



My Agricat Story

By Ken Baker

While attending a farm auction in Taylor, Arizona, I was talking with Harold Shirley about what I was hoping to find. I told him I was looking for a small, gas-powered Caterpillar, and he said he just might have something I'd be interested in seeing. He had an Agricat Model C mini-dozer with blade and ripper in a storage lot in Sun Lakes, AZ. We connected a couple of months later. It hadn't run in several years, so we had to clean out the fuel system before we could start it. We were able to get it running well enough to get it loaded and unloaded. I want to thank Harold for all of his help with the starting and loading of the Agricat.

I wanted to show it at the Apache Junction, AZ show in March 2017, but discovered that the top piston ring was in pieces in the muffler the week before the show. Not wanting to have the piston break-up and destroy the motor, there wasn't time to rebuild or find another motor before the 2017 AJ show. So I contacted Paul Vander Hulst (briggsplanet@AOL.com) who is the Southwest Director of VGTCOA for a good used engine. He had a Briggs & Stratton Model 23 which is an exact replacement of the original. I want to thank Paul for a great engine. I serviced the fuel system, ignition and checked the compression. (100 PSI!) It started and ran well, except for one thing, there was an internal leak in the carburetor. I found that the main jet/emulsion tube was not sealing to the carb body. Burnishing of seal area resolved the problem. Now it ran clean with no fuel leaks.

My wife, Rhonda, helped me clean-up the tractor, made a couple of parts runs and helped with the removal of the old engine and installation of the new one. We got the Agricat running the day before the show, so we did make the 2018 AEDGETA Show in Apache Junction, AZ.

There was a lot of interest and discussion on Saturday about the Agricat. I met one gentleman who had actually sold Agricats back in the 1950s. He had lots of stories, but one particular one he related was by his account the scariest thing he had ever seen anyone do on an Agricat. He took one out to demonstrate at a demolition site of a six-story building. They used a crane to lift it to the sixth floor where the operator used the Agricat to shove debris into a central hole. He would get so near the edge it appeared that operator and machine would soon go down the hole as well. There were several other guys who had interesting stories to relate about their experiences with Agricats.

Apparently, these little powerhouses were built in California back in the late 1940's through the 1960's. They were often sold to landscapers probably because of their size and ability to get into small places. Sometime in the late 1950's or early 1960's, they were sued by Caterpillar because of the use of 'cat' in their name. Caterpillar won and Agricats became known as Agritracs. They were later bought out by a competitor, Trackmaster, and eventually disappeared from the market. However, within a few years, Trackmaster also disappeared due to the introduction of the Bobcat. There are still a few around and if you're lucky you may see one at a local vintage tractor show sometime.

There remain a few things to finish-up on my little "Ruff Rider" before the next show, the turning brakes being one of them, a rather important item. I want it to be ready for the parade and the pulling competition.

I would really like to thank Harold Shirley, Paul Vander Hulst, and my wife Rhonda, for their help with the Agricat. It has been a wonderful project and a lot of fun. I can be contacted at gkbaker@yahoo.com.

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