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Has anyone seen this hitch?

By Alan A. Wheel • Originally published December 1991

"Hey, Al, what's that pile of junk in the back of your truck?"

"Well, boys, I'm not quite sure. I hope it's the adapter I need to hook up those dad-blasted John Deere plows I have at home."

It was this innocent conversation that kicked off my discovery of the elusive Yakima hitch.

Here in northern Vermont, the words "Yakima hitch" could mean anything from an Indian wedding ceremony to a new wrestling hold. In reality, it was John Deere's early attempt at an implement quick hitch or more commonly known as an integral tool carrier. I had read an article about this hitch and its supposed scarcity among John Deere collectors. It seems that this hitch had compatibility problems and was later recalled by John Deere.

My accidental discovery of this piece of equipment really came out of necessity. I had purchased my 1949 model "B" five years ago, after obtaining my

version of "Green Acres." It's a 16 acre farm that consists of, but not necessarily in this order—four horses, two chickens, one cat, one dog, one wife and one kid (of the two legged variety).

I purchased the tractor five days prior to moving into our Grand Isle, Vermont home. I thought it would be great to drive the tractor home through the beautiful Vermont countryside, even though it was 45 miles. I wish now that I had shipped the thing home via UPS as the temperature dropped into the low 40s and I was frozen like a tongue to cold metal before the trip was over. Having been raised on a John Deere "A," my new purchase was a fulfillment of my childish/adult dreams.

When I bought the "B," I also purchased a snow plow, a wagon, No. 5 mower and a two bottom plow. The plow was an integral part of the deal as I needed it to plow up 10 acres of my empire. The fields had not been touched for over 45 years and required imme-

diately attention. The plows were not the typical trailer type that I had seen on just about every farm in the northeast. They had no wheels of any kind, nor the typical straight drawbar hitch. Instead they had two arms extending out of each side with small hook connectors on them and a control type arm in the center, similar to a three-point hitch. Ol' Bob, the guy I bought the tractor from, assured me that the hooks on the plow fit into the two slotted brackets that were attached to the rocker arms on the "B." When the big day came to hook up the plows, it was painfully obvious that these plows were not going onto this tractor today or any other day for that matter. The two hooks did not line up as Bob "promised" and there was nothing for the enter piece to connect to at all.

"SHAFT! I'VE BEEN SHAFTE!" I shouted at the very top of my lungs. Good Ol' Bob had sold me a piece of junk that didn't fit anything! Before you could say "two cylinders," I had all eight

cylinders of my Dodge pickup truck revved up and headed for "Good Ol' Bob's" place.

"Well, Bob, how come they don't fit?" I asked.

"Don't know," said Bob. "We always farmed with two model 'Bs' and the boys always used those plows."

Having gotten nowhere with Bob, I reluctantly slinked home depressed and emotionally drained. "Now what?" I thought. "I'll ask Art!" Art, who owns a local automotive repair shop with his son, Wayne, knows everything there is to know about old John Deere tractors and equipment. According to Art, John Deere invented the steel plow, but Art helped him set it up. In all fairness, these two boys have forgotten more about two cylinder tractors than most people will ever know, but don't tell them I said that!

Wayne and Art tripped over themselves getting to my place to show me how easy it was to hook up a set of two bottom plows. ("Let's face it—how hard could it be?") The boys quickly changed their tune as they gazed upon this unique piece of engineering. "I haven't the foggiest idea how to hook those things up," said Wayne.

"I've never seen anything like them in my 45 years in the farming business," said Art.

Great. Just great. "I had hoped that you two would come over and say, 'Hey, stupid, just put this up here and this on there and bolt that down and that's all there is to it,' but nooo...!" Suddenly I had what was becoming an ugly lawn ornament instead of a useful piece of farm equipment.

I took time out from bashing my head against the barn door to figure my next move. "I'll get out the old farm equipment books; they have to be in one of those." Wrong again. There was nothing in those books that even resembled the plows in my back yard.

With work needing to be done on the "B," I found myself spending the good part of my Saturday mornings at the local John Deere dealer. By hanging out there, it allowed me to meet quite a few of the area John Deere tractor enthusiasts and collectors. I showed them pictures of the mysterious plows and even had pictures of the adapters on the tractor. "Nope. I've been to three World's Fairs and eaten raw yak meat and I ain't never seen nuttin' like 'em," said expert number one.

"Must be one of them there new Australian plows I heard so much about down at the feed mill," said number two.

The third know-it-all really got to me. "Looks like sumthin' I saw back in '39 on my uncle Eddie's Ford." Personally, I think using the words Ford and tractor in the same sentence is a contradiction in terms.

Four years had passed since I threw in the towel and dragged my plows out to the back pasture to share space with the crows, weeds and horses. Then one day it happened. I was at a farm auction and happened to run into my old pal Bob. As we stood around drinking coffee and trying to look important, it struck me. It struck me like an electric fence on a barn cat's nose. "Bob, did you say that you and the boys farmed with two

model 'Bs'?"

"Yeah, the one I sold to you and the one I sold to my son," said Bob.

"Do you think the adapter I'm looking for is on the other tractor?" Bob rocked back a bit and scratched his head. "You know, Al, my son, did say that he was tripping over a piece of junk at his place and he thinks it came with the tractor I sold him. I'll stop by and pick it up tomorrow 'cause the last I knew he didn't have the slightest notion what it was used for and was going to cut it up and make a snow plow frame out of it."

By now I had mixed emotions. I was glad that I might finally be on the right trail, but felt woozy at the thought of my adapter shoving snow on the front of a 46 Massey Harris!

A week later, I was standing in Ol' Bob's front yard. There in the shed sitting in a heap was a gizmo with two cranks, two arms and two stabilizer bars attached to nothing. "Is this what you're looking for?" asked Bob.

"I don't know, Bob," I said. "It sure beats anything I have now." We settled on a modest price and loaded it into my pickup truck. It stayed in my truck for more than a week, allowing me to show this to the resident "experts" and see if they now could tell me what this new thing was and how it worked. Sure enough. The responses were immediate. "Now you've got something, sonny. Yup. That's an adjustable manure loader frame support."

"Nah....That's an early style round bale pickup hook," said another. Still another said it was all

that remained of an old John Deere field rake.

I was bordering on suicide by the time Art, Wayne and I stopped at the John Deere dealer to allow the boys there to put in their two cents. "Don't know what the heck it is," they said. "Flip that sucker over and let's get a look at the other side...or is that the top? Well, anyways, flip it over one time." Risking hernia, I flipped it over and there it was, the magic word: Yakima. The boys and I were quite pleased with our new find. The dealership boys just said, "Yaka what?" Not knowing this thing ever existed in the first place kind of dampened their enthusiasm.

Next came phase five of this fiasco. This consisted of listening to the 14 theories on how the hitch fit to the tractor and 19 theories on how the plows fit the hitch. Of course, these words of wisdom were coming from the same philosophers who only days before had claimed that the thing in the back of my truck was a two row cultivator for a Sears garden tractor.

I made a command decision. I'll figure this thing out all by myself. After all, how hard could it be? Have you ever noticed that in all the old John Deere equipment ads, it always says, and I quote, "John Deere implements are designed for one man installation." And I must admit they are—one man and four boys! For here I am, in the shed, ready to put the hitch on my trusty tractor.

One hour and 15 minutes later, everything on the rear of the tractor had either been removed, adjusted or beaten viciously with a hammer. Things are not going well. Six bolts, a set of come-alongs and two floor jacks have finally allowed me to gracefully slip the joy of Yakima, Washington onto the back of my tractor.

Battered, bloody and beaten, I sat back and wallowed in the glory of the victory I had just obtained over this very worthy opponent. Custer made a mistake, Napoleon made a mistake and this big dummy from the north-east was about to follow in their footsteps. I had just decided to mount the plows. (Hey, how hard could it be?)

So here I was, out in the horse pasture backed up to an odd looking plow with one broken bottom and me with not the slightest idea how this thing went on. "Well, let's see. Back up here...lower the hitch to about here...straighten the plow...turn that top lever all the way...turn the other lever a couple of turns...there. Nope! Aarrgh! Lift that up...turn this...kick that...pound on this...rats! That's not it either. Maybe if I just give the whole shooting match a little nudge. Look out! She's tipping over! &*(@#*\$#\$ %*#! Hook up the chain, straighten the plows, now just block them up with...with what? The only thing out here in the pasture is mud and a meadow mouse laying on his back laughing so hard he's got

tears running down his cheeks!

Back to the barn and bring back everything you can think of to help with this effort. At last we are ready for the final assault. Just hold down the right side of the plow and back the tractor up about two inches...and...clunk...it's on! If I wasn't so tired, I would have bought me and that mouse a beer to celebrate. A mere two hours and 45 minutes after I started, the plows were ready to go.

Victory was mine at last, my adventure was over and my fingers were smashed to a pulp. This was truly a piece of equipment that could be installed by one man, but you can bet your socks I will have at least three other people the next time these things go on!

Needless to say, this hitch and plow set-up got the best of me and it became evident why John Deere recalled this set-up soon after it was sold. There may be people out there who own this hitch and its equipment and love it. If you watch any of the old JD movies, you'll see a guy hook up a set of plows exactly like mine, using a Yakima hitch exactly like mine, but he hooks them up in 36 seconds and drives away!

As for me, the invasion of Normandy took less planning than the operation I had tackled on this day. If there is anyone else out there who may have experienced similar enjoyment with this "collector's item," drop me a line. I'll write back as soon as my fingers heal completely.

Dear Mr. Thinker,

This question concerns the John Deere MC-1000 tool carrier that was available for the "MC" tractors and the No. 1000 tool carrier that was available for the 40-C tractors. I assume, and correct me if I am wrong, that these tool carriers were designed by Jesse Lindeman and built at the John Deere-Lindeman facility located at Yakima, Washington. Apparently all of the John Deere Yakima-built implements that were used with the ABG2000 and No. 2100 "Yakima" hitches could be mounted on the MC-1000 and No. 1000 tool carriers. After reading J.R.'s book on the John Deere 20 series tractors, I became aware of the fact that the three-point hitch was not available on the 420-C until the Series II 420 tractors were introduced. With this information in hand, I wonder if Deere offered the No. 1000 tool carrier on the Series 1 420-Cs. I have more than a casual interest in this subject because I have a Series 1 420-C and I also collect the other Yakima hitches and implements. I would like to set up my crawler in a unique way and a No. 1000 hitch and a JD-Lindeman implement, if correct, would be just what I am looking for.

H.M., Iowa

Although there is a dearth of information on the products made at the Yakima Works, some things are known, or at least thought, to be true. From the very little information that Mr. Thinker has on this subject, it appears that the No. 1000 tool carrier was canceled at the same time that the four and five roller Dubuque-built track assemblies were adopted for the 40-C at serial number 62264, late in the 1953 model year. Prior to this serial number, the three roller tracks and undercarriage for the 40-C had been built in Yakima. The Yakima Works was closed in early 1954, due mostly to high freight costs and limited demand. Some of the Yakima Works products were shifted to other Deere factories, but it appears that the unique hitches designed by Jesse Lindeman and most of the implements made for them did not make the cut and were canceled at this time. Due to changes in track and track frame construction, it also appears that the No. 1000 carriers will not work on a later 40-C or 420-C tractor. You'll just have to find some other way to make your Series 1 420-C unique. MT

