models and two models of the VFS trailer, all manufactured at the Caterpillar facility in DeKalb, Ill. Final assembly of the six Lexion combine models takes place in Omaha, Neb., where construction is underway on a new Caterpillar combine manufacturing facility. A variety of specialized material-

presence in the agricultural industry, Caterpillar is the world's largest manufacturer of construction and mining equipment, diesel and natural gas engines, and industrial turbines. Headquartered in Peoria, Ill., the company posted record sales and revenues in 1999 of US \$19.7 billion. Learn more from your local dealer or visit the Caterpillar Web site at <http://www.CAT.com>.



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