

Hercules Engine News

Including Economy, Arco, Jaeger & Thermoil

by Keith Kinney, Guest Columnist
8100 Effinger Drive
Evansville, Indiana 47711

Rudy Hufnagel was born on November 14, 1901. Rudy's roots go deep in the farm equipment industry. His dad was a blacksmith in Newburgh, Indiana, and had learned his trade at the Keck-Gonnerman Company in Mt. Vernon, Indiana.

The family moved to Evansville, Indiana, in 1916. After working in a cigar factory for several years, Rudy went to work for the Hercules Corporation. Rudy and a friend were walking down the railroad track when they were seen by Harry Wells, the plant superintendent. Mr. Wells asked Rudy if he was interested in a job with Hercules. He started work the next Monday.

Rudy worked for Hercules from 1921 until the company went bankrupt in 1927. Initially Rudy worked in the buggy division as a parts clerk filling Sears & Roebuck orders. In 1922 he was asked if he would like to learn to be a striper. After working as an apprentice for three months (and quitting three times during that three months), he was allowed to do actual striping. There were four stripers working for the company. They would stripe for the Buggy Division, Gas Engine Works, and the

Truck Body Division, moving from area to area as their work was completed.

In the Gas Engine Works the engines were assembled and mounted on testing blocks. During that evening they were tested. The next morning they were moved to carts and pulled through a washing area. After washing, casting defects were filled with putty, one coat of primer was applied, and one coat of paint was applied. The next morning the engines would be dry enough that they could be striped. Following this, the engines were moved to a staging area to await shipping.

While working for Hercules, Rudy kept his brushes and supplies in a wooden box that he made. The box was painted Hercules green and decorated with gold paint. I am fortunate to have this box in my possession. Inside are the original brushes that Rudy used to stripe the engines. Rudy brought these brushes over and striped several of our Hercules engines.

At 89 years of age, Rudy brought his box and brushes to the Southern Indiana Antique and Machinery (SIAM) Club's Spring Show and striped our 7 HP Hercules engine. It was amazing to see someone of his age pick up his brushes and apply stripes to an engine and do it as well as he had done it while working for Hercules. Does this mean that I have the only restored engine with original pinstripes?

Rudy is a charter member of the SIAM club, and brought his blacksmith

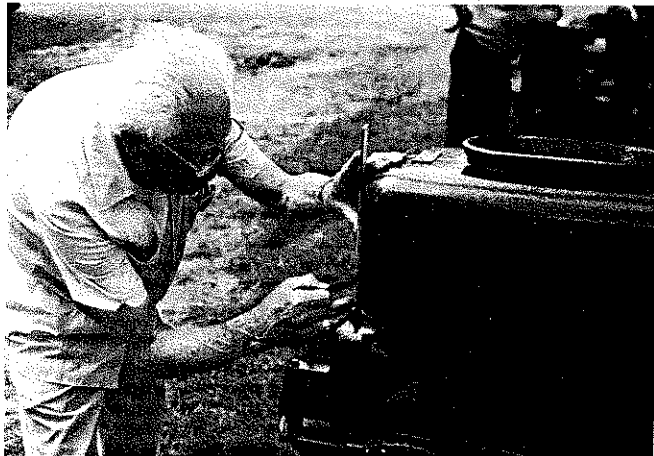


Interior of Rudy's work box with original brushes and paints; Rudy Hufnagel's initials painted on the side of the box.

equipment and engines to our shows for many years. Since moving into smaller living quarters, Rudy has recently donated all of his blacksmithing equipment and his three Hercules engines to the club so that they can be preserved and enjoyed by future generations.

Rudy has been a friend of my family for over 65 years, and I am very fortunate to have known Rudy all of my life and am able to call him my friend. He has related to me many stories about his life and what it was like to have worked in an industry that we as collectors are trying to preserve. Thanks, Rudy! ○

Rudy Hufnagel painting pinstriping on 7 HP Hercules gas engine owned and restored by Keith and Curtis Kinney.



5 HP Hercules owned and restored by Keith and Curtis Kinney, striped by Rudy Hufnagel.

