

Old Threshing Machines

Calling All Engineers!!! I'm thinking most engineers like mechanical things with gears, belts, pulleys, chains, etc. If you do then you should watch a YouTube video on a Thresher's Festival. My Favorite has always been the **Mt. Pleasant Midwest Threshers Reunion**. Here's a link to a YouTube video of the 2022 Reunion:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HaOAglUn95E>.

Mt. Pleasant is close to the farm where I spent my childhood. The Reunion was always held around Labor Day just before the school years started. It was always a highlight and even though I have not attended in years I'd love to visit Mt. Pleasant one more time before I'm called upstairs (I hope and pray).

Events like these are held all over the Midwest in the Summer. You should catch one if you ever get the chance.

We had to rely on the generosity of Uncle Leonard to take us to Events like the Thresher's Reunion. That

included trips to the Iowa State Fair and Minnesota fishing trip. As a side note a trip with Uncle Leonard was very interesting. For example, when it was time to eat we pulled into the parking lot of a grocery store in some small community on the way. Aunt Dorothy would run in the store and come back with a loaf of white bread and bologna. Then we would take off while Aunt Dorothy passed around sandwiches of white bread and bologna.

Uncle Leonard was Dad's partner on the farm and Dad never left the Farm. **Dad drove a tank in WWII until the tank was blown up by the Nazis in France.** He spent 6 months in a French Hospital before he recovered enough to come home. Everyone said he was not the same person after he came home. He never talked much, never went anywhere, never allowed guns in the house and never talked about the War.

I believe he had what they would call now as severe PTSD.

Growing Up with Dad

That got me thinking about growing up with a Dad who was never not quite there but off somewhere we could not go. Now that I'm much older I think I understand him, maybe just a mite. Don't get me wrong as you read this article. I loved Dad and he loved us. I can't begin to understand what went on in his mind but now that I'm much older I have developed a ton of empathy for him. Being a caretaker for a wife with PSP helps as well. Here's a few snippets of life with Dad:

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My earliest memory: When we were young one of us did something bad. None of us would confess or rat on the guilty party. So he whipped us all with a belt. I don't remember what we did and never knew who did it but it was not me. I've always expected Jerry.

Time marches on – I was probably 10 years old when after unloading a hay wagon in the barn Dad started the Farmall F20 by cranking the engine. Horribly, the tractor was in gear and started forward, knocking him over and running over his head. He had severe head injuries for the 2nd time. During the operation to repair his injuries **the surgeon discovered gauze in his head**. That gauze had to have been left in from his WWII surgeries.

Time marches on – I remember Dad, Uncle Leonard, Dick (Leonard's son), Jim (my older brother), and I went fishing on the Mississippi next to the New Boston lock and dam. The Game Warden stopped by and when he left Dad and Uncle Leonard were holding tickets for not having a fishing license. That was the only fine they ever had their entire lives. Uncle Leonard reckoned they came out way ahead (one fine in 60 years of fishing), but Dad was hopping mad.

Time marches on — **Dad had a really bad temper**. It took a lot to make him angry but when he did stay out of his way. I remember once we were going to butcher a steer. We had penned the steer up and Dick was

tasked with shooting the steer with his 22 rifle loaded with 22 long bullets (As I said earlier Dad did not allow guns on the farm but that only applied to us not Uncle Leonard and Dick). We should have known you can't kill a steer by shooting it in the head with a 22 but we soon found out. All we accomplished was making the steer and dad really mad.

I'll never forget the look on Dad's face when he turned to me and calmly said: "**Get me the Sledge Hammer**". When I brought it back he calmly took the hammer from me, climbed up the fence and commenced to slam the sledge hammer down on the steer's head over and over and over. Soon, the steer died and slumped into a heap. Dad climbed off the fence and continued to slam the hammer down on what was left of the head for what seemed like an eternity until finally his anger was slated. The rest of us just stared in disbelief.

High School

Time marches on – It was the Spring of my high school senior year when I had to help dad prepare and plant crops. As I related earlier he farmed with his brother,

my Uncle Leonard. Uncle Leonard was injured that year and could not work. I would rush home from school every day and head out to the field to take over plowing (or some other Spring field work). He would go home, eat, do chores, sleep for a while, and then relieve me between 2 to 3 AM. I'd sleep until 6:30 and get up for school. Over and over and over again. I was 17 and that schedule wore me out. I can't imagine how he did it at his age

Time marches on – Every Summer we baled hay to feed the milk cows and other cattle we raised. Baling in the field was not bad. Dad drove the tractor and I loaded the hay rack. That was not bad but I always dreaded unloading the hay into the barn. Dad unloaded the hay from the hay rack onto the elevator as fast as he could. In the barn I had to stack the hay bales as they came off the elevator. The barn was always hotter than hell and the bales came off faster than I could stack them

And Beyond

Time marches on – I graduated high school and left home, moved to Chicago, graduated from DeVry, moved to Fort Worth, worked for General Dynamics, married, graduated from UTA with BSes in Math and Physics (not English as you should have guessed by now), started working at E-Systems, had children, moved to Alice Springs to work at Pine Gap, came home, and Dad was diagnosed with **Parkinson's**.

Being stricken with Parkinson's should not have been a surprise because he had severe head injuries both in WWII and on the farm. For a few years then all my vacations and long weekends were spent traveling back home to care for Dad while Mom had a little time off. The last time he dined out was at a Long John's Silver's in Burlington, Iowa which I took him to. **I'll always be thankful I was able to help him during his later stages before he passed on.**