

A different story about opening the Slabtown cornfield.

Pa planted Clarence McAlpine's newly plowed field to corn in 1950. It had been pastured for many years and produced a good crop of corn. That Fall Pa had me help open corn fields. I would drive the 8N with a trailer, while he picked the two rows of corn that I ran down. The rows were close to the perimeter fence, so we needed to hand pick all the way around the field. That was easy on three sides of the field. Those three sides bordered on roads or driveways. The four side, the south side, was bounded by the Crow River. It wasn't just the river though. The river made a bend to the east after following the county road. It still does. The riverbank was very steep and high, to me. On the south end the rows curved to follow the riverbank. We picked the two rows along the road. Pa made it easy for me by turning the sharp corners for me. Then all I had to do was follow the curvy corn rows.

I could see over the bank to the river far below on my right. I was doing OK, just creeping along, when the right front wheel fell into a washout to the river. Both front wheels cranked sharply to the right as the steering wheel spun out of my hands. I wasn't expecting that. Even at that slow speed it seemed to take forever for me to regain my wits and stand on the clutch. Pa was running to the tractor.

He climbed over the tractor from the back and pushed the brake pedals down with both hands. When the tractor stopped, I broke a wooden fence post-off.

The tractor was teetering between the field and that steep bank. I could not imagine how we could keep the tractor slipping down the bank and into the river. I thought I had ruined Pa's tractor.

Pa always knew what to do.

He turned the engine off with the key, while still holding the brakes.

He told me to step off the clutch and get out of the way by going into the corn a few rows.

The tractor was still in low gear, in no immediate danger.

Pa simply stepped on the brakes, put the tractor in neutral and restarted it, straightened the front wheels with the steering wheel, stood on the brake of the rear wheel that was in the air, and let the hard-pressed rear wheel back the tractor and trailer into the field.

I learned a lot that day.



Pa on his Ford 9N

hands.