

News Column

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## TRACTOR SAFETY

My dad was a great teacher. He wasn't always a calm teacher, and wasn't even that good at giving instructions, but he was still a great teacher.

Working with my dad, I learned patience. I don't know how many hours I spent just standing beside the truck, tractor, or implement he was repairing waiting to be told to hand him a different wrench.

Being the go-fer and occasional tool handler wasn't a job I wanted – I wanted to be doing something instead of just standing and waiting – but I eventually learned to shut up and wait. I wasn't always busy, but if I was patient, I would eventually be needed.

Working with my dad, I learned self-discipline. Dad sometimes taught by example,...bad example. I learned a great lesson the year Dad hobbled on a sore foot for six weeks, obviously in pain, and probably with a cracked bone in his foot. What happened? He kicked a cow.

It was one of those cases where the cow wasn't accepting her calf. Dad had her in a chute, trying to help the calf nurse, and the cow kicked him. Dad's poorly thought out response was to just get even, so he kicked her back. From this I learned that revenge can hurt me more than it hurts the offender. I still do some of the same dumb things my dad did, but not nearly as often.

Working with my dad, I also learned about tractor safety. Once again, Dad taught by example,....bad example.

One of my earliest memories as a child is riding on the fender of a Ford 8N tractor while Dad mowed hay. The sickle bar mower stuck out to the right side of the tractor – I think it was seven feet long – and I rode on the left fender. I suppose there is a chance I wouldn't have gotten sliced if I fell off, but I was terrified nonetheless.

Those of you who are familiar with a Ford 8N know that it's no place for a five-year-old. I say that I rode on the fender, but I really stood on the axle and leaned on the fender, hanging on for dear life. It's probably good that the fender was curved at the top so I couldn't really sit on it. Otherwise I might have gotten comfortable and fallen off.

Another great tractor safety lesson was taught when the starter wasn't working on the old Oliver 88 stacker tractor. The old hay stackers were different from the modern loaders. This thing had framework that went clear around the outside of the tractor, with loader arm hinge points behind and to the sides of the driver. The important feature for this Dad episode is the solid metal framework across the back of stacker, behind the tractor wheels.

Remember, the starter didn't work, and there was this solid metal frame behind the wheels. Conveniently, the metal frame matched up well with the pickup bumper. Because he was a genius, my dad figured out that he could park the tractor on a slope and push it to start it.

Dad farmed alone, but I was along one Saturday morning when he went to start the old Oliver 88. He first pulled up to the tractor until his bumper met the stacker frame. He then got out and put the tractor in neutral before climbing back in his pickup to start pushing. Once the tractor started rolling down the hill, he jumped out of the pickup, chased down the tractor, put it in gear, and popped the clutch. He said it worked every time.

It's hard to unlearn what your daddy taught you, but that's exactly what we try to do sometimes at our annual tractor safety class. Having had my share of close calls over the years, I

find myself telling our students to “just do it the way we are teaching you. If you dad thinks it takes too long to do things safely, have him come talk to me!”

This year’s tractor safety course is a two-day course that will be held May 25 and 29 at KanEquip in Wamego. Class will run from 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. on day one and from 9:00 to 3:00 the second day. Youth ages 14 and 15 who will operate a tractor for someone other than their parent are required to take the class. We also welcome students as young as 12, and there is no limit on the upper age.

There is a \$30 fee that covers class materials and meals both days. Registration is needed by May 22 and can be done online at [www.pottawatomie.ksu.edu](http://www.pottawatomie.ksu.edu).

If you have questions, you can reach me at the Riley County Extension Office at 785/537-6350. Or, you can send e-mail to [gmclure@ksu.edu](mailto:gmclure@ksu.edu).

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