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TIRE MODIFICATION BROUGHT CUSHMAN INTO THE TURF MARKET

It was an almost token modification of a Cushman industrial vehicle that led OMC Lincoln into a major nameplate in manufacturing what still ranks as an innovative line of turf-care equipment and related accessories. Back in 1963 an engineer substituted the original tires on an industrial Haulster vehicle with wider-tread components. The intent was to provide more traction for a superintendent wanting to use the unit on his golf course. Ever since, OMC Lincoln has been rolling ahead with the production of turf-care units, only today's are custom-engineered to take the toil and toll out of landscape management chores.

"Those first vehicles were by-products of our industrial units," reflects OMC Lincoln Marketing Director Frank McDonald. "What occurred, however, was a total facelift in our manufacturing and marketing strategy. We found ourselves moving into the turf-care industry with units that were totally dedicated in design to this marketplace."

That first vehicle was available with a 9- or 18-hp, air-cooled OMC engine and became popular with superintendents for hauling mowers, fertilizer, spreaders and sprinkler heads. They offered the advantage of reduced weight, preserving the turf so tediously manicured for golfers and park visitors. OMC Lincoln field salesmen said labor-conscious superintendents were even adding hitches for pulling a gang of mowers. That word got back to the engineering drawing boards in Lincoln indicating increased sophistication had to enter the product line.

"What developed was a corporate commitment to developing vehicles reflecting the demands of the marketplace," McDonald says. "We might have remained static and tried to condition the buyer to



OMC Marketing Director Frank McDonald.

vehicles derived from our industrial line. Instead, OMC adopted the philosophy that it would react to the market instead of it conceding to us.

"This explains why our Cushman line evolved into a 'system' for turf care," he says. "We're constantly listening to what is needed around the world in turf-care equipment and reacting with units developed specifically for the tasks at hand."

For example, in 1965 Cushman

Today's Cushman Truckster, adapted in 1963 from an industrial Haulster and redesigned in 1981.

manufactured a Haulster vehicle having an 800-lb. payload and the buyer could add several integrated accessories to the 3-wheeled units. A sprayer, cyclone seeder and fertilizer spreader were available. A fiberglass cab, snow plow, tool box, stake rack and passenger seat were other options. The players on the course may have related to Cushman golf cars, but the superintendent working alongside them was quite often using a Cushman vehicle with a directly related mission, McDonald observed.

In 1966 a Cushman model with a half-ton payload rolled out. It had a six-speed, dual-range transmission and variable-ground speed governor to lend operational discipline and flexibility to the chores served. A year later, this translated into an even more newsworthy thrust—a

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SPRAYER WAS JOHN DEERE'S FIRST LANDSCAPE PRODUCT



Two generations of John Deere lawn and garden tractors, the 1964 model of the 8-hp 110 Tractor (right) and the 1981 model of the 14-hp 214 Tractor.

John Deere entered the landscape business in 1962, the same year that *Weeds, Trees & Turf* began publishing. The first John Deere landscape product was the No. 5 Lawn and Garden Sprayer. In 1963, John Deere built its first lawn and garden tractor, a 7 hp model 110 with such attachments as a center-mounted mower, snow thrower and front blade. The 110 provided a three speed trans-axle with a special feature: variable speed drive varied ratios on a belt and pulley system to allow the operator to slow down or speed up any gear without clutching and shifting. The tractor was available only through John Deere agricultural equipment dealers in the eastern part of the United States in 1963. An 8-hp 4-speed version of the tractor was sold through most John Deere agricultural dealers in the United States and Canada in 1964. The tractor was manufactured at the John Deere Horicon Works in Horicon, Wisconsin.

During the early 1960's, the Horicon Works became the world's largest producer of agricultural grain drills (mechanical seeders). But, because grain drill sales were subject to seasonal fluctuations, the

John Deere organization sought a product line that would help the factory use its facilities more uniformly.

Gary Lindquist, division manager, grounds care at the Horicon works, explained why John Deere entered the outdoor power equipment business. "We had several research studies done for us on the lawn care business in the early 1960's. At that time, there appeared to be good potential for growth in this market. The research also determined that lawn care products would provide additional sales for John Deere agricultural equipment dealers. We found that the John Deere reputation for building high quality farm tractors and implements would help our CP (consumer products) business in rural areas, providing a strong springboard to sales in suburban areas. One of our early goals was to develop independent CP dealerships to help us penetrate the suburban, nonfarm market. It remains an important objective for our organization."

In 1966 John Deere added a 6-hp 60 Lawn Tractor and a 10-hp 112 Lawn and Garden Tractor. John Deere produced a 14-hp 140 Hy-

drostatic Tractor in 1967.

John Deere introduced a new utility tractor in 1968. The 820 Tractor was powered by a 3-cylinder diesel engine producing 31 hp at the PTO. It was manufactured at a John Deere factory in Mannheim, West Germany, and marketed in North America through the John Deere Tractor Works in Waterloo, IA.

During 1969, John Deere's Horicon Works experimented with custom colors, providing some lawn and garden tractors with seats and hoods of orange, red, yellow and blue—instead of the traditional green hood with yellow seat and wheels. It was soon found that customers preferred the green and yellow combination. "Once you establish a good reputation, your colors come to represent that reputation," said Lindquist.

Another significant event occurred in 1969. The Horicon lawn care equipment business had grown to such an extent that the production of grain drills was transferred to a John Deere factory in Iowa. The Horicon Works began devoting all its time and energy to the development of consumer products.

In 1970 John Deere replaced its 60 Lawn Tractor with a 7-hp 70 Lawn Tractor, and expanded the lawn care line to include six models of walk-behind rotary mowers, two riding mowers, lawn sweepers and a 12-hp 120 Hydrostatic Tractor. Walk-behind tillers and snow blowers joined the line in 1971. From 1972 to 1974, John Deere added an electric-powered riding mower, dumpcarts, and gasoline-powered edger-trimmers.

The 820 Utility Tractor was replaced in 1973 by a more powerful Mannheim-built tractor—the 830 developed 35 hp at the PTO. It was powered by a 3-cylinder diesel engine and featured an 8-speed transmission with 2-lever control and built-in shuttle shift.

1974 was a pivotal year for John Deere. The company introduced what it termed the “second generation” of lawn and garden tractors, lawn tractors and riding mowers for sale in 1975. “We put side panels on the tractors and enclosed the engines for quiet operation,” according to Lindquist. “We styled the tractors so they would have a family resemblance to John Deere farm tractors, a feature that we

thought would appeal to both rural and suburban customers. We were the first manufacturer to offer a complete line of quiet lawn and garden tractors and riding mowers.”

On January 12, 1977, the Horicon Works celebrated a milestone by manufacturing its half-millionth tractor. The event pointed up the dramatic progress the factory had made in only 15 years. Factory plant area had increased by 81 percent, and average yearly employment had more than doubled.

John Deere added compact utility diesel tractors to its grounds care line in 1978. The 22-PTO-hp 850 and the 27-PTO-hp 950 are marketed through the John Deere Tractor Works in Waterloo. Both tractors are powered by 3-cylinder diesel engines. A 33-PTO-hp 1050 Tractor joined the line in 1979. The 1050 is powered by a turbo-charged 3-cylinder diesel engine. An MFWD (mechanical front wheel drive) option gives the 1050 positive traction in mud, slush and snow. The MFWD option was extended to the 950 as well.

In 1981 John Deere added two more compact utility diesel trac-

tors: the 14.5-PTO-hp 650 with a 2-cylinder diesel engine, and the 18-PTO-hp 750 with a 3-cylinder diesel engine. Johnny A. Dickinson, division manager, utility tractors at the Waterloo factory, said, “These new diesel tractors are designed to fill the gap between John Deere gasoline-powered lawn and garden tractors and our higher-horsepower diesel tractors. Our research shows that prospects require a greater range of forward speeds than is now available in many competitive tractors. They want ample ground clearance, a compact size for storage in a utility shed, a more convenient implement attaching system, and the availability of a full line of implements. Our compact utility diesel tractors meet these objectives.”

The lawn tractor business has been a significant growth area for the John Deere consumer products organization. From 1977 to 1981, the annual production at the Horicon Works has increased by 1041 percent.

The most recent addition to the John Deere compact utility tractor line is the 1250—a 40-PTO-hp diesel tractor.

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full model line.

The 1967 models were dedicated designs for turf care. There was an 18-hp Turf-Truckster vehicle having a pickup-style bed, an 8-hp unit with the same feature and one having a stripped chassis. A unit oddly enough named the Lobster had an 8-hp engine, along with a sister unit powered by a 5-hp engine to provide personnel transports.

Always sensitive to the user, OMC Lincoln entered the 1968 season with a 12-hp Turf-Truckster and beefed up the 5-hp Minute-Miser vehicle with a 6-hp engine. A new sprayer having rear boom delivery operated by the vehicle PTO emerged as another innovation.

The 1969 season evolved into Truckster vehicles powered by 18-hp, air-cooled engines equipped with pickup beds, wide-box dumpbeds and a 12-hp pickup and dumpbed were other options.

McDonald notes with pride the 18-hp OMC engine's legacy of durability and performance. While major automakers were constantly building bigger blocks, OMC Lincoln decided to make its engine simply better with ongoing refinements of the same standard design.

The '60s rolled out and the '70s in with the unveiling of a 4-wheeled truckster. The Lobster lost its niche in the product line, however, just as the Cushman Eagle motorscooter did in 1965. The demand simply wasn't there, so OMC Lincoln focused its product emphasis elsewhere.

The year 1973 reflects that fact. OMC Lincoln was heralded then for introducing its quick-change, pin-disconnect system on Turf-care units. The ability to promptly swap utility beds and accessories saved manhours and lended new flexibility in a vehicle having consolidated roles. That year the firm also introduced its Runabout vehi-

cle which has become a mainstay in its turf industry marketing.

“That one feature placed us so far ahead of the competition that we didn't undertake another major refinement until 1978,” McDonald notes. “That year, however, we introduced our radial frame on the Runabout and added a Greensaver aerator attachment to those accessories already established. The Turf Minute-Miser went the way of the Lobster. In 1979, we began marketing a 2-seat Runabout and the following year a power converter to accommodate the growing number of electric tools used out on the course.”

The Turfcart model followed a year later, providing the industry with a low-cost transport for minor chores. Cushman begins 1982 with a totally redesigned model line.

“The industry is unique so we will continue listening to what it needs and reacting accordingly,” McDonald predicts. “We intend to maintain our role as a bellwether.”