

Rolling Pa's 300 International.

It was mid-winter 1958 and I was twelve. I think it was a Saturday. We had heavy 12-inch snow fall that morning. Anna Croteau was stuck in her yard. Croteau's farm was a little over two miles away over gravel roads. I was sent to pull her out with 300 International Utility tractor. The 300 had a green canvas winter cab, with thin plexiglass windows like in the second photo.



Brother Jim on the 300 Utility Tractor

It was originally made by the "Hauser" company, which named it the "Heat Hauser" as a pun.

This brand of winter cab was very popular from 1950s until year-around tractor cabs became available in the 1970s.

Pulling Anna's car was an easy job.

By the time I was driving home it warmed into the 30s.

That made the fresh snow wet and slippery.

My winter clothes and the canvas cab made the ride home toasty and fun.

I was traveling as fast as the tractor could go on the north-south section of gravel that ran by our round pond.

Much too fast.

None of the roads were plowed.

Only a couple of heavy trucks had passed by.

I was drifting gradually toward the right ditch, so I touched the left brake pedal with my foot.

To my surprise, the left rear wheel locked and slid on the snow until I lifted my foot from the pedal.

Now I was drifting gradually toward the left ditch, I put my foot on the right brake pedal.

I got the same result.

This was fun.

So, I did the same thing, over and over and over.

At full speed!

The road was wide, but not wide enough.

After a quarter mile of this fun, but risky behavior, two things were happening.

With each swerve the tractor was getting closer to the ditch, and each time the ditch was getting deeper.

I finally saw the danger, but foolishly I tried to remedy the danger by stepping on both brakes.

Instantly the tractor sailed off the road and down a 15-foot embankment to our pasture below.

The tractor left the road at an angle which caused it to roll while airborne.

It landed upside down except one rear wheel was resting against the power pole at the edge of ditch.



Farmall 300 with a Canvas Heat Hauser



This third photo shows the road embankment as the road passed by our round pond.

Unfortunately, the photo does not show the slope to the left (south) where I actually left the road. The ditch bank is at least 30 feet high from the road surface to the pond surface. The tractor should have rolled over completely as shown on the “crush zone” sketch. In which case you would not be reading this story, because I would not have lived to write it. What actually happened is the tractor flipped over with the rear wheel resting on a sturdy power line pole.

The tractor left the road above at 18 miles per hour.

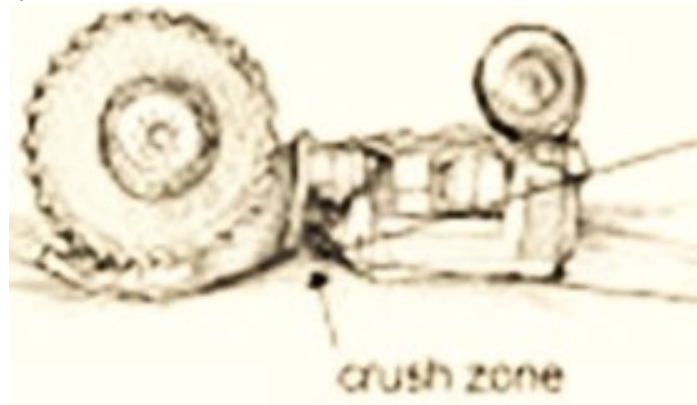
That the pole would be in the right place to catch the rear wheel of the tractor is incredible.

But that the forward motion of the machine, stopped precisely at power pole, is astronomically unlikely.

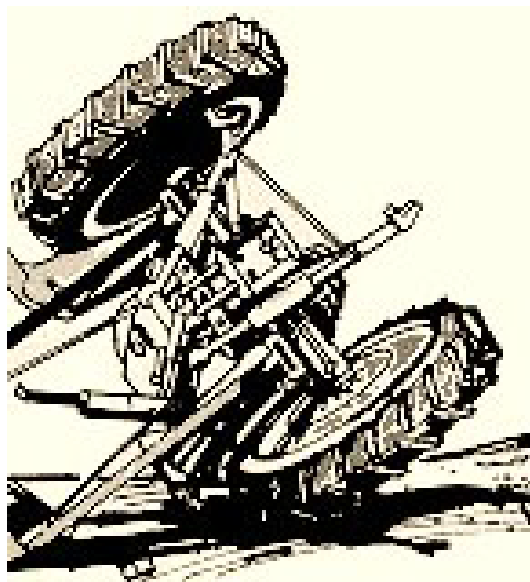
I was unconscious for a short time, I think.

Of course, the tractor was not running.

The Heat Hauser was partially crushed around me, I crawled out.



This is the way the tractor would have landed.



Imagine the power line pole on the left.

It was a quarter mile to home through the pasture. I recall that my head hurt and my thinking was very fuzzy. In fact, I think I walked home but somebody remembers picking me out the pasture I would not argue. The clear memory I have is of Pa carrying me to the sofa. Then a doctor walked in carrying a small bag and examined me. It was the senior doctor from the Elk River Clinic. Was that Doctor Roeke?

The 300 was not damaged and ran fine when righted. Pa straightened the canvas and tube steel Heat Hauser. Pa never said a thing about it, as was his way. Sonny Lindenfesler may have brought his tractor over to help to right the tractor. In any case Sonny knew exactly what I had done. Sonny teased me about it for years. Tom.

About the Rogers to Elk River Road that ran past our round pond.

Ma recalled traveling that road in Grandpa Tommy's one-horse buggy.

Before the road was improved, passengers would have to get out and walk up the northside slope from the round pond.

Also, **an ancient channel of Interglacial Crow River** crossed here our round and long ponds, and Corbin's and Schwab's ponds.

I have written about that.

Tom.