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## Hercules Engine News

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This story centers around a 1¼ HP model S Hercules engine with serial number 374563. The main frame casting date was August 1, 1929.

In 1973 I began collecting gas engines. During my travels as district sales manager for Pioneer Seed Corn, I was able to find a lot of engines out in the countryside.

One day I asked my dad what had happened to the gas engine that we had there on the farm in the '30s and early '40s. After WWII most everything around the farm was electrified and the engine was no longer needed. It had been used to run the homemade ear corn elevator, the Clipper fan mill, the corn sheller and the pumpjack at the barn. The engine was taken to a nearby community sale where it brought \$12. Reportedly, it was back at the sale the next year where it brought \$3. I also asked Dad when they got the engine. He said that it was shortly before I was born. That put it in the fall sometime before November 23, 1929.

Many years later, in the fall of 1977, an auctioneer friend called about eight o'clock one Saturday morning. He told me about a sale later that day where there were a couple of old tractors and a gas engine. For some unknown reason, they were not on the sale bill. I went over to the sale site which was some seven or eight miles away. The tractors turned out to be two old four-wheel style Co-ops which didn't interest me at the time. As I looked around, I came across the gas engine, and remember saying to myself, "It's just another Hercules engine."

After looking at other items to be sold, I came back past the engine again. This time I recognized some familiar features. The original skids had a homemade wheel arrangement on them. The rear axle was attached with U bolts and had six-spoke cast iron wheels. The square front axle had two smaller three-spoke cast wheels with badly chipped rims. Then came the clincher. I had gone to an auto junkyard with Dad where he purchased two oil bath air cleaners to put on the two old 1927 International trucks that we had. He also got a smaller air cleaner to put on the gas engine. The air cleaner was attached to a board nailed to the skid. A curved hose arrangement was used to attach it to the engine mixer. In order

for the hose to fit well, Dad had sawed the tip off where the choke flap had attached so the hose could be easily slipped on. The air cleaner was gone, but the sawed off tip was there! It was my lucky day, I had found the engine that had been gone for 30 years.

A friend of mine was standing nearby when these discoveries were being made. He asked me what the engine would bring. My reply was, "I don't know what it will bring, but I know who is going to buy it!" A couple of hours later, it was mine for \$110.00!

As much as I thought the engine had been used, it turned out to be in very good condition and looked like it had never been used since it left home some 30 years earlier. It was complete and still had the non-original swing top lever oiler. My granddad used to tell me to leave that oiler alone because he had it set just right.

My Uncle Harold worked at Servel, Inc., the successor to Hercules. He purchased the engine for my granddad for \$75.00 including the pumpjack. The pumpjack is gone. It was destroyed when a nearby barn burned several years ago. The homemade ear corn elevator is gone along with the Clipper fan mill. Luckily, the best part remains, and I had the lucky opportunity to get it back. Engine number 374563 still lives!