

Business grew from salvage yard to international player

Thanks to the Internet, new farmers find their way to company

By ERIC MORTENSON
Capital Press

TANGENT — From Oregon 34, cutting west off Interstate 5 toward Corvallis, it looks like a tractor graveyard. Skeletons of old International, Case and John Deere tractors, combines and other farm and construction equipment sit in neat rows. Most have been plucked of parts.

That was Randy Raschein Sr.'s original vision for Farmland Tractor Supply when he started the business in 1980. A recession was draining the country's economic life, and Raschein figured a tractor salvage yard would find a market with farmers who were patching old equipment instead of buying new.

"There was a need here, for sure," Raschein said.

His instinct was on the money, and the business has grown steadily over the past 36 years. The view of the original salvage yard from the highway is misleading, because Farmland Tractor Supply now covers 30 acres and has 2 acres of covered parts storage plus a machine shop and other manufacturing, storage and office space. Individual parts are tagged and tracked by computer.

"A lot of people think it's an old junkyard, but it's not," Raschein Sr. said.

Crankshafts to radiators

The business still carries used parts, from crankshafts to radiators and rims, but in many cases they were salvaged from newer equipment that was damaged in a fire or accident. Farmland also carries after-market parts made by other manufacturers to fit various equipment lines. The business also overhauls and sells engines.

A significant number of customers are small or beginning farmers. For them, a business such as Farmland could fill an important niche, said Garry Stephenson, director of Oregon State University's Center for Small Farms and Community Food Systems.

New and small farmers are interested in used equipment for the cost savings and because older equipment is often smaller and a better fit for the scale of their farms, Stephenson said by email.



Farmland Tractor founder Randy Raschein Sr. takes a seat on one of his favorites, a 1941 narrow-tracked International Harvester that he bought used in 1963 and later sold. As a surprise, his family found it about 10 years ago, bought it and secretly restored it before presenting it back to him.

Photos by Eric Mortenson/Capital Press



Jaime Perez, mechanic at Farmland Tractor Supply, rebuilds a Case engine for resale. The company, in business since 1980, often sells to beginning or small farmers who can't afford new equipment.



Randy Raschein Sr., founder of Farmland Tractor Supply walks down a line of tractors in various stages of salvage. The business, near Tangent, sells new and rebuilt parts and engines as well.

Struggle to buy equipment

Fellow Oregon State Extension small farms specialist Heidi Noordijk agreed, noting that new farmers who don't inherit family gear struggle to buy new equipment. A tractor is the biggest need for most farmers, she said.

Thanks to the Internet, new farmers and even international customers find their way to Farmland Tractor Supply.

"We've sent parts to Africa, Greenland, Australia — we had a guy in here from New Zealand," Raschein Sr. said. His son, Randy Raschein Jr., has traveled to China to meet with suppliers. He's also introduced a new line of LED lighting systems called Tiger Lights that can be plugged into existing equipment and provides more light, for longer periods, with less demand on the tractor's electrical system.

A family business

Farmland remains a family business. Randy Raschein Sr.'s grandsons, Ty and Dustin, also work in the business, as does his daughter, Suzy Klein. His 9-year-old great-grandson, Wyatt Eastman, spends time at the business as well.

The family worked together to pull off a surprise for Raschein Sr.

In 1963, when he was farming in California, he bought an unusual nar-

row-tracked 1941 International Harvester from the U.S. Forest Service. He sold it when he quit farming, but always retained a fondness for International equipment. He sold parts for them at dealerships, including one that brought him to work at a store in the Willamette Valley before he started his own business.

About a decade ago, his son, Randy Jr., came across his father's paperwork from the sale. He tracked down the buyer, convinced him to sell back the International and set about restoring it in secret. "I didn't want to let it get away," he said.

The family hauled the restored tractor to a show in

Brooks, and took Raschein Sr. to look around. Coming across the tractor, and not yet knowing it was his, he expressed surprise because he'd never seen another one. "It's not even in the parts book," he said. A sign at the display told the story, and he happily realized he'd been had.

"They rebuilt it under my nose," he said with a laugh.

He's low-key about it, but Raschein takes pride in seeing how the business has expanded and adapted over the years. The business has only a handful of competitors in the Pacific Northwest.

"We started from scratch, one tractor at a time," he said. "Anyway, it worked out fine."



9-1-WHAT?

THE BEST OF THE WORST CALLS TO ASTORIA 911 DISPATCH

Squatch out

We like a good practical joke as much as anyone. But don't mess around with Bigfoot. Not in Oregon, for heaven's sake.

So we sympathize with the emergency caller who found a stolen 3-foot-tall Bigfoot statue on her front porch in Astoria. Thankfully, Bigfoot was returned to its owner.

Follow reporter Kyle Spurr on his 9-1-What? Twitter watch, where a few of the sometimes head-scratching calls to area dispatch take center stage. The full feed is at www.twitter.com/9_1_WHAT.

9-1-WHAT? Following

{3/15 @ 10:06 a.m.} Large puddle of what appears to be blood in the middle of the road. It was dry red paint. #Astoria

9:52 AM - 21 Mar 2016

9-1-WHAT? Following

{3/16 @ 9:09 p.m.} Caller worried about a man riding his lawnmower. She feels he's a danger to himself because it is dark out. #Astoria

7:03 AM - 21 Mar 2016

9-1-WHAT? Following

{3/18 @ 5:33 p.m.} Caller found a stolen 3-foot-tall Bigfoot statue on her front porch. Bigfoot was returned to its owner. #Astoria

7:12 AM - 21 Mar 2016

9-1-WHAT? Following

{3/20 @ 12:57 p.m.} Two intoxicated people over the fence with the sea lions. #Astoria

RETWEETS 2 LIKES 2

7:04 AM - 21 Mar 2016

9-1-WHAT? Following

{3/19 @ 9:02 a.m.} Cat up a tree for more than 24 hours. #Warrenton

7:13 AM - 21 Mar 2016

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