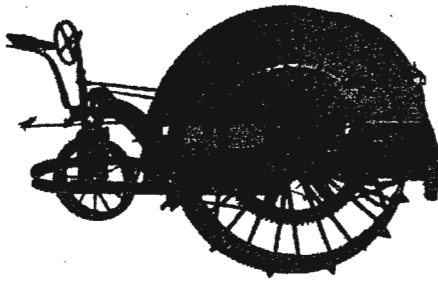


# Friends of the Lester F. Larsen Tractor Test and Power Museum Museum



Judy L. Ray – Editor    Newsletter #19    August 2004

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*To collect, preserve, research and interpret the traditions and technologies of agriculture.*

## Summer Events

The Lester F. Larsen Tractor Test and Power Museum has been busy this summer participating in various tractor shows. The staff and volunteers have been spending many hours away from the museum engaging in various events. This season has seen the constant loading and unloading of the 1909 Ford. We had the "Old Girl" out on display at the Platte Valley Antique Machinery Association, INC. Working Show in Ayr, Nebraska the weekend of July 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> and at Camp Creek Threshers in Waverly the weekend of July 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup>.

Along with the 1909, we took the Ford Ferguson 2N out to Camp Creek and assisted Jerry Kohl with hauling his Oliver Cleatrac HG68 out there also. The Ford Ferguson was driven in the parade by Steve Watkins (Bill Splinter's son-in-law) on Saturday and by Darrell Shunkwiler (Mark Nickolaus' cousin) on Sunday. The museum staff would like to thank EVERYONE that assisted in making our presence known at both of these events. Outings like these give the museum staff a new audience to meet and invite to the Museum.

Many of you have been approached by Rod Hollman from the State Fair Board on the possibility of having an Antique Tractor Exhibit at the State Fair this year. The Museum is working with Rod to hopefully make this dream a reality. If you have any questions about showing your tractor at the State Fair, please contact Rod at Home (402) 792-4535 or on his Cell Phone (402) 641-6745. You can also contact the Museum for more information.

Museum staff will be at the Old Trusty show in Clay Center the weekend of September 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup>, Husker Harvest Days in Grand Island, September 14<sup>th</sup>-16<sup>th</sup> and at the Farm and Ranch Museum's Harvest Fest VIII in Gering, September 18<sup>th</sup> & 19<sup>th</sup>. If you are at any of these shows stop by for a chat with the staff. We are always looking for opportunities to meet and talk with our Friends. Also, send your promotional show posters to the museum. We will put them up on display on our bulletin board in the entryway. This is a great way to advertise your event to people who are interested in tractors and antique machinery.

A special event is being planned for the Museum sometime this fall. This Open House and Recognition Dinner will be the Museum's way of thanking everyone for their time, donations and achievements. You will receive a formal invitation when the exact date and time has been determined for this event. Keep checking your mailboxes for more information about this exciting evening

## Board Meeting

**October 19, 2004 1:30 p.m.**

This meeting will be held at Chase Hall, just south of the Tractor Museum on the East Campus UNL.

Please catch up on your 2004 membership and send your annual \$10 made out to the Friends of the Tractor Museum or this may be your last newsletter. Separate donations can be made to Larsen Tractor Museum or via University of Nebraska Foundation, Tractor Fund #4182.

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V. President: Don Edwards  
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Louis Leviticus  
Susan Norby  
William Splinter

## Who's That New Person?

-Amanda J. Ray

Ah great, another staff change right? Some of you are aware that Luis Vasquez has left the Museum for greener, yet colder pastures in Minnesota. This left a hole in the staff at the Museum and Bill took some of Luis' advice and called me, Amanda Ray to offer me the vacant position. I gladly accepted and have been a member of the staff since the 7<sup>th</sup> of June. I am a Lincoln native and have close ties to my community and family in the area. My B.A. is in Secondary Education from Peru State and My M.A. is in Museum Studies from the University of Nebraska. My "official" title at the Museum is Museum Development Associate. In the last month or so I have been called everything from Museum Educator, Curator, P.R. Lady and my personal favorite "the crazy lady with all of the ideas". As you will soon find out, I'm a little of all of these things rolled up into one person. My main objective at the Museum is to apply for funding opportunities and to build the Museum's "Image" in the community and across the country.

I am currently in the middle of many projects to make both of these things happen. The Museum is currently waiting to hear if we have been awarded the ILMS (Institute of Museum and Library Services), Museums for America Grant to be used to develop the new Evolution of Mechanized Agriculture Gallery. This Grant will help fund improvements and development of exhibits for the current Garage, Shop and Northwest Corner of the Museum. The Museum is also waiting patiently to hear if we have been accepted to receive funds from Save America's Treasures. This exciting program would provide funding to maintain the current building and add a few "extras". This Grant will help improve environmental conditions inside of the museum as well as structural improvements to the building itself. The best part about this Grant is that the Museum then would be eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places. About time, don't you think? I hope to have more information about the progress of these two Grants/funding opportunities and others in the next newsletter.

## A Message From the President of Friends

- Charles D. Borcharding

There was a Texan who when he got excited about something would say, "I tell you what", and then he would proceed to tell what it was that he wanted to say.

"I tell you what." The tractor museum has a new look. Many have spent a lot of time cleaning up the exhibit and organizing its contents.

Thanks to a large donation, the garage is being renovated. Restoration and repair work will be transferred to the Behlen Building. Volunteers work to maintain many of the tractors in running order.

The Friends of the Larsen Tractor Museum held their quarterly meeting on July 20. The Farmall H was sold at the Camp Creek Swap Meet in May. Mark and others continue to escort individuals and groups for a tour through the museum. The Friends are still asking for donations of old Tractors which in turn can be sold to supplement funds for the operation of the museum. We appreciate all the help and donations to keep this important part of Nebraska's history a place where people can see how Nebraska grew during the past one hundred years.

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### Judy's Corner

I am very sorry to lose Luis to Minnesota, but it is a wonderful opportunity for him. We thank him for all the contributions he made in making this museum greater. Amanda is rearing to go. She is jumping right in there with tours and publicity and grant searching. I am not just saying that because we have the same last name. The 2005 tractor calendars are in!

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## Have You Heard The News Yet?

This summer Bill Splinter and Mark Nickolaus made a road trip to O'Neil for a Special Donation. Larry Bitney donated his father's 1917 Moline Universal to the Museum. This donation is currently being housed in the Behlem Building until it can be looked at and prepared for the Gallery. The following excerpts are from Larry Bitney and his sister Jean Harding on their father, Dow Bitney's work on the Moline Universal and its history. The Lester F. Larsen Tractor Test and Power Museum would like to thank this family for their donation to the Museum and the information that they have provided to assist in our learning of this machine.

### History of the "Bitney" Moline Universal

By: Larry Bitney

Dow Bitney, an Antelope County Nebraska farmer, performed the original restoration of this Moline Universal tractor in the early 1980's. The tractor had been setting in a grove of trees for many years. It posed quite a challenge in getting the engine unstuck. Mice had made a home in at least one of the cylinders. He completed the restoration (except for the electric speed control) and drove it in an antique tractor parade at Petersburg, Nebraska in 1987.

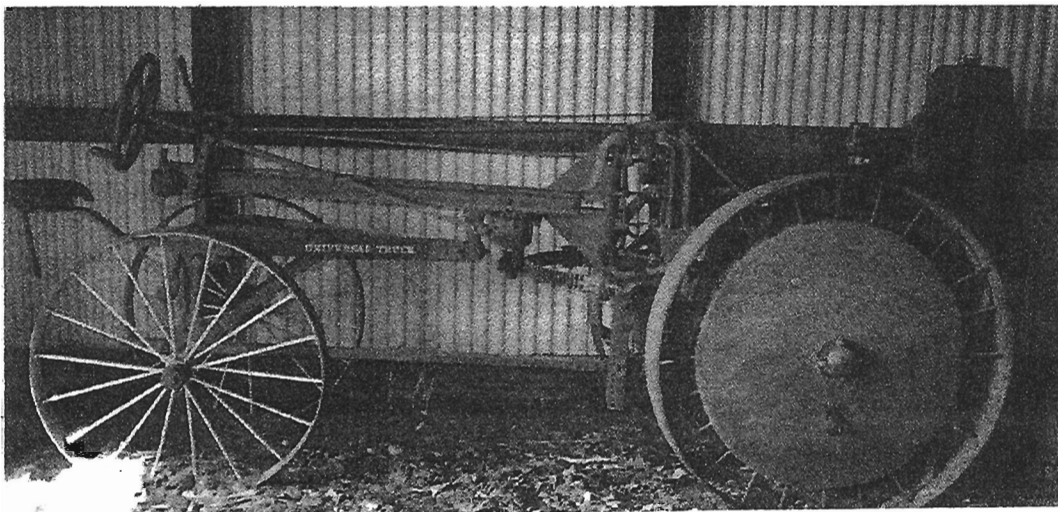
The Moline Universal was purchased used by Duane Reinke, a neighboring Antelope County farmer, probably in the early 1950's. He intended to use it on his farm, but apparently it was used very little. He parked it in the trees near his farmstead. Approximately 1980, Duane and Dow made a deal, that if Dow restored it, they would own it as 50-50, with rights of survivorship. While Duane was younger than Dow, he passed away in 1984 at the age of 57. Dow became the sole owner of the tractor. The ownership of the tractor prior to Duane Reinke's purchase is unknown.

Dow Bitney passed away in April of 2000, two weeks before his 90<sup>th</sup> birthday. His wife of 66 years, Vera passed away seven months later. The Moline Universal was donated to the Lester F. Larsen Tractor Test and Power Museum in 2004 by their heirs; Larry Bitney, son; Jean Hardin, daughter; Shari Bitney and Jane Bitney, granddaughters.

### The Man - Dow Bitney

By: Jean Hardin (daughter)

Before he got his first tractor, a 1937 Farmall F-12, my dad, Dow Bitney, farmed behind a team of horses, though not by choice. He loved tinkering with machinery, especially machinery with engines (modifying, improving, inventing when necessary) to make things go faster, accomplish more or just to be amusing from. From his early Model T to stock cars to go-karts to a '37 Ford Coupe to a realistic race car he made for kids to a home-made tractor for drilling rye between corn row to restoring a 1917 Moline tractor. No challenge was ever turned down and he enjoyed the attention his creative mechanics attracted.



## Calling All Friends

As always, the support of the Friends of the Museum is one of our main sources of help for the Tractor Museum. The change in seasons opens many opportunities for Friends to help volunteer to make the Museum a wonderful place to visit and experience for the public. The staff has been looking at the possibility of changing our operation hours to meet the needs of the public. As we tour the countryside this summer at the various shows, one main concern has been voiced by people interested in the Museum. The public would be willing to visit the museum more if we offered weekend hours. Therefore, we are looking for people who would be interested in becoming Weekend Docents for the Museum on Saturdays. There are also other ways for you to help the Museum. We are looking for people who are willing to be trained to help process our Archives as well as volunteers who would like to help out with Tractor Restoration Projects and Gallery Upkeep. Please call the Museum if you are interested in helping in any of these areas. As a member of the Friends of the Lester F. Larsen Tractor Test and Power Museum you have a wonderful opportunity to help the Museum. There are MANY people in our communities that have no idea that the Museum even exists. As a member of the Friends, you have the tools and skills to start making a change in this area. Please, take time to "talk-up" the Museum with your family, friends and acquaintances. Your ability to help promote the Museum in a "Friendly Way" will help to get the word out that the Museum is open and ready for the public to visit. You have the skills and the knowledge base to assist the Museum in this way. Please feel free to contact the Museum for any extra brochures or information to help future visitors learn about the Museum and what it has to offer.

The Museum staff is also looking for some supplies to make OUR Museum more visually appealing to OUR visitors. We are in search of the following items to make our jobs a little easier and to generally assist the Museum in being a place that the public will want to visit. Please bring your donated items to the Museum at your convenience (guys, make sure you ask permission before digging around in the Kitchen!):

- OLD Cookie Sheets or Jelly Roll Pans for catching oil under the tractors
- Brooms and New Paint Brushes of Any Kind
- Dust Rags (like old t-shirts)
- A Good Working Shop Vac or other type Vacuum Cleaner

**Friends of the Lester F. Larsen  
Tractor Test and Power Museum  
P.O. Box 830833  
Lincoln, NE 68583-0833**

ADDRESS CORRECTION REQUESTED

**If there is a red mark on your address this will be your last newsletter.**

**FYI** January 1 began a new membership year. Please continue your membership and send your annual \$10 made to the "Friends" of the Larsen Tractor Museum to the address on this newsletter. Donations can be made to Larsen Tractor Museum or via University of NE Foundation. Please let us know if you do not wish to receive the newsletter.