



The author and his son, Brandon, in stand in front of their Case MX270 in the top-left photo.

LETTER FROM LANGDON: THE FARMALL FAMILY ALBUM

For farmers and other enthusiasts who have made their tractors practically members of the family, here's a reminder that every tractor has a soul.

For commuting folks in the city, slow moving farm tractors aren't much more than an irritation.

That reality became crystal clear for me late one autumn day as I made my way home down a particularly narrow stretch of road on my tractor. A car had been following me for quite a while. When conditions allowed I pulled as far to the right as I could and slowed, so they could pass. Normally, where neighbors are concerned, that simple action would earn a smile and a wave. But for the irritated city fellow behind me, I had seemingly been placed on that particular road just so he would be late for work.

My friendly, palm-exposed five finger wave was acknowledged by the back of his hand and a single extended finger raised high out the driver side window.

That brief encounter along State Highway D pointed out to me that not everyone loves farm tractors. On the other hand, farmers and people who grew up on farms see them almost as members of the family. One farmer I know installed a bench seat on his vintage tractor so that he and his wife could take long drives together on quiet country roads. My favorite equipment dealer used to take pictures of his customers standing next to their newly purchased machines, and send them a print along with a thank you note for their business.

We love our tractors.

Preferred machine color is probably the greatest source of disagreement among friendly neighbors, but a preference for red, green, blue, orange or yellow can unite even liberal Democrats with conservative Republicans...if only for one brief moment in time.

Speaking as someone who has occupied the driver's seat of one red tractor or another for over 60 years, I confess to talking to my tractor, urging it to pull the plow harder as its governors open, urging it ahead through mounds of drifted snow, or sometimes just wishing we could be home and in the shed for the night.

Photographer Lee Klancher brings those tractors forward in time to remind farmers like me of our conviction—that every tractor has a soul.

Octane Press (<http://www.leeklancher.com>) and Lee Klancher have found a way to serve the needs of red-loving farmers everywhere with his **2017 Farmall Calendar (<https://octanepress.com/book/farmall-tractor-calendar-2017>)**. Printed on glossy paper, shiny, old timey International Harvester Farmalls come as close to being alive as any machine ever can.

Each page of the calendar has its own web link with a story of the machine and its photograph.

That's what Lee's pictures mean to me. Personality of each of those red machines is undeniable. The gold-hooded International 1026 Hydro Demonstrator he placed over June reminds me when I longed for such a prize in 1970, but knew in my heart I would never have one. They were too expensive for a young farmer with a wife and kids on 160 rented acres. And, just like generations of farm families I have known, you can tell who's kin simply by looking at them. Lee Klancher's International Harvester Farmall calendar illustrates generations of Farmall tractor family evolution.





Maybe that's why some family farmers like me collect calendars, or the tractors that adorn them, because once a young man's fancy turns to love, he never forgets the first one. For me it was the Farmall A my mother used to "roll" corn rows behind Dad as he planted with his Farmall M. With my sister perched on the edge of the seat in front of her, Mother held me on her lap while driving the "A", packing six rows at a time on half-mile straight rows.

When my sister first learned to drive, it was on the "A." It was the same for me. When "set aside" needed mowing in 1962, I mowed it with the A. And in 1964 when 20 inches of rain flooded the road to Langdon, Dad sent me to get the mail on the A because the engine sat high enough it wouldn't drown out.

The Farmall Calendar doesn't show an A, but in October it features a Cub Lowboy that's close. In March the 1955 Farmall DLD diesel, made for German markets, looks just like my gas-powered A.

It's hard to explain how machines can feel alive. Maybe that's why some families pass the same ones down through generations. They take care of their own. If that's the way you feel about tractors, Lee Klancher's 2017 Farmall Calendar is more than a moment in time.

It's actually a family album.

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