



Vintage Garden Tractor Club of America

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If Only

Did you ever wonder the life history behind the "old iron" that you collect? Did you ever wish you knew what your piece did in its lifetime? Well, I sure wonder what my B1-3 ROTOTILLER did in its years of service and why it was left to rust away sitting in the mud somewhere.

My tiller is the last version of the model B1-3 that Rototiller, Inc. made before selling the manufacturing rights of this machine to Graham-Paige Motors. There were 2 versions of this tiller, the first having a one-piece gas tank and engine shroud, the second having a separate gas tank and shroud. The B1-3 came with either a Tillotson or Amal carburetor. I have seen 2 different intake/exhaust manifold combinations for the Tillotson carb. I believe mine was made in the year 1944, but cannot be sure since the data tag is missing.

Rototiller, Inc. was started in Long Island City, NY by Cadwallader Washburn Kelsey in 1930 by importing tillers made by Siemens from Germany and two years later, SIMAR tillers from Switzerland. In 1934 Kelsey made the Model AA using the SIMAR engine design. Next came the A-1, first tiller built by Rototiller, Inc. in Troy, NY followed by the B1, B1-2, and B1-3.

I bought my B1-3 in 2000 with everything but the wheels rusted and stuck. I worked at freeing up the easy stuff first. I dumped penetrating oil in the top of the piston in hopes of freeing up the piston. I wanted to be patient and not break any engine parts. So, until 2006 I would add oil to the engine every year around the time of my local show and give the piston a couple of whacks with a hammer and drift, but it would not budge.

In 2006 at my local show a fellow came with two B1-3s and a B1, all in running condition. Now I wanted to get serious with my B1-3 and get it running. In an attempt to get the piston unstuck, I broke the top of the cylinder off just below the end of the studs for the head. Talk about being deflated, I thought this project was dead in its tracks. I went ahead and disassembled the engine. Turns out I never had a chance, the lower end had been full of water at one time as it was setting outside with no air cleaner to shed water, plus the crankpin

was broken. In all those years of soaking, the oil never made it past the piston.

In a long shot effort, I emailed the fellow who I had met at my local show to see if he had any extra parts. Turns out he had bought a B1-2 parts machine and could sell me the cylinder, crankshaft, connecting rod, and piston. Well, the project was GO again. I bought a set of rings from Otto Gas Engine Works, replaced the crankshaft seals, and now was able to assemble the engine.

On to the transmission and of course more problems, instead of the axle shaft having splines to mate with the wheel drive clutch, it had 4 quarter inch keys. The key seats were worn and the keys were twisted and one was missing plus at one time one escaped through a hole in the bottom of the case that had been patched. I applied J-B Weld® over the existing patch to the transmission case. New keys were fitted and installed using a little Quick Metal® to, hopefully, keep the keys tight.

After painting all the parts and starting the process of reassembly, I ran into one more obstacle, there was no room for the quarter inch copper fuel line fitting between the carburetor and engine shroud. The cylinder from the B1-2 was not the same as the original B1-3 cylinder. The original cylinder was a quarter inch thicker in the manifold area, which moved the carburetor away and allowed room for the fuel line. Time was running out until my local show. You know how one tends to save stuff? Well, I had saved these very small copper elbows that were threaded on one end and made for 3/16" hose on the other end and fit perfectly in the space between the carburetor and engine sheet metal. After some adjustments, I finally got it running the morning I loaded my tillers for the show. It sure was good to hear that old two-stroke come to life after who knows how many years of silence. The tine cover needs work before I can tear up some ground, but for now I am happy to hear it run.

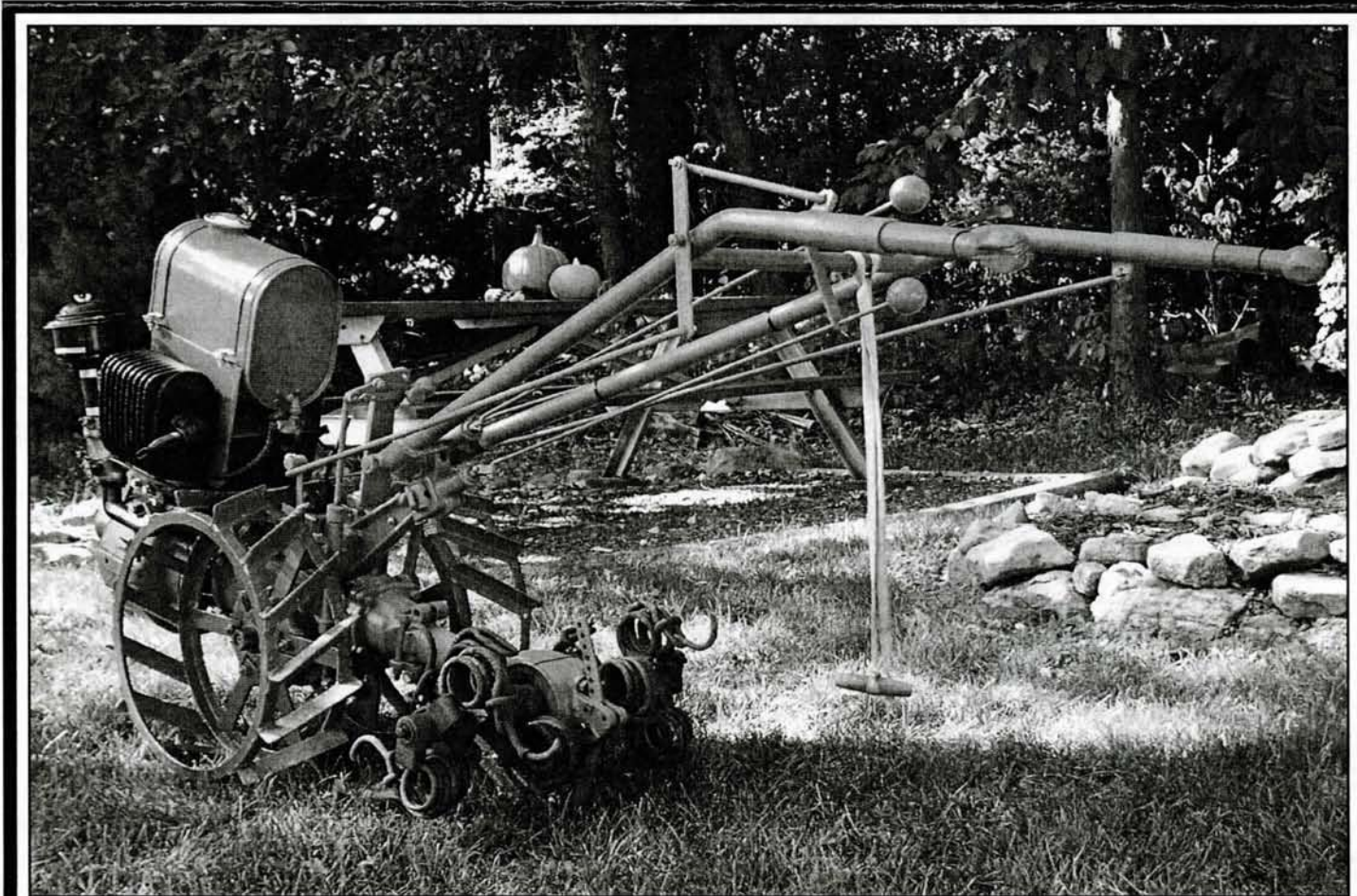
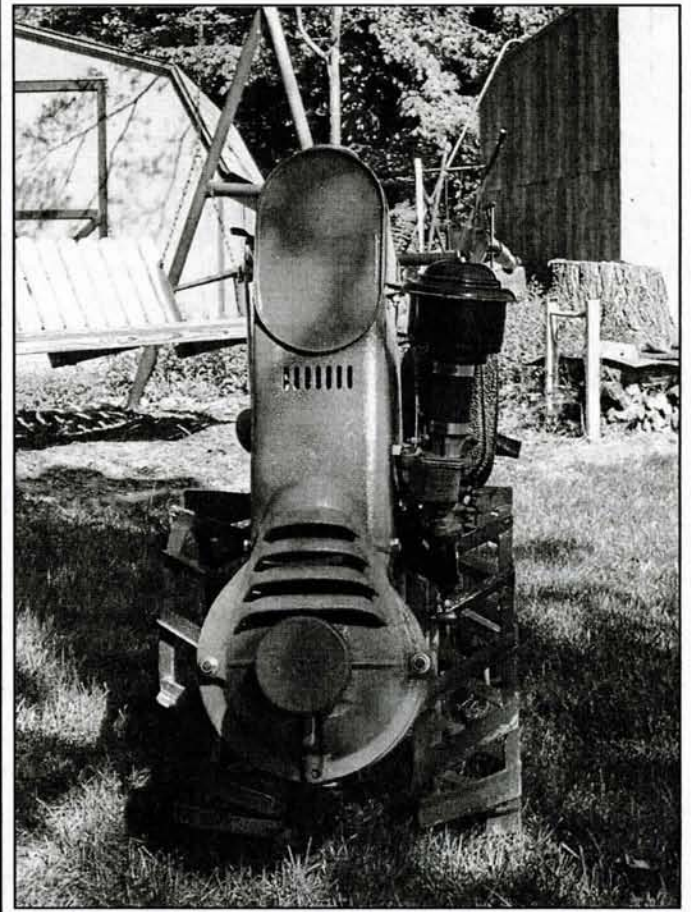
This spring I made a trip to Troy, NY to meet with some former employees of Troy-Bilt. Two of these employees had fathers whom worked for Rototiller, Inc. and had many great stories to tell. I learned that Rototiller built two prototype B1-4 tillers, one

went to Graham-Paige, and the other went to Kelsey. G-P needed a product to make after the war and approached Rototiller about building the large commercial type machine. The B1-4 evolved into the B1-6 "Frazer Rototiller", which became very popular for the few years that they were produced. A lot more history and a fine collection of Rototiller and Troy-Bilt tillers can be seen at **The Burden Iron Works Museum**, headquarters for the Hudson Mohawk Industrial Gateway in Troy, NY. If you are ever near Troy, contact them for a tour of the museum and a history lesson on just how productive and important this town was.

I collect tillers made by, sold by, or sold under the name of ROTOTILLER. You can learn more about my collection at

www.zucksrototillers.com

*Charlie Zuck
Elizabethtown, Pa.*



Meet Charlie Zuck

Charlie is an Industrial Maintenance Mechanic for an aluminum rolling mill just outside of Lancaster, PA. In March of 2008 he will have been employed there 40 years. He is currently working for Alcoa which is the third different owner of this plant.

Charlie says he is married to a wonderful and understanding wife, Gloria, and has three married sons. He has also been blessed with two grandchildren, a boy and a girl. His grandson, Tyler, loves Charlie's old rototillers.

Rototillers are not Charlie's only interests. He has always had older lawn and garden equipment simply because he just likes older equip-

ment. He has two older Cub Cadets (70 & 147) that are workers. He has had the B1-6 Rototiller since 1977 but didn't really start collecting until 2000. Prior to that it was strictly a working machine.

All of the photographs for this article were taken outside Charlie's house. The cover photos were taken in Charlie's front yard. What a view!! The others were taken in the back yard.

Charlie also enjoys photography. Before he became a collector, he would go to shows and photograph all kinds of old iron.

In Charlie's own words; "I have met so many great people through going to shows and my website. The Internet has been a great tool to gain information and meet people from the US and literally around the world. As I said in the article, my highlight this year was to go to Troy, NY and see the original factory and meet people associated with Troy-Bilt and Rototiller.

