

Member Profile

Kent Davis – Dozier, Alabama

In 1998, when about a dozen Alabamians were beginning to get organized to form a Chapter of International Harvester Collectors, one of these early enthusiasts was Kent Davis. While most of those involved were from North Alabama, Kent hailed from Dozier in the southern part of the state in Crenshaw County, near Opp and Andalusia.

The early meetings took place in Athens, near the Tennessee line, but that didn't stop Kent from driving four or five hours to attend these sessions that were crucial in getting our chapter off the ground.

At the time, Kent had been active in the Dixie Flywheelers Club that put on a tractor and engine show in Dothan each October. He heard about the worldwide International Harvester Collectors club through the Flywheelers and was already a national member (#484) when he got involved with the North Alabama group.

Kent grew up in Dozier and lives today on land that was homesteaded by his grandfather in the 1800's. When asked if his father had been a farmer, Kent replied, "No, he wasn't. He was sort of like me, an itinerant flunky boy. I guess he did a certain amount of farming, and that sort of thing, but I don't think he had any certain occupation."

Kent is one of five brothers and was raised by an aunt following the death of his mother shortly after his birth. Up until 1969, Kent earned his living farming about 60 acres, raising peanuts and corn. At that time, he and two cousins, who he had been raised with, decided to start an International Harvester dealership in the near-

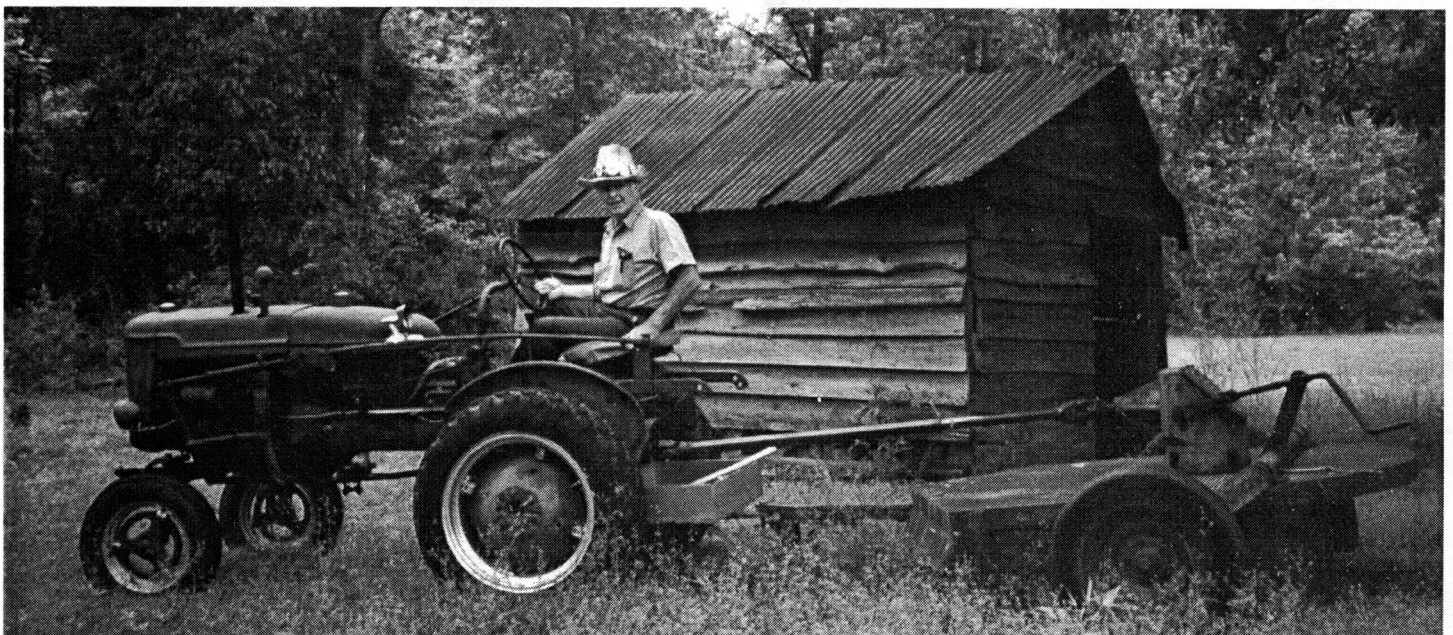


In addition to full size tractors and stationary engines, Kent enjoys his restored Original Model International Cub Cadet.

by Rose Hill community. It was called the Rose Hill Tractor Company. The dealership was serviced by an International blockman from Andalusia who was part of the Atlanta sales district.

The first tractor models sold by the dealership were the 424's and 504's. When the 656 model came along, Kent and his cousins thought they were too big for current farming practices, but as time went on, these tractors proved to be too small to meet the needs of local farmers.

At one time, Rose Hill had 10 employees with any-



Kent Davis, this past spring, on his Farmall A at his property in Dozier. The land has been in the family for generations and the building in the background is an old smokehouse, built around 1918. It's the only remaining original structure.

where from 2 to 5 men doing mechanical repairs. Kent did mostly shop work and pick-up and delivery for the dealership. The dealership repaired any brand of tractor that came in the door but tried to stay strictly IH as much as possible.

Rose Hill Tractor operated for 20+ years, according to Kent, but only managed to stay open for about five or six years after the last International Harvester tractor rolled off the line in 1985.

The demise of the business can be attributed to the closing of International as well as the dramatic changes that took place in farming in South Alabama over the past 30 years. The inventory was completely liquidated when the business was dissolved, but the building still stands today and is owned by one of Kent's cousins.

Kent has owned a number of tractors in his lifetime, but currently he has a model 656, a Farmall A, and several Cub Cadets. He has a strong interest in stationary engines which developed through his membership in the Dixie Flywheelers. He says that he was "a collector before I knew it" because he still has an engine that he saved from the late '40s, a little air-cooled 1½ hp Continental. He says that he used it to operate a cement mixer, a bicycle, and even had it on a boat one time to make an airboat by putting a fan on the crankshaft.

"So," says Kent, "one way or another I kind of evolved into being a collector." Today he has 12 engines, 7 of which are Internationals.

Kent enjoys taking parts of his collections to tractor and engine shows during show season, and his wife, Lucy, often accompanies him. When asked if she just tolerates or enjoys her trips with him, he answers, "I think it's some of both, I think it's a combination. In any case, I'm certainly glad to have her along."

Kent was shelling peas when we talked to him by



Kent Davis, and his wife, Lucy, at the Chapter directors meeting at Elkmont in April, 2003.

phone in June, and he says that he puts in a small patch of peas, corn, okra, and a few tomatoes every spring. When asked how he is feeling these days, he says, "Oh, doing pretty fair, I guess. Old age is setting in and I have rigormortis every morning, but I'm alright."

Kent is one of the finest men you will ever meet, and we're fortunate to have him as one of our members.

Just A Little Side Trip

by Kent Davis

Somehow, it seems almost obligatory to attend an engine show if it is only 100 miles off your planned route, especially if you are already over 1000 miles from home. A few more miles will surely be worth it.

Our destination was Rochester, Minnesota to attend The International Windmillers Trade Fair. The 2003 Engine Show Guide said there would be a show in Viroque, Wisconsin on June 14-15, just two days after the Rochester event was over. That was too good to pass up, so I made arrangements accordingly.

I could not take along any big heavy IH engines in the car trunk. I did find room to carry 3 small Sterling Cycle hot air engines, plus an assortment of other small articles. We were welcomed as an exhibitor by the club. They had not had hot air engines before. They drew lots of interest and questions.

Their gasoline engine display included about 40 engines. Most of them were well restored and running.

The afternoon parade featured the following, more or less:

8 Farmalls, 4 Cubs, 2 Cub Cadets, 3 McCormick Deerings, 2 Co-Ops, 4 Cases, 1 Gibson, 1 Caterpillar Model 20, 1 Cat Model 60, 1 Massey Ferguson, 5 Allis Chalmers, 12 John Deeres, 6 Massey Harris, 1 Oliver, 1 New Holland self-propelled hay baler, 11 Fords, and 1 Sears Roebuck Model T conversion tractor.

A Baker fan was set up to hitch various tractors to. Several other stationary machines were on demonstration. A Farmall BN restored to new condition was used to pull a shuttle wagon around the whole area for anyone to ride.

It was a good show, well worth the detour on our way home. We greatly appreciate the hospitality shown us by the Coulee Antique Engine Club. Having fulfilled our obligation under the unwritten law of show attendance, we left at the end of the first day.

The photos on this page did not appear in Kent's 2003 member profile but were added for this web article



Randy Bodine visits Kent Davis in his tractor shed/repair shop in Rose Hill, AL in 2010 near Dozier in Covington County.



Kent on a vintage bike he got back in shape to ride.



Clay Nordan and Kent Davis looking at Kent's Original Cub Cadet in 2003.



Kent and Lucy Davis at the Dothan show in 2010.



Rose Hill Tractor Co. as it looked in 2011.