

FORD TRUCK TIMES

march-april 1950



Artist Yale Gracey's cover painting is of the busy harbor of Ketchikan, gateway to Alaska. This city is cut off from the outside world except by air or steamship, has but 24 miles of roads, yet nearly everyone has a car or truck. The Ford truck pictured is employed in Ketchikan's busy fishing industry. A new paper mill will soon increase the town's business.

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With an assist from the tractor, the big F-8 backs down the steep levee slope to dump its 10,000 pounds of red hot mix.

Action on the Levee

by Roland Neff

paintings by Thomas Marker

FOR MANY YEARS river engineers have been hard put to keep the treacherous Lower Mississippi within her muddy banks. Levees were built, willow mattresses were sunk along the water's edge, but still the river would break away from time to time.

Experiments conducted late last year on the Arkansas shore

between Memphis and Helena appear to be a permanent answer to the problem of washing. Large expanses of levee siding were hard-coated with a "hot mix" of sand and asphalt which set into a solid pavement for the river bank.

A fleet of F-8 trucks with dump bodies, hauling up to 10,000 pounds of the smoking, bubbling mix, had a large part in winning the battle against stream action. This fleet outmoded a former method of spreading the hot mix with draglines and buckets.

A furnace mounted on a barge was first used to melt the asphalt and sand. It cooked the mix into a boiling mass of 217 degrees Fahrenheit. The F-8's were backed down the 33.3-degree levee slope and onto the barge to be loaded. In wet weather the trucks were speeded down the grade in reverse gear to avoid miring, and a tractor with steel cable was stationed on the levee top to aid them in the loaded uphill run through the muck.

Once on top, the trucks would race their seething cargos from 500 to 1,500 yards to unload before the mix cooled below 175 degrees. At the site the F-8's again dipped down the levee slope and dumped their loads like so much incandescent mo-

A panorama of the levee paving operation. F-8 in center is taking on sand while others on levee top race their seething loads to paving site.



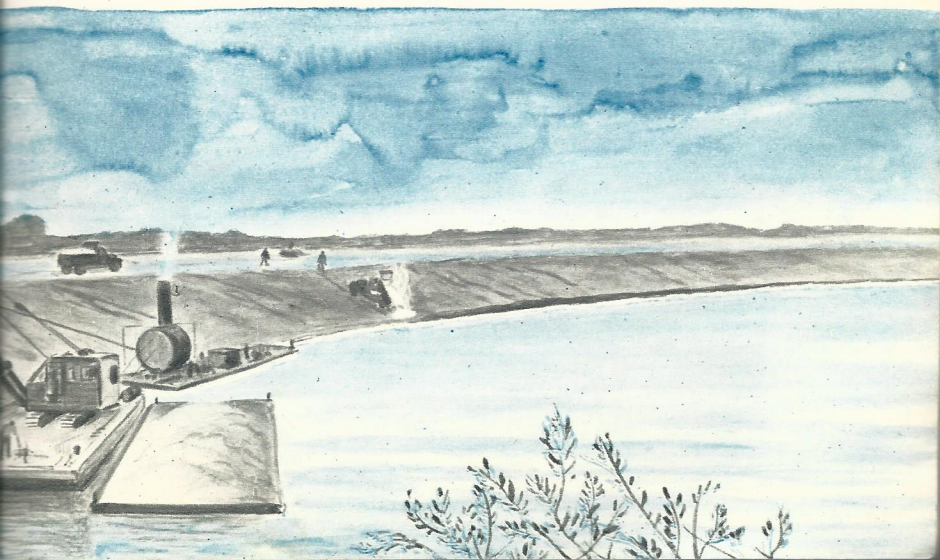
lasses. The mix spread evenly down the levee side with an average thickness of six inches, flowing into a strip of concrete blocks placed just beneath the water's edge to prevent undermining. Individual strips of levee paving may vary from four to seven inches in thickness, depending on the job.

Two hours after pouring, the mix had set into a solid mass of pavement, firmly connected with the concrete blocks below, and extending to the top of the levee.

Satisfied that the new idea would work, the engineers next tried a stationary mixing furnace at the top of the levee. It successfully fed the fleet of F-8's which packed the hot applications on Old Man River's elbows at double quick time. The stationary furnace freed the barge to travel up and down the river and attend to emergency fills.

The stationary plant was located at what the United States Engineer Department designates as Mile 615 APH, which is counting miles northward from Ahead of the Passes, a river juncture below New Orleans. At that point, 40 miles below Helena, the Mississippi is half a mile wide.

The longest continuous stretch of levee paving was two and one-third miles, where the accompanying painting was done. Eight smaller areas of varying sizes were also completed last year. The truck system has already been repeated in 1950, in January, when the river began chewing into a bend along



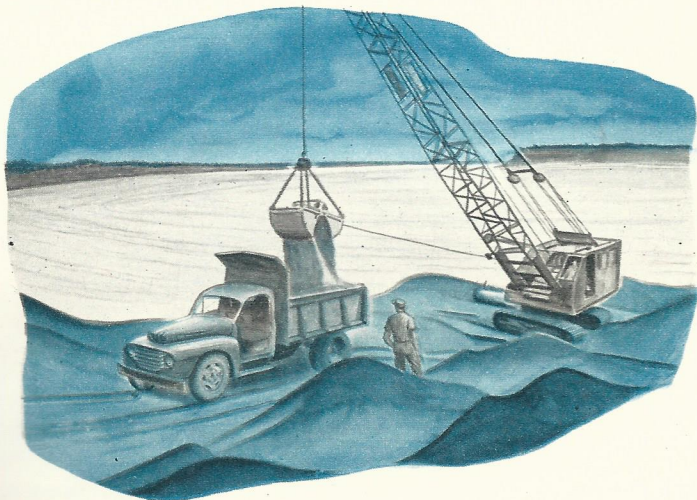
the Mississippi state shoreline, about a quarter of a mile north of the east landing for the Helena ferry.

The F-8's are purely stock models, mechanically. The only variations are addition of steel "fish plate" reinforcing pieces along each side of the frame, and a steel hook welded in the center of the front bumper. Steel cable is welded to the plates and pulled through the hook, forming a stress-defying V when the tractor must be connected.

Six-inch sideboards are attached to the bed to keep the load from splashing out, and the cab doors are removed so that the driver can make a quick getaway in case of accident. However, no driver has had to make the hasty exit.

Strength of the cooled mixture was accidentally evidenced when a truck dropped its rear wheels too low in the levee gumbo, allowing about half the load to pour out prematurely. The remaining contents solidified so fast that a fair-sized charge of dynamite was required within thirty minutes to clear the dump and let the truck roll free again.

The big F-8's rolled along twenty-four hours a day for weeks at Mile 615, averaging thirty-five trips per truck per eight-hour shift. They stockpiled eight-ton sand loads from barges to the stationary plant whenever they got ahead of their pouring schedule. They needed no major repairs in that time, despite absolute lack of maintenance facilities in the isolated river bottoms.





*"There's something bonus built in your future,
a girl or a truck . . . I can't tell which!"*



Prehistoric Big Rig

by A. J. Sandstrom

HURD, the famed magician, had more than rabbits under his hat. He had some clever ideas, as the above photograph points out.

Being "one of the best," Hurd naturally had a modest desire to give the citizens of all the hamlets and whistlestops along the open road a chance to see his skill, but he undoubtedly had a problem when it came to carting his load of wizardry on the rutted, muddy

byways of the day. The solution was a natural choice, the model T truck, to which he attached a 14-foot trailer. Across this rig he splashed a suitable ad and his name in bold letters. He had a caravan to rival Toad's gypsy wagon. Could this be the granddad of today's big rigs?

The power line running into the trailer, and the glass-paned rear door, indicate that it con-



tained living space for the magician and his apprentice, the truck itself probably carrying their equipment and supplies. Reminiscent of the horse-drawn red and gold circus wagons of the early century, Hurd's "T" truck-trailer was also a forerunner of the modern motorized units that now haul massive sideshow and carnival equipment.

The question is, where did mystery-man Hurd go, and for that matter, where did he come from? The above picture turned up in Portland, Oregon, found in a long vacated building by a con-

tractor about to tear the place down. It is believed that Hurd and his road-show were active in the early twenties or before, but old timers don't seem to recall him. No other sign of his existence can be found. In the classics of the old masters he departed as any magician should: he disappeared.

The many offspring of his "T" truck-trailer remain with us, however. Today more than half the tonnage carried on our highways is handled by these big-rig combinations. It's not all due to the tricks of the famed magician but he gave the idea a start. ■

Stories of the Road

THE FORD TRUCK TIMES will pay \$25 each for true, unpublished stories of the road which are accepted for publication in this department. Humorous or unusual incidents that you have observed while hauling about the country are particularly eligible. The funnier they are, the better, but we won't mind considering tear jerkers. Keep your offering under 200 words and mail it to: Editor, *Ford Truck Times*, Ford Motor Company, Dearborn, Michigan. If you want your story returned, you must enclose return postage.

decorations by John Davenport



ONE EVENING as I passed a fish hatchery an owl flew into the top of my pickup truck and fell, instantly killed, into the cab between my shoulder and the door. At home before taking off my mackinaw I reached into the pocket for my pipe and found instead a trout about five and a half inches long that the owl had filched from the hatchery. I felt lucky that a game warden hadn't stopped me.

—ED S. GIVENS, Auburn, Washington



IN RAZING an old theater building in a town in Michigan's Upper Peninsula all the pipes from an old silent era organ were tossed out and some high school buddies and I salvaged one of the largest and by an ingenious arrangement hooked it up to the exhaust of our Ford pickup. We were happy when we found that it made a noise like the *Queen Mary's* whistle. Driving on a back country road we approached a farmer friend busy with his hay rake. Little thinking of the consequences, we greeted him with a loud blast. The horses, hay, and hay rake went flying, giving the farmer the roughest ride of his life before the team finally stopped. Through the dust we had a last glimpse of him shouting at the horses and waving a malicious fist at us.

—MARK HUDSON, Tempe, Arizona



ABOUT THREE YEARS AGO my mother and I accompanied my father and cousin to look at some timber. We had driven about six miles in our '39 Ford pickup when our radiator began to steam. Dad got out at a creek to put in some water, and when he raised the hood, out flew one of our old white hens. We finally caught her, tied her, and put her in the back. Then we discovered that she had laid an egg between the starter motor and the engine. Apparently the hen had come in from underneath to find her warm little nest. While Dad and my cousin looked at the timber, Mom and I built a fire and had roast egg.

—HOWARD FITZHUGH, Boswell, Arkansas



IN 1948 we purchased a new F-5 Ford truck which we like real well. But did you ever hear of a dog falling in love with a Ford truck? A little dog that came to our place and adopted us took a great liking to the truck from the start and began guarding it night and day. He can recognize its sound as it approaches. When we move the truck from one barn to another, the dog moves along with it, and the cab is his private bedroom. No one except ourselves can go near the truck, thanks to the dog's loving vigil.

—FRANK J. PAYNE, Kingsley, Pennsylvania



AS I WAS driving home from my afternoon's shopping, I turned off the main thoroughfare onto our quiet little street. The quietness ended, however, when I ran over a curb and hit a lamp post. Hurriedly I got out, looked at the damage, picked up all the loose debris I could find on the spot, and put it in the car trunk. Luckily the car started and I continued home. I ran into the house and reported the accident to my husband, who dashed out to take a look. He opened the trunk and exclaimed in bewilderment, "My dear, what are you doing with this man-hole cover?" I meekly replied that I had picked up everything that I thought had fallen off of the car.

—MRS. ROBERT MASON, Jacksonville, Florida



photograph by Forrest N. Yockey

Cinders Pay Off— a one-picture story

GETTING rid of cinders used to be a problem. Today scouts are paid good money to locate new supplies for block manufacturers. Popular because they're low in cost, easy to handle, and provide a natural insulating air space, cinder blocks are now used in thousands of structures of all types. In a typical plant, raw aggregates are crushed and screened, weighed, and mixed by machine, thence into shaping molds where vibrators form the blocks. These are ejected by a "stripper," then dried in 180-degree kilns. Ford platform trucks at the Colorado Duntile Products Company plant in Denver are shown being loaded from fork lift machines which can handle 3000 blocks per hour. Good use of efficient methods and equipment has made this a paying industry. ■



So You're Not Superstitious?

by Henry F. Unger

decorations by R. M. Kozlow

TENDERLY, the veteran trucker carries the tiny doll from the loading platform, enters his large trailer-truck, places the object gently in a niche above the driver's seat. His new driving companion watches with amazed eyes.

At a Cleveland loading platform, a tough trucker manages regularly to confuse traffic conditions. Just as he is about to back out of a crowded terminal, he leaps from his truck and slowly walks three times around his cornpopper.

Truckers are no longer surprised at a St. Paul terminal when a long-time driver climbs into his seat, his jacket bulging with a bulky object—the framed picture of his wife.

Crazy you'll say. But don't attempt to have these men locked up. You'll find that they are pillars in their communities—and incidentally addicted to a superstition. They are typical of truck drivers throughout the country—each with his pet superstition, revealed or extremely well hidden and known only to himself. Many are humorous but others are downright serious to the trucker involved.

The doll-bearing trucker would never think of wheeling out his truck without his doll beside him. His baby daughter's first gift—with the daughter now grown to womanhood—the doll to the trucker serves as a protection and a connection with the past.

The Cleveland trucker can't explain the reason for this three-time walk around his truck before starting out on a journey, but he maintains that the walk brings him good luck on his runs. The St. Paul trucker recalls a vivid incident in his life, and consequently never relinquishes the framed picture of his wife. He was stopped one night by a thug soon

after his marriage. A false move, a tussle, a running and firing bandit and the trucker was felled. Doctors discovered that the bullet had struck the heavy frame of the picture and warded off certain death. The trucker is playing out his hand and continuing to carry the framed picture for good luck.



Spotting red-haired women before starting out on a run is for some truckers the pronouncing of a death sentence. One Detroit knight of the road is so convinced of the bad luck omen of a red-haired woman that he will stop his truck, leap from the cab, inhale deeply and walk once around the many-wheeled job. He insists this breaks the spell. Another trucker always amazes his buddies by expectorating into his cap when he spots a titian-haired female—another evil-spell breaking move.

Friday for many drivers is not a particularly lucky day and many take steps to prevent any untoward accidents. Several truckers carry a rabbit's foot, the traditional good luck charm, in a handy pocket. A New York State trucker even engages in a ritual of removing his shoes before a run, switching them several times and then putting them on, ready and prepared for a safe trip.

Friday the 13th for many drivers is a day of rest—a day when they simply refuse to touch any phase of a truck operation. They are convinced that only ill luck would pursue them on such a day.

Hidden in pockets of numerous truckers are various trinkets and gadgets intended to ward off the supposed tempest certain to break over their heads. One Omaha trucker never drives without checking that seven coins rest in his left-side pocket. All types of lucky pieces are found in truckers' wallets. One fellow carries the first love letter from his present wife. He insists that since that letter was the beginning of a happy marriage, it will protect him in his daily runs with his truck.

Despite years after the war, one young driver still wears his air force flying cap. "It protected me during my aerial fights with the Germans—it ought to bring me luck on the highways," he tells you.

One regular driver along a Michigan highway never fails

to stop into a certain restaurant for a cup of coffee. He rarely buys anything else in the eatery. His stopover is definitely a superstition. Unexpectedly he stopped at the restaurant one afternoon. A few minutes later while he was drinking coffee, a horrible accident involved another trucker and a careless passenger-car driver. The coffee stop saved the driver—so he thinks—and religiously he continues to stop at the coffee-shop.

Don't laugh if you should spot a trucker rolling along wearing a derby hat. He has a reason. He was wearing the derby as a gag a few years ago when he suddenly avoided an oncoming careening car and ended up in a ditch. His head jolted against the dash board. The impact of the blow was broken by the strong derby. He has never driven without a derby since that day—convinced that it had saved his life and might do the job again in the future.

Pet superstitions have arisen among many truckers, their seriousness varying with the trucker's personality. To many, for instance, finding a worm on workday clothes, while seated in the truck cab, means a new suit of clothes. To others, singing before breakfast means tears before nightfall. Truckers exposed to winter driving often believe that consuming many onions eliminates the catching of colds. (Non-consumers have little doubt that it eliminates driver-helpers!) In the stop-over places for truckers, out comes the superstition that bad luck will dog the driver who puts on his trousers first. "Put your shirt on first and you'll have good luck for the day," is the cry of the superstitious.

Drivers often complain loud and long about license plates containing the number 13—in spite of the fact that finest drivers in the business pilot trucks with license plates bearing those so-called unlucky numbers. Many drivers have their own lucky number, and if it appears on their license plate they feel assured of safe highway rolling.

Practically any trucker will tell you it's not superstition—just a matter of good or bad luck. Of course, it could be a case of coincidence. But seriously—what is *your* superstition? ■



Irrigation water is pumped from Bayou Teche, at left in picture, into the rice paddies. This farm was re-claimed from virgin cypress swampland. →

Louisiana Rice

*story and paintings
by Ralph L. Wickiser*



ONE-HALF of the earth's population uses rice as its principal food item, yet to most Americans it is one of the least known of our many crops. Louisiana is the leading rice producing state because of its southern location and the abundance of water afforded by its many bayous.

One of the state's more prominent growers is O. L. Pollingue



In picture at left, the plane is sowing the rice seed. Man with flag guides aviator.



of Port Barre, who has been designated a "master farmer" by the *Progressive Farmer* magazine and by Louisiana State University. Mr. Pollingue started his farming career with Ford trucks, and was still using them last year when he harvested his thirty-second crop.

His farm totals 3,440 acres, 2,240 of which he reclaimed

At right, seed rice is loaded into the plane preparatory to the planting.



from virgin cypress swampland. He has built 16 miles of canals in draining and irrigating the land, put up 40 miles of fences, and cut 20 miles of roads. Since 1930 he has spent \$112,000 for dynamite alone.

Farmer Pollingue plants 850 acres in rice each year, allowing his other fields to stand unused for two years between plantings. The rice is grown under water not because it needs great quantities of it, but in order to keep down grass and weeds. The growing areas, called paddies, are formed by building small levees to hold the water at proper level. The water is pumped from the bayou into the canals, and thence into the paddies. A rice farm the size of the Pollingue place thus uses more water than a city of 25,000 people.

The paddies are filled in the spring, and the seed rice is placed in the canals to germinate, after which it is trucked to a small airplane which flies low over the paddies to sow it. Each germinated grain, or mother plant, will send up forty to fifty yellowish-green shoots.

As the plant grows, the top, or head, fills with milk, which turns to dough, and later becomes the ripened grain. When the latter stage, known as heading out, is reached, huge combines move into the fields to cut and thresh the golden crop.

The rice readily absorbs moisture and will sour if not dried within twenty-four hours after it is threshed, so harvest time finds rice growing turning into a high speed operation. The combines move along and thresh the crop. They are followed by tractors pulling rice buggies which are loaded and rushed over to the waiting Ford trucks.

Then begins a dash to the rice dryers which work twenty-four hours a day until the crop is dried. The operation is so fast that the trucks aren't unloaded in the normal way. The front wheels are run into a hoist and the front end is quickly lifted to a 70-degree angle, dumping the grain out in one large mass.

The acreage that is left unplanted for two years between crops is by no means wasted. Mr. Pollingue's 1,000 head of cattle fatten themselves on rice shoots and gleanings left behind by the combines. ■

Paintings at right are: 1. Mother rice plant "stooling out." 2. Unloading rice from combine to rice buggy. 3. Transferring grain to Ford truck. 4. Cutaway view of hoist lifting truck to dump rice. 5. Loading for rice mill. 6. Hauling sacked rice to warehouse for storage.



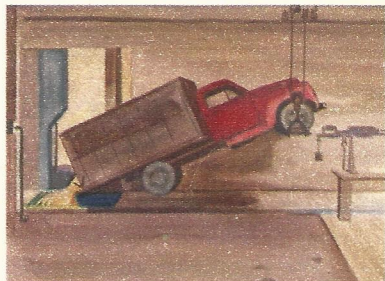
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Praise from a Lady

Truckmen cozily at home in their truck cabs may think it's strictly a man's world. They're invited to take another look. On nearly a third of our farms owning trucks there is no other family car. The following letter from an Arizona ranch wife, like many received from women who ride and drive these trucks, indicates that the Ford bonus of comfort and easy riding is well appreciated.

My Dear Sirs:

After many years we are the proud possessors of a new motor vehicle.

One doesn't usually think of trucks as being beautiful or speak of them in that way, but we think this one is, and it has been referred to by that term by countless persons since we have had it.

We purchased the F-2 three-quarter-ton pickup, and the color is gray. We find we have very excellent riding and driving comforts, even taking passenger cars into consideration. It is certainly the maximum in comfort of any truck we considered. We live on a ranch, on the roughest road in the U.S., I believe, and I know the truck is rugged enough to "take it"—and is beautiful too.

My husband has always driven for a living, and of course we chose our truck after much consideration and careful study; he knows motors and gears, forward and backward.

Every day that we drive it contributes to our pleasure no end. We took a rugged trip into the back country after wood yesterday, and, needless to say, my husband tested it thoroughly and was very well satisfied with the way it performed. We had wood stacked much higher than the cab, and even through sand it didn't pull as though it had a load on it.

We haven't as yet tested it under all conditions, but by what we have already driven we can see that everything you say about your trucks is true.

My husband has a job in addition to the ranch and at 4 a.m. in zero weather the motor starts at the touch of the starter

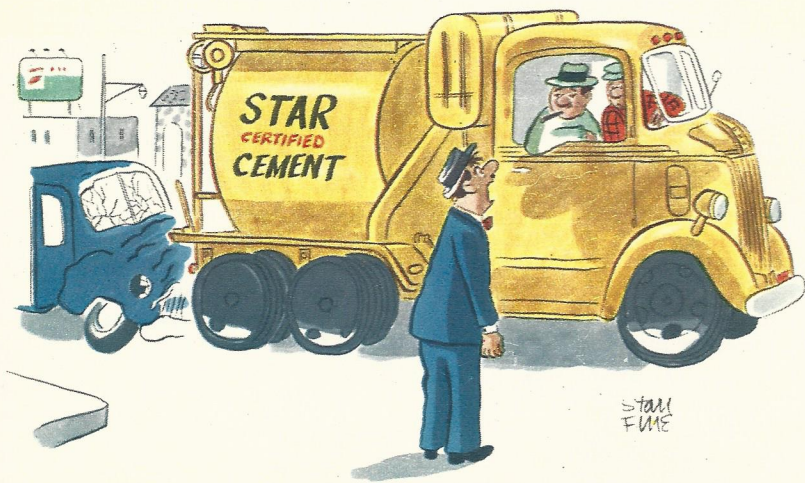
button, and our Ford heater starts giving off heat almost immediately.

We have a large family and financially it will be a hardship upon us until we are "owners" rather than "possessors," but we are convinced that when it is "ours" we will have something.

Your dealer in Holbrook, Mr. Dallas Guttery, is a very fine man. We were in to see him twice before we finally purchased the truck. He was never impatient; he always had time to talk it over with us and figure with us over a period of months. He was always courteous and friendly, and bent over backwards being helpful so that we could have a *new* truck.

I'm a novice at this sort of thing, this being the first letter of its kind I've ever written, but I simply felt I had to tell you how proud, happy, and pleased we are with our new Ford truck.

Sincerely yours,
MRS. D. A. TERPSTRA
Holbrook, Arizona



"Didn't you guys hear me plow into you?"

F-7 Firewater

photographs by C. L. Kirk, Jr.

THE SLEEK new F-7 fire truck shown opposite is the pride of the Volunteer Fire Department and the citizens of Brownsburg, Indiana, a town of about 1,100 on State 24 some 20 miles northwest of Indianapolis. Engineered and designed by the Midwest Fire and Safety Equipment Company of Indianapolis, the unit, known as the Big Four, is in increasing demand throughout the country.

An official of the equipment company said that seven out of eight orders specify that the firefighting apparatus be built on the F-7 chassis because of its power, speed, and lower cost than the custom units.

The most unusual feature about the Brownsburg truck is that it brings four different kinds of water to a fire, all designed to provide maximum efficiency per gallon of firefighting water in suburban and rural areas where there may be no other source other than the truck's tanks.

The truck can bring the following to bear on Brownsburg fires:

Standard water under a maximum flow of 690 gallons per minute; "wet" water which has been treated with a chemical to reduce surface tension; foam, and high pressure fog at 700 to 800 pounds per square inch.

The "wet" water penetrates three times as quickly as ordinary water, hence the truck's 500-gallon supply is equal to 1,500 gallons. This type is effective on burning mattresses, cotton bales, hay in the barn, wooden shingles, or like fires.

Fog and foam are used for gas, gasoline, or oil fires which require smothering. The fog gun uses only 24.5 gallons of water a minute, yet it surrounds the base of the fire with a thick moisture blanket that effectively holds out oxygen. Thirty gallons of liquid foam mixed with 500 gallons of water produces 4,500 gallons of foam by volume, enough to put out any tank truck fire. Where available, the truck can also draw water from an outside supply.

The Brownsburg firemen say their F-7 can take care of any fire in town, and has enough extra power to pull over a barn or rip out a wall, if need be, to get at a blaze. ■



Mail Truck

Dear Sirs: My brother and I were working on a fence one day in the fall. We were trying to take it down and put it around another field. In some places weeds and bushes grew in between the wire and it was very hard to take up. My brother took our F-3 Ford truck and drove up to the fence. We then hooked the wire onto the front bumper and backed away from the fence. This plan worked very well, for when he backed away it pulled the whole fence down. We now find it very easy to work on fences with our Ford.

FRED AUGUSTINE
Burgaw, North Carolina



Dear Sirs: The baby of the family (our F-1 platform truck) transported these gasoline storage tanks from Vallejo, California, over the Coast Range, to Cantua Creek, California, a distance of more than 200 miles.

RALPH MINNITE
Cantua Creek, California

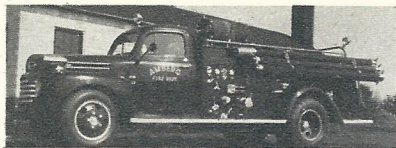


Dear Sirs: While reading your September-October FORD TRUCK TIMES I came across the story of Roy Green's service unit. This picture is of a similar unit, owned by the United States Sugar Corporation of Clewiston, Florida, which I operated for two years. It was on a one and one-half ton, 1942 model Ford with no extras except the rear springs, and they had extra leaves to support the load. It was equipped by a St. Louis firm and had a total loaded weight of seven and one-half tons. It carried six 50-gallon drums of grease, lubricating oil, Diesel oil, hydraulic oil, transmission oil, and track roller lubricant. I was servicing from 35 to 60 pieces of equipment daily from this unit, over 7,000 acres of sugar cane. During the two years that I operated this truck it was never in the shop for any major repairs, and it took plenty of rough going.

ROY HALL
Bean City, Florida

Dear Sirs: My father has used the same Ford for three years and has 50,000 miles on it, and it doesn't use any oil between changes. It has cost us nothing—the heads have never been removed, the body has held up swell, and the original cost was small. We broke it in at 50 mph, which no other truck will take. We know a Ford by experience.

ELWOOD CREWS
Rives, Missouri



Dear Sirs: Last spring we organized our first Amberg Volunteer Fire Department. We gathered a lot of dope from various manufacturers of fire trucks, and finally accepted the bid of a Wisconsin firm to build a truck on any make chassis we wanted to buy. We asked the company what make most fire departments specified and they answered that Ford was the popular favorite by a big majority. We bought a new F-6 chassis from Spangler Motor Sales of Peshtigo, Wisconsin, and our fire truck was delivered to us last May. We have put out two fires already; our township covers 80 square miles, so we have to really hustle to get to some calls. We are all very much pleased with Ford and know that few rural firefighting companies have anything better.

H. O. WHITE
Amberg, Wisconsin

Dear Sirs: When I was a boy my father used to heat a circular wagon tire to expand it. He would then slip it on the wheel and as it cooled it contracted so that the diameter was reduced to fit the wheel. I have always been told that a circular aperture in steel will have the diameter reduced when chilled and expanded when heated. I therefore wondered if the enclosed clipping is with merit. I would be interested to know.

JOSEPH ANDREWS, III
East Point, Georgia

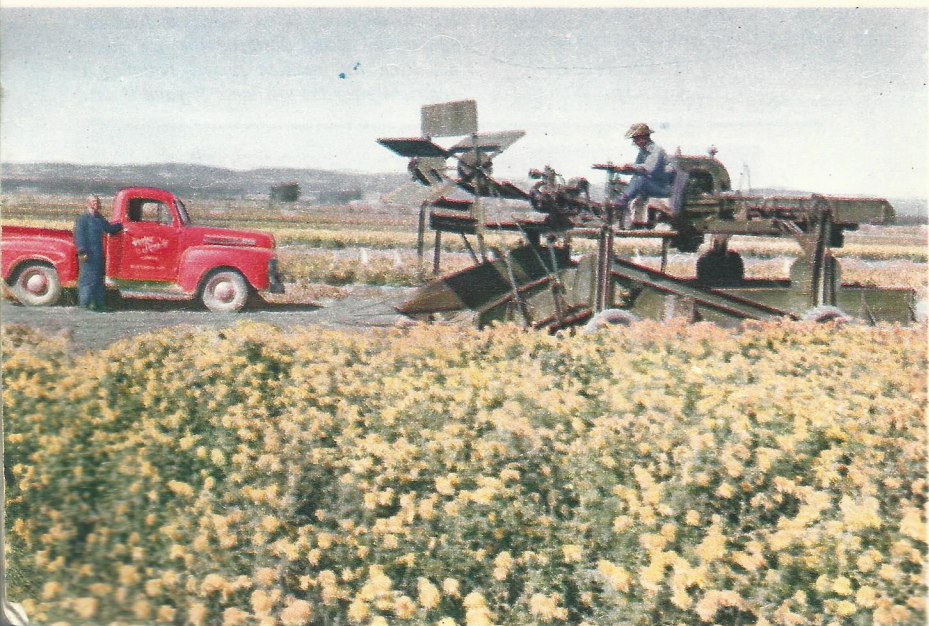
(Editor's Note: Mr. Andrews refers to a Problem of the Road in the November-December FORD TRUCK TIMES in which a mechanic stuck his finger into the spark plug hole of an engine and was unable to remove it. He was finally released after the doctor ordered the engine filled with ice water. Mr. Andrews is correct in stating that the diameter of a hole in a piece of metal is reduced by contraction, but the difference is too minute to have any squeezing effect. Rather, the ice water acted on the swollen finger, reducing it sufficiently for the mechanic to yank it out.)



Dear Sirs: A year ago I bought this abandoned rural schoolhouse from a town in Maine. I wanted to move the building onto one of my lots in the village. In deciding how to move it I struck upon the idea of hiring a heavy road equipment operator. Included in his equipment was a brand new F-8 tractor with a low-bed

trailer. He intended to haul his bulldozers and other machinery on it. He took my job and did it with no difficulty at all. The trip included eight miles of rural unimproved road, half of which was a steady climb.

STANLEY E. DAVIS
Delhi, New York



← The Bodger F-1 pickup and a visitor's V8 convertible are shown beside beds of marigolds, foreground, and asters beyond.

Valley of Flowers

by Joyce Rockwood Muench

photographs by Josef Muench

IN THE NORTHERN part of California's Santa Barbara County, near Lompoc, lies a balmy valley, sheltered on three sides by ridges of the Coastal Range, and extending to the Pacific on the west. Watered by the Santa Ynez River, and favored with temperatures of between 50 and 80 the year round, the valley is among the most fertile to be found anywhere.

That fertility has given the valley a title: largest producer of flower seeds in the country. Seventy per cent of the colorful packets of flower seeds sold to gardeners throughout the United States are harvested in Lompoc Valley by three of the largest wholesale seed houses in existence.

One of these is Bodger Seeds, Ltd., which may have as many as 900 acres of waving blossoms, made up of almost every annual and many perennials. Although blossom time in June is the big show of the business—thousands of visitors come to see it each year—raising flowers for seed is a year-round job. Beans and tomatoes provide a rotation of crops, and some fields lie fallow for a season or so, with the result that the flower rainbow shifts from year to year. While spring blossoms are seeding out, plowing, irrigation, and planting goes on around them in preparation for the next splash of color.

Pollination, cutting, and threshing of some plants must be done by hand, but mechanization has come into the flower seed business. One machine, known as the "Galloping Goose," was developed and built in the Bodger shops. It is a strange looking, long-legged contraption that ambles down the rows of matured plants, cutting a wide swath. Sharp blades cut the stalks near the ground and large paddles thrust them backward into a wagon-like undercarriage.

← At left is the "Galloping Goose." This machine and one operated by firm elsewhere are only two of their kind in existence.

← A flower seed thresher is shown at work in one of the vast flower fields of Lompoc Valley. It cuts, cleans, and sacks.

There is also a seed thresher which separates seed from stalks, cleans it and packs it into bags.

In growing flower seeds a steady watch must be kept to maintain color and other characteristics. This brings in the complex science of hybridizing, a highly specialized work acquired only with years of experience.

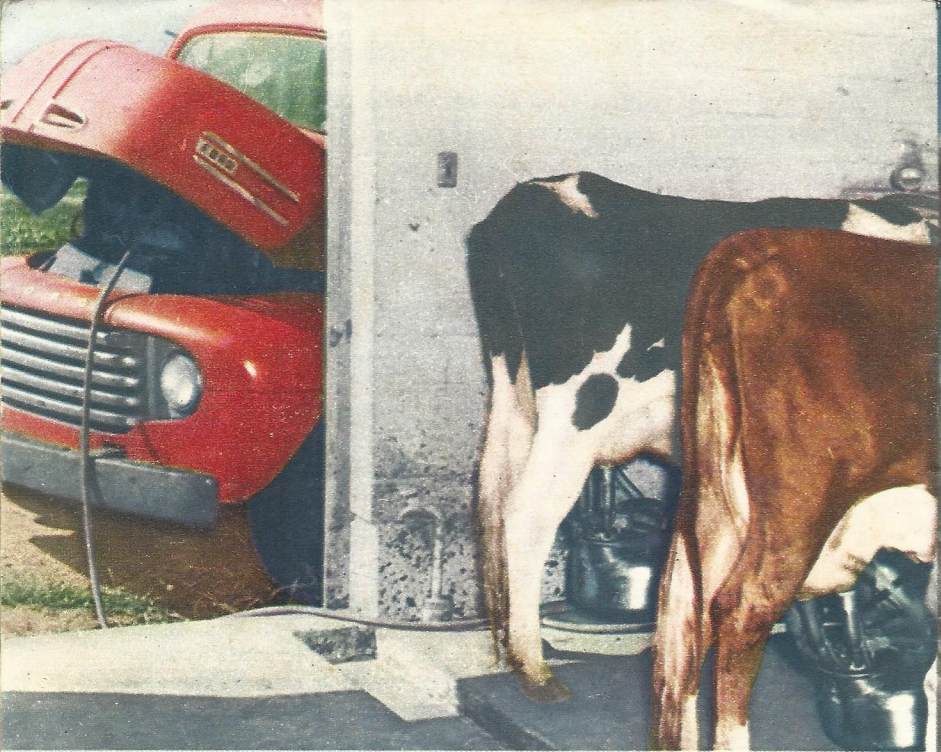
Ian Sinclair is hybridizer for Bodger, with the responsibility of seeing that the essential traits of each variety are kept up to standard. This is a full time job because flowers tend to resist regimentation. Yellow in marigolds, for example, is a recessive trait that will die out completely unless the plant is aided by seed taken from intensely yellow blooms. Uniformity in the bright envelope of seeds you buy at the grocery or seed store is a direct result of hybridization.

Mr. Sinclair spent eleven years developing "Petunia Fire Chief," a vivid new shade of *petunia compacta*, which recently won for him a gold medal for the first outstanding achievement in the production of flower and vegetable seeds in some years. The award, however, was not made as soon as the new flower was produced. It came only after the new seed had been thoroughly tested by experts and grown in twenty different parts of the country. This spring the new flower will blossom all over the world, a gift to garden enthusiasts from the Valley of Flowers.

Flowers vary widely in the amount of seed they turn out. The fringed petunia produces only about three pounds of seed per acre, against 150 pounds for the sweet pea. But 250 sweet pea seeds make an ounce while the petunia requires 300,000. Not even Mr. Sinclair can explain the singular fact that the flowers will have different shades at different times of the year, going from delicate tones in the spring to heavier colors in the fall.

As the Bodger firm is exclusively wholesale, the final sorting and packaging is done by many retail firms. Hence, a seed harvested in the Valley of Flowers may be shipped overseas by an exporter and blossom half way around the globe. ■

← The colored bands of flowers are rows of asters and marigolds on the Bodger acreage in Lompoc Valley.



photograph by Dick Mottweiler

*Helpful F-5—
a one-picture story*

THE ABOVE SCENE of contentment and cooperation resulted when an ice storm knocked out electric power at the dairy farm of M. R. Lesley in Lewisville, Texas. With no current for his milking machine, the dairyman and two helpers were faced with the job of hand-milking 135 cows twice a day. Drawing on a good working knowledge of his F-5 c.o.e., Lesley attached a length of garden hose to an outlet of his vacuum system. He then attached the hose to his milking machines, and, at idling speed, the chore was performed at about normal efficiency. Although he doesn't plan to use his truck in competition with the electric company, it does provide a comforting margin of security.

PROBLEMS OF THE ROAD

*decorations by
Don Silverstein*

THE PROBLEM: Back in 1924 my cousin and I left Abilene and headed west on a feed buying trip. We were several miles out of Jayton, Texas, when we came to a canyon with a small wooden bridge over it. We crossed the bridge and had to stop. In front of us was a Model T ton truck stalled at the foot of a long hill, its clutch band burned out from trying to pull the slick grade. Our time was running short and we had to be on the move, but we couldn't get around him. We had to get the truck up the hill some way.

THE SOLUTION: I had an old ten-gallon hat, so I took my knife and cut a couple of one-inch strips about a foot long off the brim. I opened the transmission case and pushed the felt strips into place with a screwdriver. Then I tightened up the band and drove the truck up the hill for the grateful driver.

E. B. CORNETT, Houston, Texas



THE PROBLEM: My job is to deliver Diesel fuel to portable saw-mills in remote sections of West Alabama. On one occasion I was hauling a load to one of these mills, and upon arriving I found the mill deserted because of very bad weather. I cut off the engine of my 1941 Ford truck and was looking about the mill. On returning to my truck I found that the rough roads had shaken a wire loose from my generator, causing my battery to weaken to such a point that it would not turn the engine fast enough to start. Being about 15 miles from the nearest place where I could get any help, I sat down and began to think how I could get myself out of this predicament.

THE SOLUTION: I finally hit on it. I removed two spark plugs, thus lowering the compression enough for the weakened battery to turn it. I then re-connected the generator wire. The engine cranked right up, running on six cylinders. I carefully replaced the spark plugs and attached their wires (which I found to be a very shocking task) and continued on my way.

ROBERT E. HAMILTON, Eutaw, Alabama



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