



Adi Karniel shipped two Farmalls from California to Israel for restoration. He had to overcome challenges with customs, shipping and finding parts before he could even start restoration.

Farmall Tractors Shipped 7,500 Miles For Restoration

By Lorn Manthey, Contributing Editor

“People find it hard to believe that a pair of 85-year-old Farmall tractors have been restored in Israel, but these two rust buckets intrigued me from the first time I saw them, so I made the investment,” says Israeli tractor buff Adi Karniel. Farmall models A, C, H and M had been sold in Israel, but never the F series models, so Karniel says that’s another reason he wanted to restore them.

The 50-year-old 5th generation farmer is no stranger to tractors and restorations. Karniel says he’s been driving tractors since age 6 and repairing them since he was strong enough to loosen a rusted nut. “After my Army service I started farming full time and began restoring our 1956 Bristol 25 Caterpillar, which had been lounging in the sun and rain for 30 years,” Karniel says. “It was a huge undertaking, but I got it done.” Next he tackled a 1965 Ferguson 35X, then a 1975 Deere 2030. Those rebuilds were a success because Karniel says “I just like fixing old engines, twisted metal and frozen bearings, plus I’m not afraid of grease.”

Karniel’s farming operation allows him time to work on ageless old iron when he’s not raising grapes, peaches, nectarines, apricots and plums on his family’s 60 acre farm. “Our community is a ‘modern’ farming

village, only about 141 years old, located on Mount Carmel, with magnificent views of the Mediterranean,” Karniel says. “We use smaller SAME and New Holland tractors for tillage, spraying and weeding, but I like restoring bigger and older iron.”

Karniel acquired the F-12 and F-20 Farmalls in California while traveling with his father to visit a large table grape producer in Bakersfield. “They were rust buckets parked in the weeds, and we didn’t even know what they were,” Karniel says. “We inquired at the residence, where the owner told us he wasn’t a farmer, and the tractors were definitely for sale. From that point on, things moved real fast.”

After a brief and friendly discussion, Karniel bought both tractors, fully aware there were big challenges ahead. “The seller couldn’t believe where they were going,” Karniel says. “We lifted them on a trailer with a small crane and hauled them to a place where I removed the rotten tires and pressure washed the metal. They had to be clean so I could get a health certificate before they were loaded into a shipping container.” Six weeks and \$2,500 later the tractors arrived at his farm in Zichron Yaacov, Israel, nearly 7,500 miles from Bakersfield.

Before he left the U.S. Karniel made a list of missing or broken parts that he needed to fix the tractors. Eventually he ordered engine overhaul kits (pistons, rings, gaskets and bearings), spark plugs, carb kits, manifolds, electrical parts, radiators, brake cables, decals and fan belts. He found other parts on eBay and got good advice from Frank Rice of Rice Equipment in Pennsylvania.

After the container arrived in Israel, Karniel, with his daughter and son and family friend Avraham Shacham, worked 3 mos. to completely disassemble the F-20. “There wasn’t a nut or bolt or piece of metal that we didn’t remove, clean and repair or replace,” Karniel says.

The engine was “frozen” and wouldn’t turn over, so Karniel disassembled and completely overhauled it with Shacham, who then rebuilt the carburetor and magneto. They located a replacement radiator and also rebuilt the steering system.

“The transmission and drive train were okay after we completely went through them. We sandblasted the wheels and cleaned the double wall kerosene/gas tank inside and out,” Karniel says. “We primed and painted everything with authentic Farmall red epoxy, so with the new tires the tractor looks just like it came from the factory.”

Karniel says restoring the F-20 took them a full year, which they documented in a short video. A final segment includes starting the engine with a hand crank. They completed the F-12 in a similar process a year later, and now both tractors are driven only for shows. “It



Karniel’s family and friends helped with the restorations.

was great pleasure to involve my friend, my son and daughter, who all share my interest in restoration,” Karniel says. “My daughter is now a Tank Commander in the Army, my oldest daughter is a student in Structural Engineering, and I hope my junior high age son will some day come back to our farm as the 6th generation to run this land.”

While Karniel waits on that decision, his latest restoration project is a 1945 Allis Chalmers WD.

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Restored Farmall F-20 on display in Israel.



During harvest the Slagell’s have had as many as 5 Gleaners in the field at one time.

He Still Harvests With Old Gleaners

Kenneth Slagell spent the majority of his adult life away from his parent’s Oklahoma farm, but his heart was never far from the golden fields of grain and the old combines that his dad used for harvesting. When Slagell retired from his aviation management job in 2007, he returned to his birthplace to carry on the Gleaner tradition at the family’s 200-acre homestead.

“Rather than spending \$300,000 on a new combine or hiring custom rigs to harvest the grain, I’m content with two L2 Gleaners that I bought for \$12,000 in 2010,” Slagell says.

Those machines join three other L2’s, two Gleaner C2’s and six Gleaner A’s. Slagell’s wife Janet says it’s equipment that’s nostalgic as well as functional on the Slagell farm. “A person doesn’t have to use many parts off the older machines to pay for it, because new parts are very expensive,” Slagell says.

Slagell has bought and maintains some of the Gleaners while other machines have been at the family farm for years. An old pull-type Gleaner gathering dust and rust has been on the farm since it was new.

Kenneth’s grandfather Joe and Elmer

Slagell bought a Gleaner Baldwin 51R in the 1950’s. In 1966 they acquired a new Gleaner C2, used it for nearly 40 years, then parked it in a shed. Kenneth’s brother Michael recently made it operable after replacing several chains, belts and locating a new radiator to replace the one someone had stolen.

Kenneth says it’s a real thrill to have the 40-year-old Gleaner L2 machines running on the multi-generational farm, working just fine and not full of computers that have problems he can’t fix. “For several years when I was living and working in Virginia, our family would come back every summer during harvest and my dad had as many as 5 Gleaners in the field at one time,” Slagell

says. “The whole family was here for a celebration, which was really special.”

These days Slagell runs the 200 acres by himself, no-tilling wheat and cotton with tireless older equipment. His wife Janet says “Ken grew up enjoying old machinery and keeps those Gleaners running great. He still hauls grain with trucks made in 1957 and 1973 and drives 40-year-old tractors. When he’s not working the fields, he’s driving his big old Caterpillar or track hoe working on the dam.”

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Kenneth Slagell uses Gleaner combines on his 200 acre farm.