

Years ago farmers were looking for an alternative power source to pull plows through their fields. Horses and mules just could not put in the long hours required to cultivate more and more acres and it was such a job to keep the exhaust cleaned up in their sheds. In 1914 a small company in Minneapolis, MN began manufacturing engines for the Bull Tractor Company. In 1919 they began making the whole tractor and that was the TORO Tractor. (Do you see anything unusual about the footprint of this TORO? Not to worry...just keep plugging along in this epistle.)



Now, Grampa Saaijenga was always on the cutting edge of farming so, don't you just know, he had one of them and his son Folkert soon was using it. That's Aunts Rosie and Hattie in the picture below, watching their big brother in about 1920:



Yup, Dad was a busy guy and he made the dust fly in that field northeast of German Valley, IL:



The farming industry was in a depressed state in the mid '20s so in 1927 TORO sold their tractor business to the Rumely Company and TORO focused their attention on lawn mowers. (Yup, the same company we see today.)

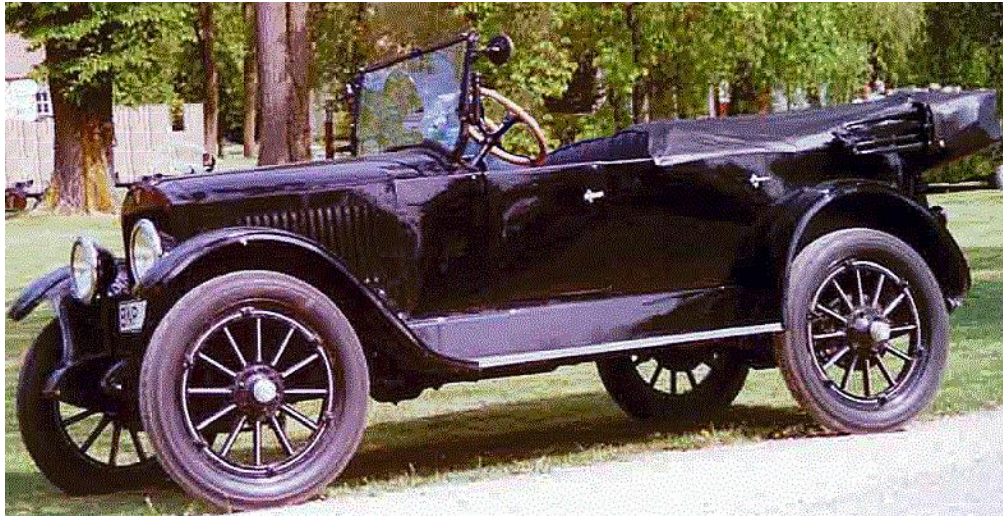
Now you just knew we would go off on a rabbit trail so here goes: Did you know that the John Deere Company sold trucks and cars at one time? (And, no, they were not painted green.) John Deere's grandson, W. L. Velie, produced the vehicles from 1908 to 1928 in a separate factory in Moline, IL but they were sold by John Deere dealerships. You might know Grampa Saaijenga had one of these too. Below is a scan of his August 3, 1918 diary page:

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1918 Saturday 3, Aug. —

Thine Jay
Hauled 3 loads of
limestone, and 1 load of
soft coal from Everts
Sound Limestone is \$1.60
and the Turnace coal are
\$6.12 per ton, all was
hauled in about 1/2 day
with motor truck.
Been to Valley with
Velie car and procured
Oat meal hookkeys, soap
and barn plank also
25 etc cigars.

(In case you wonder, Grampa went to German Valley and bought oatmeal, cookies, soap, corn flakes and cigars.) The picture below isn't Grampa's Velie but it gives you an idea of what a fine machine it was.



Well, wasn't that a fun rabbit trail to follow? OK, it's time to get back to the Rumely tractor, since that is the whole reason for this story.

In about 1970 Dad found a 1930 Rumely DoAll tractor in the swamps along the Mississippi River and began the slow process of restoring it.



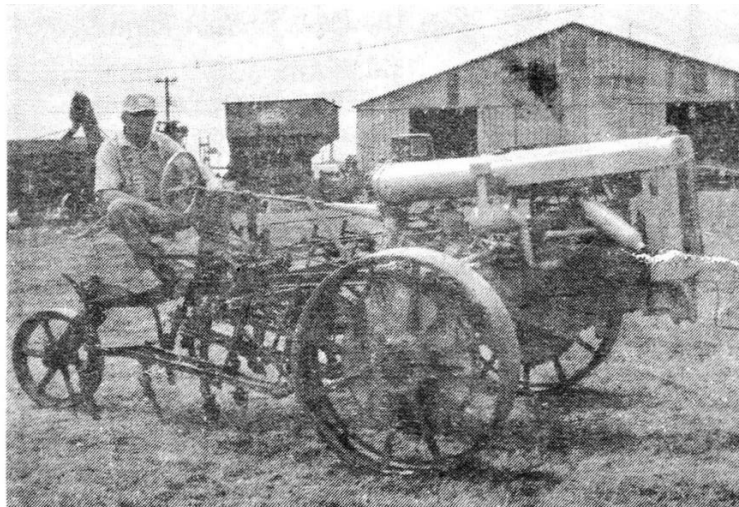
By summer Dad had that Rumely looking pretty sharp. This model of Rumely tractor had an interesting quirk. You could use it as pictured above or the rear wheels could be moved forward, the front wheels removed, and a tail wheel, seat and cultivator added to the rear of the tractor and, voila!, you had a squirrely-looking fancy cultivator for digging pesky weeds out of the corn. (Remember the first TORO picture with the unusual footprint?)



Dad loved his Rumely and drove it in the parade at the Stephenson County Antique Engine Club's annual threshing show several years.



He even had his picture in the local paper:



THIS RUMELT DU-ALL, built in 1930 and owned by Folkert Saaijema, will be seen at the Stephenson County Old Time Threshing and Antique Show at the Stephenson County Fairgrounds, Freeport, on Friday, Saturday and Sunday.

Alas, health concerns forced Dad to sell his beloved Rumely to his brother-in-law, Reinold Plautz in 1987. Part of Dad's heart went along with that tractor as it was moved to Nebraska. Below is an entry from Mom' diary:

June 15
Mildred called they
are coming for the tractor
tomorrow so I had Doree
bring some groceries and
my milk got sour
she came this evening
and clean the rugs

June 16
Wm & Florence came to
help load the tractor at 3:
and Mildred, Ron & Vergil
came at 3:30
the men loaded the
tractor and Florence
& Mildred clean the
big fish the got at
the river

The Rumely made numerous visits to the Camp Creek Threshers show near Waverly, Nebraska but has been resting quietly in a shed near Pleasant Dale, NE for the past few years.



Uncle Reinold's grandson Kevin tells me there are plans for a new gas tank and other restorations are in the future of Dad's old Rumely. Early this spring the old tractor was enjoying its place on the Nebraska farmland for just a little while. I'd like to think my dad was right there on the seat with his sly grin, chomping away on a wad of Black Jack gum.

