

THE CRANK & STROKE

THE VOICE OF THE HISTORICAL ENGINE SOCIETY

Founded 1970

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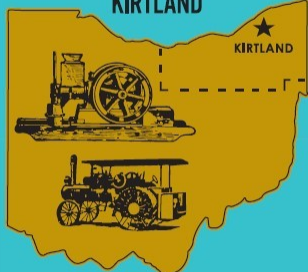
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↑ Autumn Reynolds on her Panzer with her Dad, Nick

HISTORICAL ENGINE SOCIETY 54TH ANNUAL SHOW KIRTLAND



JULY 25, 26 & 27, 2025
EXHIBITOR

2025 SEASON KICK-OFF

Hello fellow members of The Historical Engine Society! As I write this article, after one of the coldest and snowiest winters we have had in a while, it sure is good to see warmer weather on the horizon and discussions about getting back to the exhibiting part of the hobby.

I hope you all were able to take advantage of being indoors to make progress on your projects and perhaps add a few new “toys” to your collections. I myself stumbled upon another tractor, a 1931 John Deere GP. I know, like we need another John Deere tractor at the show! I have also added a few gas engines, some carts and parts for my engines, all of which should be at our show in July with some appearances at other events.

Speaking of other events, there are a couple events coming up that are for members and not necessarily exhibition events.

Annual HES Plow Day

A big Thank You to Vince Kibby in working with Farmpark to once again host a plow day. The event will take place at Farmpark on May 17th starting at 9am. Donuts and coffee will be provided in the morning and lunch at noon. You may bring your tractors, plows, or just yourself. Even if you don't have anything to bring, please come anyway, there will be plenty of opportunities to try your hand at plowing. Enter through the east gate like we do for the summer show and follow the road to the right, then bear left and look for the others.

Spring HES Gas-Up

In years past HES has hosted a gas-up in the spring. This year we will start that tradition up again. The gas-up will be on May 24th at the home of Donald and Elaine Kuhl, 10340 Mayfield Road, Chesterland starting at 9am. You may bring engines or tractors, there will be plenty of room. This is an event for HES members and invited guests, not for the general public. Even if you don't have anything to bring, please attend anyway and socialize and see one of the largest engine collections in the area. Donuts and lunch will be provided. We are playfully calling the event Kuhlspring. Get it, the Kuhl residence, in the spring, sounds like Cool-spring. I'm looking forward to seeing you at Kuhlspring, the HES Spring Gas-Up!



THE SIXTY'S A HUNDRED

Contributed by Adam Lang

How many HES members can recall the first time they laid eyes and ears on a dark gray machine and its low rumble, slowly making its rounds on the gravel roads of Century Village Museum? For my own family, we can claim four generations watching first Don Green, then Dan Donaldson, and finally the Kotkowski family and Lakeside team (including myself and my son) maintain, start and operate this impressive old crawler. For almost 50 years, this particular machine has become a hallmark of our club, entertaining thousands of spectators over the decades.

Many of us are familiar with the Caterpillar brand of today, the world's largest producer of heavy construction equipment. However, the multi-billion dollar Fortune 500 company of today started with humble beginnings in the San Joaquin Valley of California. It was here that Holt Manufacturing patented the first practical track laying tractor on December 7, 1907. It is said that while shooting promotional photos of Holt's "crawlers" company photographer Charles Clements stated that the tracks resembled the movement of a caterpillar as they rose and fell over the rollers. From then on, Holt referred to his track laying machines as "Caterpillars".

While Holt was perfecting his "Caterpillar", nearby competitor C.L. Best was also building track laying machines. As WW1 was fought in Europe, the U.S. Army as well as other nations purchased Holt's Caterpillars to move artillery and other heavy equipment into battle. At home C.L. Best received government support and was able to supply many farmers with new machines, leading to the design of two new models, the Best Thirty, and the widely popular Best Sixty!

Post WW1 led to a massive recession and both companies headed towards bankruptcy, borrowing money to stay in business. Holt died during this time and his successor was lead into a merger, recommended by the bank, with longtime rival C.L. Best in 1925. The agreement included the corporate name "Caterpillar Tractor Company" and Best took the reins as CEO. It was also agreed that the Best model Thirty and Sixty were the more superior models of the two companies and they would continue in production at the San Leandro, California plant until 1930.

During the 1920's and 30's Caterpillar shifted their focus from agricultural machines to industrial and road building equipment. The model Sixty topped off the line as the largest model featuring a 1,128-cubic-inch 4-cylinder gasoline engine, 72" track gauge, and weighing around 20,000 pounds. It was used for many different applications including farming, logging, mining, road building and construction. Caterpillar claims this machine has worked on every continent in the world except for Antarctica. Between 1919 and 1931, 19,948 examples were produced by both C.L. Best and Caterpillar.

(Cont'd on page 4)

"A Caterpillar Sixty is one of those machines that leaves an everlasting impression on you the first time you see and hear one run. From the first time I saw one running at a show I wanted one."

-Dan Donaldson

September 2011



MEMBER SPOTLIGHT

Contributed by Brian Baxter

(Instigated by Dean Kirby)

I had a conversation with Brian Baxter, a long time member and HES President from 1996 to 2002, about doing a feature article about how he got started in the hobby and becoming an HES member. Below is his story. Would you like to share your story? Just email me at DeanKirby@gmail.com with your story.

40 YEARS FOR BAXTER'S CASE RC

My name is Brian Baxter, and I'd like to share with you the story of how I got involved with HES. My father, Norm Baxter, became acquainted with the club through a family friend in 1976, bringing a 5-year-old me along for the ride. We started attending work nights for the club show at Burton's Century Village. It was also around this time that HES and GCHS started to plan out building the boiler house and engine room at the sawmill. That first year, Norm and a bunch of guys ran the stationary engine at the mill. It wasn't until the following year that they actually had a building. While dad was working on the building, I was too little to be of much help, so I started wandering around, talking to and getting to know various club members. These people included Oscar Kirby, Preston Foster, Ellis Wellman and Bob Carlton. My interest in engines began around this time. Family friends, Sterling and Phil Farnham, introduced me to gasoline engines. I was fascinated and determined to own my very own engine to display at the shows. After speaking with Norm, Sterling had a Maytag Twin he was willing to sell to the right person. I had to explain my plan to Sterling: how I was going to build a skid for it, repair it and clean it up. Sterling wanted to know the engine was going to a good home. We settled on the price of \$5. That night, Dad and I spent 3-4 hours getting the engine running. In the coming weeks, I built a makeshift skid and scraped and cleaned the engine, getting it ready for painting. Norm and I showed that engine for 5-6 years.

While showing the Maytag was fun, I started to notice other kids close to my age driving tractors around the show. I thought this was a pretty cool idea and wanted to join in. The next tractor Dad and I restored was a Moto-Mower Detroit model that was self-propelled with steering clutches and a sickle bar on the front. The Moto-Mower was a walk behind and I was still in search of a tractor to drive. Jim Bacon, a club member, knew I was looking for a tractor. He had a neighbor that had a tractor he was willing to sell. At that time, I had no idea what it was, possibly an Allis-Chalmers. Jim went home from the show on Saturday evening and said he would speak to his neighbor and return on Sunday with more information. I could not wait for Jim to get to the show grounds Sunday morning. When he returned, he said the neighbor didn't know the make of the tractor, but he only wanted \$50. Being 14 years old, I knew I was going to have to find a way to get the tractor home. The next day, Dad and I went to look at the tractor, which ended up being a 1938 Case RC. The tires were junk and the motor was stuck. I gave the man his \$50 and started trying to figure out how we were going to get the RC home. In the next two days, I rode my bike to every house that had a trailer and inquired about having a tractor hauled to my house. As luck would have it, one of our neighbors agreed to help. For \$25, the RC came home.

(Cont'd on page 5)



"This is the tractor that started it all. Bought it 32 years ago, got it to the show 2 years later and gave her a new paint job this summer (2017). Got to say I still love her."

-Brian Baxter

October 2017

SIXTY – CONTINUED

Somewhere close to 50 years after “our Sixty” rolled off the line in California, Don and Dorothy Green of Kirtland, Ohio acquired it as well as other parts tractors and restored the crawler we all know and love. It still retains its C.L. Best style track pads used on earlier models, has a later model flywheel and a combination of different years on the intake/exhaust manifold. It’s also known for its logging style bumper and canopy.

Most importantly and almost ironically, this machine has lived the last 50 years or so in northeast Ohio, under the care of multiple HES members. In 2022 she returned back “home” to Kirtland for our summer show at Lake Metroparks Farmpark, right next door to the Green’s. Even though we lost Don some years back, Dorothy has made it over to the show each time to see the “Sixty” again. She was excited to see it’s still running and being operated by a crew of young men. In a practical sense it’s only a man made creation of iron and steel. To The Historical Engine Society it has become a catalyst for growth, a tangible connection to the past for our members, and a bridge in between generations. Happy 100th birthday and long live the “Sixty”!



Larry Kotkowski with Grandson, Gabriel Jones, on the Caterpillar Sixty and Grandson, Adam Sly, with Ronnie Kotkowski’s Grandson, Harry Kotkowski, on the Euclid Bottom Dump at the 2023 Show

NEXT ISSUE: HES YOUTH

In the next issue of the Crank & Stroke we will discuss Youth Engagement and Involvement in the Club. Some of the topics we will cover are:

- ◆ **Introduction:**
 - ⇒ Complications of youth INTEREST in antiques
- ◆ **Engagement:**
 - ⇒ The first step in getting someone involved
 - ⇒ Requires having something that catches the attention of the person
 - ⇒ Activity and motion
 - ⇒ OTHER YOUNG PEOPLE
- ◆ **Involvement:**
 - ⇒ The second step of getting someone involved
 - ⇒ Competition
 - ⇒ Comradery
 - ⇒ Good gradation of age of members and officers



The Future of HES

BAXTER – CONTINUED

The next day the restoration began. I started pulling the tractor apart, removing the head and found all four pistons were under water. I dried out the cylinders as best I could and filled them with WD-40. After many weeks of bumping and rocking, we felt all the pistons except #3 were trying to move. At this point, we knew the tractor needed to be split so that we could separate the engine from the oil pan, due to the frame of the tractor being the oil pan. Winter was quickly approaching, and the tractor was placed behind the garage until spring. In the spring of 1986, we resumed work on removing the #3 piston by heating, bumping and soaking. We reached a point where Dad reminded me we may not be able to move the piston. Now, it's 1986, there is no internet. Locating parts consisted of calling part stores. However, we didn't want to start calling around until we knew we could get the piston moving. Norm was determined that piston was coming out, in one piece or multiple pieces. Dad ended up using 3-inch bar stock that we placed in the bore to dislodge the piston and used a sledgehammer to beat the piston out. At this moment we were either going to fix it or junk it. Two days of sledgehammering later, the piston was freed! We spent the next few weeks calling around for parts. Automotive Incorporated in Warren was a huge help in finding the specs for the crankshaft bearings. Dad was able to measure the crankshaft and found the rods were undersized and could not be turned. The crank was out of round .0025 inches, so it was unusable. After numerous phone calls, we found Charlie Burgh's Junkyard in Zelienople, PA. He had 4-5 RC Case tractors in their yard. But unfortunately, in order to measure the main bearings on the crank shaft, the tractor had to be split, and the engine separated from the oil pan to pull the crankshaft out for measuring. We pulled four tractors apart and made a small mountain of junk and still didn't have a good crankshaft. By this time, it is July, and the show is just around the corner, so we decided to spend the weekend looking for parts for the tractor. At the show, I talked with Ed Deis. Ed thought he may have a Case back at his place and invited us to come take a look. We confirmed that it was the correct engine, and he agreed to let us pull the engine so we could check the crank shaft. Initially we thought it was better than what we had, but still not immediately usable. Dad took the crank shaft to Ward's Machine Shop where we found the crankshaft was better than our original but not turnable. Ward's discussed having the crank spray welded so it could be turned to the correct size. We located rod and main bearings and rings. We were able to reuse the pistons and valves after machining and lapping the valves into the block. While searching for these parts, we purchased and restored a David Bradley Tri-Trac and showed it at the 1986 Burton Show. Over the next 6-8 months we got the RC running and also found new rubber for all four wheels; also doing a complete body restoration. We worked very hard and were close to having it ready. HES offered light and heavy hauling, and we were approved to have the RC hauled to the show. Due to it being my first restoration, I wanted to be the one to load and unload the tractor, however it was to be hauled Thursday during the day. July was a busy month that year, between getting the RC done and trying to get my driver license (my birthday is 7/18). I needed to get my license to follow the truck up to the show grounds to unload my RC. As luck would have it, I passed my test Wednesday afternoon and was able to make it to the show grounds to unload my tractor. This drive was my first big drive, all by myself, much to the dismay of my mother who was a nervous wreck. Norm knew it would be fine, as we have been making the same drive 25 times a year for the past 10 years. Many of those years were me sitting on his lap, steering the truck back to Howland.

That 1938 Case RC tractor has been at every HES show since. Over the years our collection and family have grown. Different equipment has come and gone. Some key pieces include multiple Case RC's, Case SC, Case LA, Case L, many garden tractors, John Deere H, John Deere 70, Bucyrus-Erie 10B, 16 hp Frick steam traction engine, 1/3 scale Case steam traction engine, Caterpillar Sixty, Rumley Oil Pull H and a plethora of gas engines too numerous to list. The original Case RC remains the anchor of our collection.

Over the years, Norm and I have had the pleasure of mentoring younger members of the club and hobby. It is important to keep young people involved or the hobby will die. Pass along your knowledge as often as you can and help them start their own collections. You never know...the "junk" you have in your shop may be the start of someone else's hobby.

When you attend this summer's show, stop by our display and say hi! Come see the old Case and talk tractors with The Baxter's! We always have an open chair and a cold drink waiting.



Brian and Son Jake - 2017 Restoration



THE VOICE OF
THE HISTORICAL
ENGINE SOCIETY

PO Box 892
Chardon, OH 44024
Phone: 440-669-2578
Email: info@historicalengine.org

**Meetings will be held the 2nd Thursday of the month
(except December, January and February) at 7:30pm
in the Theater at Lake Metroparks Farmpark
8800 Euclid Chardon Rd. (Route 6)
Kirtland, OH 44094**

The Historical Engine Society is a non-profit organization whose purpose is to provide a focal point for people interested in the machinery of a bygone era. We encourage the collection, preservation, restoration, and exhibition of power producing devices and the machinery driven by these units.

Society fellowship consists in the sharing of knowledge, ideas and educational programs. Work parties, picnics and field trips make this a truly family oriented organization. The annual show is a year-round effort, culminating in a gathering of people and their machines. Visitors are treated to the sights, sounds and demonstrations of the power of the past.

ALL FIRED UP

Contributed by Adam Lang

Following the 2023 debut of retired Kent Fire Department's "Engine 2" at the Lakeside Sand and Gravel Open House, a few of us were approached to assist the Department with their own 1938 American LaFrance ladder truck. The goal was to get it back up and running for some community events, and to attend some local shows as well.

This truck was originally in service alongside the 1933 fire engine owned by Lakeside. For a time both trucks were owned by the Kotkowski family following their retirement from active duty. It was decided by them to donate this ladder truck back to the Kent Firefighters Association IAFF Local 721. Back in the hands of the department, its restoration was lead by Todd Gavriloff. The truck has resided silently in Kent Station 1 following Todd's retirement but current member, Pat Paisley, has recently taken on the roll of caretaker. His goal is getting this truck back out in the public where it can be enjoyed!

On a cold March Saturday we stopped in at Station 1 and assisted them with getting it started, checking fluids, testing brakes and addressing a few minor electrical issues. We also pointed out a few repairs and maintenance items that needed addressed. Within a few hours my son Adam Jr, his girlfriend Erica and I were riding up and down the Kent streets cheered on by students celebrating "Fake Patty's Day"!

This 1938 American LaFrance made its first public appearance in years at the 2025 Lakeside Sand and Gravel Open House. It was driven in the rain from Kent and displayed by Kent Firefighter Patrick Paisley, his father George and his son Patrick Ryan Jr. It was fun to represent HES in this endeavor. We are hoping the truck is able to make the journey to Kirtland in July!



1938 American LaFrance Ladder Truck—Kent, Ohio