

Our Family Farm after the War in Alpine, Utah Van Burgess

Van Burgess, a farmer and orchard owner from Alpine, Utah, gave an oral interview about life on a Utah farm. In one part of his interview he talked about machinery on his farm. How did Mr. Burgess feel about using machinery? What was his attitude toward the new machines that replaced earlier models?



“My father started with horses. Our first tractors were purchased about 1939 or 1940. They were Fordson’s. They were iron tired and the back had spikes on them. I remember when we bought a Farmall in the early 1940s. We bought the ultimate. That machine made agriculture in Alpine. It was 1945 and my dad had sold the grain from the farm and got a \$1600 dollar check for the summers’ work. Dad said, ‘we’re going to buy a tractor. We’re going to buy a tractor and it cost \$1500 dollars.’ We bought another Farmall tractor in December 1949, the biggest Farmall made – we still have it today. That probably turned agriculture around for us. It pulled three types of plows including a moldboard plow and a 5 1/2 foot disc plow. We also put a posthole digger on it. We had a front-end loader on the front of it and the world came alive. We didn’t have to haul by hand anymore; you could do anything with that tractor. There’s one thing it didn’t have though, it didn’t have a three-point hitch on the back. It couldn’t lift up the pulled machinery; it had a draw bar only. We ran that for about four or five years.

In 1951 we bought a Ferguson tractor with a lift on it. It’s still on the farm, still runs everyday and I have it for my grandchildren to drive it all over to prepare the ground. It’s a wonderful little tractor. We’ve overhauled it only once. It’s only been in the shop once in 50 years. We’ve done all the maintenance work on it and it’s never left outside in the weather. I can show you farm machinery 20 to 25 years old whether it’s a lawn mower, or a baler, and you will tell me I probably bought it last year. That’s because we do all our own service work. Now we’ve progressed to bigger tractors; we’ve gone from gasoline to diesel.



Our first sprayers were orchard sprayers. My dad would pump the lever on 50-gallon barrel like a cylinder jack a to get the pressure to spray the trees. Then we went to a Meyer sprayer. It was 100-gallon wood one and had a flywheel on it. You poured water in the top to keep the engine cool. It was driven by two horses and you’d go to the irrigation ditch and the water would slop out because it was open on top. You’d have to get the spark plug out and dry everything off after that and away you’d go again. Then we went to the Bean sprayer. It was 300-gallons, power take-off. Two men walked with fifty-foot hoses

in grass up to your waist and went up and down every tree row on both sides and walked around the tree. We sprayed every seven days, and if you’ve ever taken a ten-acre orchard and took about three days to spray it, and the rotations were about every seven days, does that tell you what you’d do all summer? That’s all you’d do. We didn’t wear masks when spraying, we didn’t wear respirators, we sprayed each other, and we’d have water fights with it almost.

Well and then we went to the magic of what we call speed sprayers. They’re 500-gallon tanks electronically controlled by switches. We sit on the tractor and drive down the row and there’s a jet of about ten sprayers on this side and on that side. It has a 350 horsepower engine in it and when I drive down the row I just flip a switch and this side comes on and I flip a switch on and it goes off. I can spray 25 acres in one day.”

