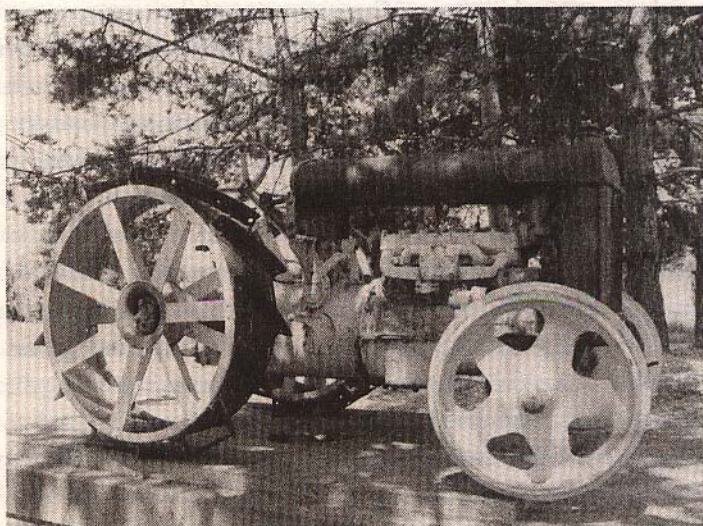

DON'T KILL YOUR CUSTOMERS

HENRY FORD'S FLIPPING FORDSON



The Fordson tractor was famous for flipping over, often with fatal results for the driver.

1863-1947

PTO technology approached the problem of operating agricultural equipment from first principles — looking at the task to be accomplished and the technology available and inventing a way to do it better. The Fordson, on the other hand, was just a horseless horse. Unlike the Model T, the Fordson was not designed based on first principles to make the best machine possible for the job.

A more drastic design fault was the vehicle's tendency to flip front over back, sometimes with fatal results. A couple of agricultural rags published statistics and lists of farmers who'd been killed driving it. *Pipp's Weekly* in 1922 attributed 136 dead farmers to the flipping Fordson. Someone suggested Ford make up a decal for the vehicle for drivers to read prior to start-up, "Prepare to meet thy maker." Some of the accidents happened when a plow hit a large boulder or other obstruction that the tractor could not pull. The engine turned the sprocket, the sprocket turned the back wheels, but the tractor could not go anywhere, except up. The short wheelbase and relatively light front end of the Fordson contributed to the tendency of the front wheels to rear upward and over. Ford later added large rear fenders to the Fordson, which helped prevent this kind of accident.

A farmer named Bill, who currently chats on the Yesterday's Tractor forum, remembers an experience his bachelor uncle had with a Fordson in the United States — one of last new Model Fs with optional rear fenders:

The Fordson was not without its little quirks. One of them being hard to start when hot. Another was having no brakes. Another was that, while idling, they had a bad habit of jumping into gear all on their own. Farmers who came in at noon for lunch and left them running would sometimes see them going across the lawn all on their own. My uncle had his Fordson sitting in the yard idling while he was working nearby. The Fordson, true to form, jumped into gear and headed straight for the silo. My uncle couldn't catch it before it plowed into the silo, climbed right up the silo and did one of its famous back flips and, in spite of being made almost completely of steel, caught fire and burned beyond