

Editor's  
Notebook



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**Reader Urges Caution  
When Reworking Fuel Tanks**

Here's a letter we got from reader Keith Fravel, Cresco, Iowa, after reading a recent FARM SHOW story about a farmer who made warm, dry livestock shelters by burying old fuel tanks into a hillside.

"This is a letter of warning. A man living near me used a 1,000 gal. gas tank for watering livestock. One night, after he had already used the tank several times to haul water, he used a match to check to see if the tank was empty. The end blew out, hurtling him against his barn about 100 ft. away, killing him instantly. The message is that water by itself does not necessarily eradicate all fumes from old fuel tanks.

"Another nearby man was brazing an old gas tank that had not been used for years. As he took a break, standing up to ease his back, the end blew off, hitting the ceiling. It likely would have killed him if he had not stood up out of the way.

"I used to braze gas tanks but I would fill them full of water, leaving just a little room at the neck so the water would not carry the heat away from the work to be brazed. Even with just a small space they would occasionally blow. So now I use JB Weld after a thorough cleaning. But you still have to be careful not to create a spark while doing so."

**Woman Driver Completes  
87 Years Behind The Wheel**

An Illinois woman who has been driving continuously for 87 years started driving at the tender age of 13. And she has a photo to prove it.

Elsie Steward, Nokomis, Ill., turned 100 last October 18th. Her parents bought a car "kit" from Sears & Roebuck and



Elsie takes the wheel for the first time in 1911.

put it together themselves in about 1908. They let Elsie start driving it when she turned 13. Back then, no driver's license was required so you could get behind the wheel whenever your parents would let you.

Elsie reports that the first car she drove herself (without a parent in the car) was a Model T Ford. It had to be cranked but she says she could start it with just a quarter crank if the engine was well-tuned.

The likelihood of anyone breaking Elsie's record seems slim, now that you have to be 16 to get a license. The number to beat will remain at 87 years since the state of Illinois recently refused to renew Elsie's license.

If you know of anyone who has driven longer, let us know.



Elsie at her 100th birthday party last October.

**Implement Dealer  
Takes Grain In Trade**

Last fall a Case-IH dealer in North Dakota offered local farmers a 50 cent per bushel bonus for wheat traded in on new or used equipment. Magic City Implement in Minot launched the "Bushel Bonus" program in October and ran it through the end of November.

Here's how the program worked: Producers traded either spring wheat or durum for up to 30 percent of the retail price of equipment. The dealership used \$3 per bushel to calculate the amount credited.

For example, to buy a \$100,000 tractor you could use 10,000 bushels of grain to help pay for it. The 50 cent per bushel bonus would add up to \$5,000.

General manager Travis Zabltony said there was a lot of interest in the offer but only two farmers ended up trading grain for equipment.

Zabltony attributed the slow sales to the fact that equipment bought on barter apparently does not qualify for accelerated depreciation and also to the fact that overall sales were slow last fall. He plans to offer the program again this year.

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Magic City Implement Inc., P.O. Box 105, Minot, N. Dak. 58702 (ph 701 838-8884; fax 8880). (Jim Houtsma, Associate Editor)

**Help Your Kids  
Become Millionaires**

You can give your kids a jump-start toward future financial security by putting their farm earnings into an Individual Retirement Account rather than paying them wages.

Consider this: If an 8-year-old contributes \$500 to an IRA and then in succeeding years contributes \$750, \$1,000, \$1,250, \$1,500 and finally, \$1,750 at age 13, with no more deposits for the rest of the child's working life, that original account will grow to \$1,266,170 by the time that child retires.

If a teenager contributes \$2,000 a year to an IRA from age 14 to 18, that original deposit will be worth \$1,174,500 by age 65. Compare that with a person who starts contributing \$2,000 a year at age 26 and continues doing so for 40 years. He would end up with only \$893,700 (all estimates assume a 10 percent yearly return from income and growth).

IRA deposits must be made from wages earned, not money received as gifts, but there's no law that says wages can't be paid from one family member to another. (Illinois Agrinews)

**Man Cuts Off His Own Hand**

English farmer John Mitson of Stowmarket-of-Suffolk saved his own life last fall by cutting off his right hand with a 3-in. knife after he got trapped in a baler.

The 45-year-old farmer was walking up to his baler when he stumbled and his hand got caught between two 4-ft. rollers.

"I realized my hand was literally being cooked by the friction - it looked like a piece of raw meat," Mitson told *The London Telegraph*. "It was obvious that I was never going to get it out and I was getting weaker all the time. So I decided to cut it off. To me, it was just sheer survival and logic. I knew that if I didn't cut it off, it would drag me right into the machine and I would die."

After hacking through his forearm with his pocketknife, Mitson calmly retrieved the hand and walked to a nearby house. He was rushed at once to a hospital in West Norwich where doctors concluded there was no chance of successfully reattaching the hand. A plastic surgeon at the hospital

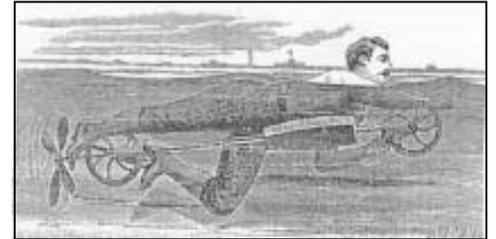
said, "What this man did was absolutely remarkable and is a tribute to his character."

**Golden Nuggets**

- Even if you are on the right track, you will get run over if you just sit there.
- The person who says it can't be done is generally interrupted by someone who is doing it.
- It's your attitude, not your aptitude, that determines your altitude in life.

**Underwater Bicycle**

We spotted this illustration of an "underwater bicycle" in a recent issue of "Steamboating", a magazine for people interested in all forms of steamboating - from large river boats to



small lake-size fishing boats fitted with mini steam-driven engines. It's published by the International Steamboat Society, Rt. 1, Box 262, Middlebourne, WV 26149 ph 304 386-4434.

Apparently the geared-up propeller on the water bike would move the "rider" along faster than a regular swimming stroke. But to us it looks like a lot of work, which may be why you don't see it for sale at your local Walmart today.

**Life-Like "Bionic" Arm**

A patient in Edinburgh, Scotland, recently became the recipient of a first-of-its-kind "bionic" arm developed by prosthetic engineers after 12 years of research.

Campbell Aird, a 47-year-old hotel owner who lost his right arm to a rare form of muscle cancer, was fitted with



the Edinburgh Modular Arm System, which incorporates a shoulder that rotates 135 degrees, an elbow that bends 180 degrees, a rotating wrist, and grasping fingers. Motion is generated by an array of electrical motors and gearboxes fixed to a frame of lightweight carbon-filter tubes and powered by rechargeable 12-volt batteries. It's covered with a skin-like membrane.

Aird uses residual function in his shoulder to operate tiny switches that can produce a range of movements not possible with his old prosthetic arm. "I can now reach down and tie my shoe or hold up a nail to hammer it," he says.

The prototype arm cost about \$160,000 to develop, but engineers believe it could be mass-produced for less than \$16,000.

The next step in development will be to place electrodes over residual shoulder muscles to pick up electrical signals from the brain and then relay them to the electric motors. That way the wearer could operate the arm by thought alone, researchers say. (Popular Science)

**These are real warnings that appeared on real products:**

- On a Korean kitchen knife: "Warning: Keep out of children."
- On Nytol (a sleep aid): "Warning: May cause drowsiness."
- On a package of bread pudding: "Product will be hot after heating."
- On a string of Chinese-made Christmas lights: "For indoor and outdoor use only."
- On a jar of peanuts: "Warning: Contains nuts."
- On an airline packet of nuts: "Instructions: Open packet. Eat nuts."