



# Tri-State Antique Engine and Tractor Show

A special section in The Commercial Review,  
The News-Gazette, The News Times and The News and Sun  
Tuesday, August 20, 2024



# SLOW RIDE

## Brothers made 695-mile trip on tractors

*Editor's note: Ten years ago, a pair of Virginia brothers made a nearly 700-mile ride to Jay County on their tractors for the Tri-State Antique Engine and Tractor Show. This story was published after they arrived.*

**By KELLY LYNCH**

The Commercial Review

They drove 695 miles at an average speed of 13 miles per hour, sitting on thinly padded seats.

And they did it smiling.

"I couldn't tell you the number of cars that came by and they would (take photos) on their phone, you know," said Wayne Smith.

"I had none of them give me the bird," added a laughing Lloyd Smith. "Nobody."

See **Slow** page 8



The Commercial Review/Kelly Lynch

Lloyd Smith, left, and his brother Wayne Smith stand next to the 1955 Ford 960 Wayne drove more than 695 miles to the Tri-State Gas Engine and Tractor Show in Portland from their hometown in Virginia. The duo left home Aug. 10 and arrived at Jay County Fairgrounds on their tractors Aug. 18.

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The Commercial Review/Ray Cooney

## Mini tractors provided a unique ride at the show

*Editor's note: This story was published during the 2014 Tri-State show.*

**By RAY COONEY**

The Commercial Review

For the Tri-State Gas Engine and Tractor Show, Jay County Fairgrounds and the streets of Portland will be full of golf carts.

Show visitors use the small vehicles to easily zip around the fairgrounds and the city during the massive

convention. But a Tennessee family uses a more event-appropriate mode of transportation.

Kilp Carroll and his son Jonathan, 11, of Springfield, Tenn., will spend the week tooling around the show on their Wheel Horse's — 1960s era riding lawnmowers that look more like miniature tractors.

“At this particular show,

it's so big, you almost need something to ride around on,” said Carroll, who spends much of his summer with his son and wife Rebekah visiting shows in Tennessee, Kentucky and Indiana. “So they look like a small little miniature tractor, so it goes along with the whole theme of the show.”

See Mini page 6

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Kilp Carroll and his son Jonathan, 11, make a turn on their Wheel Horse tractors while driving around Jay County Fairgrounds while Kilp's wife, Rebekah, rides in a wagon being pulled behind his vehicle. The Carrolls are annual visitors to the Tri-State Gas Engine and Tractor Show, which begins Wednesday. Kilp has been to every show since 1979.



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## Mini ...

Continued from page 5  
The Wheel Horse brand, which was bought by Toro in 1986, originated in a South Bend garage in 1946 when Elmer Pond, who would later be joined by his son Cecil, began making two-wheeled, self-propelled tractors. They could handle a variety of attachments, including plows and mowers, with the operator pushing from behind.

But prior to making a visit to the World's Fair, Carroll said, Cecil Pond got the idea to add rear wheels and turn the piece of machinery into a riding lawnmower. Those early four-wheel vehicles, like the 1960 Wheel Horse Jonathan drives, had the engine underneath the seat to accommodate the original design. Later models, such as the 1968 that Kilp drives, have a more conventional design, including an electric start, with the motor underneath the hood.

Kilp's tractor has a six horsepower engine while his son's sports a four horsepower. Both have had their mower decks removed.

"They're tons and tons

and tons of fun to ride and go out back in the yard and go play with them," said 11-year-old Jonathan.

He also likes to drive around the neighborhood in Springfield, which sits at the intersection of U.S. 31 and 431 about 10 miles south of the Kentucky border with the Little West Fork River running along the north side.

Jonathan's main interest at this week's show lies in the large oil field engines.

"All of this stuff used to be in the oil fields, pumping oil out of the ground," said the home-schooled sixth grader who previously attended Cooperstown Elementary in Springfield. "It's always interested me a lot."

The two Wheel Horse's the Carrolls have with them this year represent half of their collection, with two more still waiting to be restored at home.

It took about four months for Kilp to restore his son's tractor last year, although he has the benefit of a nice workspace because his brother Danny owns a machine shop.

It took him even longer to find some of the parts — about a year for the

front hubcaps — although eBay has made that process easier than in the past.

"Especially when it comes to finding, like, the decals," Kilp said. "There's a lot of people on eBay that reproduce the decals."

Jonathan, who attended his first Tri-State show in the womb, is part of the third generation of Carrolls who make an annual trip to Portland.

Kilp's father, David, made his first visit in 1978. Kilp, who also brings antique gas engines to display, followed a year later and has been to Jay County every year since.

David and his wife Jo Ann, Kilp's brothers Danny and Jimmy, his sister Julie Fuqua and their spouses will all be in attendance this year. And there are a few more regulars who won't be able to make it because of health issues.

The family has a variety of farm equipment dating back to when David was young, including Case, Farmall and John Deere tractors.

See **Mini** page 12

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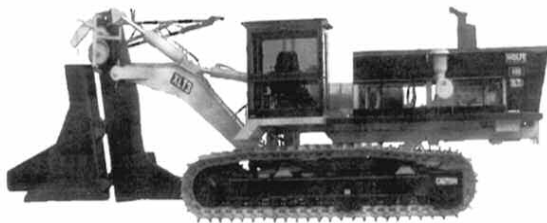
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## Slow ...

Continued from page 2

The septuagenarian brothers' mode of transportation for the trek from their hometown in Virginia to their first visit to the Tri-State Gas Engine and Tractor Show at Jay County Fairgrounds was a 1955 Ford 960 and a 1953 Super M Farmall.

And that unique choice to ride tractors found them admiring more than the beautiful scenery along the way.

The duo unexpectedly became instant celebrities in every town they traveled.

"I told my wife, 'I want to be low-key. I want it to look like I'm just going over yonder to work,'" said Wayne. "But if I'd known we were going to get all this, I would have done a little differently you know."

While some called their venture crazy — and they themselves laugh at the idea of being a celebrity — many along the way asked for photographs, offered to feed them or gave them a spot to rest their mobile home for the night.

They left Virginia the night of Aug. 10 to travel the next week on country roads in West Virginia, Ohio and eventually Indiana, but before they could head on their way, people started showing their support for the brothers through surprise donations.

"It really flattered me," said Lloyd. "This guy came up and shook hands with me. When we shook hands, I could feel something in my hands, and I just balled it up and stuck it in my pocket. And after he left, I pulled it out — well, he had told me, 'This will buy you all a drink or something' — I pulled it out, it was a \$20 bill."

See **Slow** page 10





The Commercial Review/Ray Cooney

## Feature lineup

Ford tractors were lined up Sunday in the new area designated for featured tractors. (It is in the space where the midway is set up for the Jay County Fair.) Ford and Fordson tractors are featured this year.



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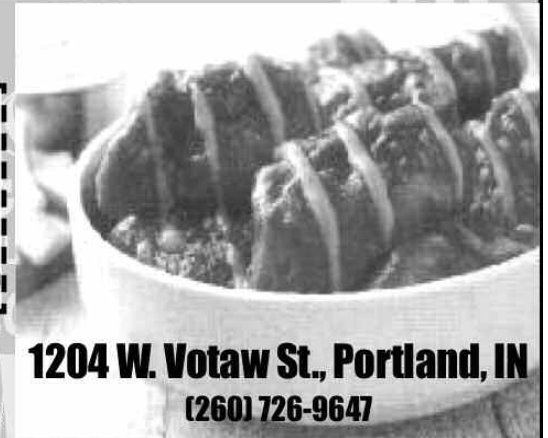
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# Slow ...

Continued from page 8  
While on the road,

passersby “waving, hollering and taking pictures” bombarded the duo, and the brothers would respond with a hearty thumbs up.

It was a much different response than what lone tractors on the road usually receive.

“If you’re riding a tractor, they’ll honk, but if you have a flag, they’ll wave,” said Lloyd, who adorned the tractors with American flags, the flag of Virginia and signs with information about the ride.

On the road daily by 8 a.m. and not stopping until late evening, the brothers now have a breadth of new stories of hospitality and humor to recall from the trip.

A man in a pick-up truck offered to help them get home, only to learn they

were more than 500 miles from where they reside. A lady offered to bring them back dinner from a church social, returning with 10 heaping plates of food and enough dessert to last them the week.

Going down a mountain in Virginia with rain soaking their bib overalls, they were passed by a man on a mountain bike, shouting “coming through.”

“We ain’t seen him since,” laughed Lloyd. “I don’t know where he went, whether he went off the side of the mountain or

what. We didn’t see him no more.”

While reactions to their trip pleasantly surprised the brothers, they weren’t so impressed with the weather.

Planning the trip since last August, they could map their route but they couldn’t predict what Mother Nature would do. And she brought nothing but trouble. The brothers had hoped to drive 100 miles a day, a distance they were accustomed to riding as part of other shows, but that was only if the weather cooperated.

“We didn’t get far that (first) evening,” said Wayne. “Then the next morning it was raining. And it rained and it rained. We lost half a day that day. Next day, rain. The third day, it was a drizzle rain, but the wind was blowing. It was cold. But we rode that day, and luckily neither one of us caught a cold or anything. We froze though.”

Their original schedule had them arriving in Portland Aug. 17, but with more than a day lost to bad weather, they didn’t set foot at Jay County Fairgrounds until the evening

of Aug. 18. Mayor Randy Geesaman paid the brothers a visit soon after, as the news of their ride had already swept through the fairgrounds.

The brothers had signed up to participate in Tuesday’s tractor ride, but after a full week of driving, they decided it was time for a rest.

But now back at full capacity, the duo is glad to have chosen their first long-distance ride to end in Jay County — a part of the country they’d only seen through their careers as truck drivers — to participate in the display of Ford tractors.

“The show is fantastic,” said Wayne. “The old stuff is what I like. I tell people I like old cars, old trucks and old tractors. My wife got old, and I like her too.”

The brothers have their tractors on display at the fairgrounds, but they don’t have too long to stay settled as they’ll be back on the road in a few days.

Thinking of future rides, only one comes to mind.

“We gonna do another (ride) Sunday,” said Wayne.

“We gotta get back home,” said Lloyd.

**‘We didn’t get far that (first) evening. Then the next morning it was raining. And it rained and it rained. We lost half a day that day. Next day, rain.’**

—Wayne Smith



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# Mini ...

Continued from page 6  
The group also collects  
gristmills and coffee mills,  
has a few antique auto-  
mobiles and owns about  
100 antique engines in  
all.

Most of the group stays  
at the show grounds  
while Kilp, Rebekah and  
Jonathan spend their  
nights at Schug House  
Inn bed and breakfast in  
Berne.

"It's a family reunion  
every year," Rebekah  
said of the group, which  
lives just a few miles  
apart in Tennessee. "We  
all try to get up here if we  
can."

Rebekah, who rides in  
a wagon pulled behind  
her husband's Wheel  
Horse, is interested in the  
engines because of the  
family involvement.

But she also looks for-  
ward to the Jay County  
show because of the vari-  
ety of other attractions  
that go along with it. She  
likes to visit the flea mar-  
kets and yard sales in  
search of silver, crystal  
and jewelry.

"The silver and the  
crystal is very difficult to  
find other places because  
people really don't use it  
a lot anymore because  
it's such a hassle to pol-  
ish," she said. "But I love



The Commercial Review/Ray Cooney

it and I use it all the time."  
The Carrolls love riding  
the Wheel Horse's  
around as well, partially  
because they are a con-

versation piece. They  
said they get stopped  
often to talk about the ve-  
hicles, and that they're an  
eyecatcher especially for  
the more casual tractor  
and engine show visitors.

"The general public  
that don't always quite  
understand the motors,  
they'll appreciate these,"  
said Kilp, who owns

Jonathan Carroll  
works to start his four  
horse- power Wheel  
Horse tractor at Jay  
County Fairgrounds. The  
11-year- old has attended  
the show in Portland  
since he was in the womb  
and enjoys looking at  
large oil field engines.

Hardware City in  
Clarksville, Tenn. "Espe-  
cially the women that  
could care less about the  
motors ... they'll think  
they're cute because it  
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"We put them in a lot of  
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## Show ready

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The Commercial Review/Ray Cooney

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