

Dick Pedersen wrote this about his plowing career and time spent as a long-time participant and officer of the Iowa Plowing Association, USA Plowing Organization and World Ploughing Organization. Dick is a great person and exemplifies the qualities of a true sportsman and plowman. I am proud to call Dick Pedersen my friend, as I am sure we all are. Ray Ellsberry

Pedersen on Plowing

A next-door neighbor, Lyle Mason, was my introduction to plowing. The first US National Plowing Contest was held in Mitchellville, Iowa, in 1939 and was sponsored by WHO Radio with Herb Plambeck, the farm broadcaster, as the driving force behind it. Lyle Mason won the Junior Division of that event and continued to compete in the “Level Land” division until he was 18 years old. He later competed in contour plowing. Our family moved to a farm adjoining theirs in 1948 and it seemed as if my dad, my three brothers and I spent a lot of time helping the Masons with their farming. This was OK with dad because always willing to help people and he had boys that he liked to keep busy. Lyle tried very hard to convince my dad that he could teach me and /or my brothers the art of plowing. My dad tried to convince Lyle that we had neither the time, desire nor the money to waste on such an endeavor. However, my youngest brother and I finally got him to let us give it a shot. We would use our John Deere 1948 “B” and 44 plow. To get started, Lyle tore our plow apart, reversed the frame and added more parts. Then he laid out several plots for our practice. This only gave proof to my dad as to why we often had to help the neighbors get their work done. Nevertheless, we started plowing. Our county contest – “Pilot Rock” was the largest county contest in the state. My youngest brother won the Junior Class in 1954 and I, as a senior in high school, won the Level Land. I won the 1954 state contest in Bedford, IA with the highest score ever recorded in a state contest, 94.7 points. I think that record still holds, all-be-it we don’t use the 100-point scoring any more. I competed in the national contest in Olney, IL. I competed the following year too, then went to college and had to quit plowing. The rules stated that, “Plowman must be bona-fide farmers”.

I went to work in the bank in my hometown, married a beautiful home economics teacher and was ready to be a spectator only at plowing matches. In 1965, my wife and I decided to quit our jobs and get more education. We moved to Des Moines so my wife could get more degrees from Iowa State University and I could likewise attend Drake University. In 1966, I was invited to attend the Agri-Rama USA, along with all former state contest winners. We were inducted into the Iowa Plowmen’s Hall of Fame – a creation of Herb Plambeck. At this time in history, Herb was working at a savings bank, which was in the same block downtown as the bank where I worked. Somehow, he became aware that we were neighbors and we started communicating. He was, at that time, the secretary/treasurer of the Iowa Plowing

Association. He would come to my office and talk plowing in an attempt to get me to join the IPA and it worked. I joined the IPA and he soon came to my office seeking help with his secretary duties. He had no assistants in his office, and I had a good staff, which did all his typing, stuffing envelopes, etc. for IPA. My bank also paid for all supplies as well as postage. That was how Herb always got things done. When he died several years later, he still owed Bill Pearson and me for numerous cups of coffee and pastries that we had been nice enough to buy for him at the plowing matches. He never had any money- so he said. I was soon elected to the IPA board and given Herb's jobs. I was later given the same jobs when I went on the USAPO board. I was the secretary/treasurer of these organizations for over forty years. I had resigned from those positions, but I enjoyed them until I retired from the bank and had to start doing all the things my secretary, Sue, had on bank time.

In the early 2000s, I became the US representative on the World Ploughing Organization and continued until 2019. What a great time Mother and I enjoyed during those years. You need to know that during all my "plowing" escapades, I worked at the big bank in downtown Des Moines and a much smaller family-owned bank in a smaller suburban community for a total of 47 years. Both banks were proud to have representation in the agricultural environment and I was glad to do it. My wife and youngest daughter went to all state and national matches with me for many years and loved every one of them and the lasting friendships created-plus the shopping excursions. Today, my daughter Betsy, her husband and three young sons go along to all state and national matches and have a great time, just as Mother and I have always had. Kevin Holl always seems to have a 4-wheeler or side by side available for their use and the boys love it.

Plowing contests are not always a snap. Not every landowner has ground we can use and finding towns or organizations that are willing to sponsor a national contest can be a tough sell. I recall one year in particular during the many years Jack Law was the IPA president. Jack was a good president, and he won many antique contests. He did his usual good job and arranged a meeting with the Sioux City Convention Bureau, as they wanted to host the national contests. I don't remember the year. Jack and I made three trips to Sioux City to make arrangements – all good. At a crucial time, something changed and Sioux City said the Airport Authority, who owned the ground, said "No Deal". We really had to scramble. Over the next couple of months, Jack and I met with folks in Atlantic, Council Bluffs, Oakland and Winterset. Good meetings, but no takers. Time was running out and Jack was getting frustrated until he got a call from Laurene Huber offering some alfalfa ground, and good ground it was. Jack was elated and we had an outstanding national match. I think Jack kissed Laurene when we were done.

For 65 years, I have enjoyed being involved with great friends all over the world whom I will never forget. I have the utmost respect and admiration for all the folks involved in keeping competition plowing moving forward. It takes a bunch of time and money to keep the programs going. The first plow competitions in the U.S. were held in Ohio and Illinois during the late 1800's. Foreign countries have been plowing in competitions for 300 years or more. How long can we keep it up?

U.S. world representatives are getting better. I remember a plowman from Norway telling me many years ago that he thought our competitors were the best people to work with – always ready and willing to assist anyone in need. In answer to my question, “What do we need to do to get better scores in the world competition”, he said, “You plow like farmers”. We have had wonderful representatives for 50 years and our scores are improving – including one 1st Place win in 2018. It is a lot more fun to look at the final scores when you can start at the top of the sheet as opposed to starting at the bottom.

We are who and what we are because of the many great friends and co-workers – Bill, Jack, Darlene, Jim, Lawrence, Monroe, Sonny, Russell, Cliff – to name a few who are don plowing. A few of us are getting closer to the time when we need to make our “Finish Round” in the next decade or two.

I am glad Lyle convinced my dad to let me use our “B” and 44 plow, tear it apart and go wherever we had to go to do our thing.