

# Chapter Five

## R. M. Wade Tractor Sales Division

In 1931, I received a phone call from Arnold Groth, Vice President of the First National Bank, and my friend as well as my banker. He advised me that a Ford Motor Co. executive, Frank Rice, was in his office. Mr. Rice was seeking a new tractor distributor for the Fordson tractor and Arnold wanted to know if we were interested. Of course, we were, so Arnold set up an appointment for me with Mr. Rice.

The Fordson had been the leading tractor in the United States. It had mechanized farms all over the country and was the major factor in the conversion from farm horses to tractors. Of course, R.M. Wade & Co.'s car agency in Spokane had sold Fordson tractors in the early introduction of the tractor. In

1928, Ford discontinued making Fordson tractors in the U.S. and moved production to Cork, Ireland. Distributorships were set up and the Portland distributor was Tri-State Company. (The Cork operation did not pan out and later production was shifted to the Dagenham, England Ford plant.)

By now, tractor competition had caught up with Fordson and it no longer was the leading tractor. Tri-State gave me the figures for tractor and parts sales and I worked out a budget for a separate Fordson operation and determined that it could be profitable. Mr. Rice offered us the agency and we accepted. Ford wanted us to form a separate corporation from R.M. Wade & Co., so I set up Wade Tractor and Equipment Co. which, though separate, operated out of the same building as R.M. Wade & Co. The owners were Susan Newbegin, my mother; Gillis Kellaher and Ernest Crichton, my brothers-in-law; and myself.

Then I learned an interesting principle. Ford did not want to cancel Tri-State because of possible liability. Ford wanted Tri-State to resign which, after three days of negotiations, they did. This was a valuable lesson to me in handling future changes in dealers and distributors when we were the sellers. We took over Tri-State's stock of parts and tractors, and Wade Tractor and Equipment Co. was appointed distributor for the Northwest.

Ford was generous in giving us, at no charge, lots of surplus accessories and parts like wheels. We finally sold all of them at full price for 100 percent profit. My calculations and budgeting for Fordson tractors were correct; the line was very profitable and also gave R.M. Wade & Co. additional dealer outlets for other products.

In the 30s I visited the Ford Motor Company in Detroit, staying at the Dearborn Inn, a delightful hotel. Frank Rice, head of the Fordson Tractor Division, gave me a royal tour of the manufacturing plant. I learned that Ford manufactured a percentage of everything that went into their cars and trucks, and bought whatever else was needed from outside suppliers. In this way they knew what the cost should be and kept their plants operating at 100 percent capacity.

**ANNOUNCEMENT**



**The Improved Fordson Tractor**

•

§ We are pleased to announce that we have been appointed Fordson Distributors for Oregon, Washington, part of Idaho and Alaska.

§ We have a complete stock of Fordson Tractors and parts, and through R. M. Wade & Company offer a complete line of equipment to go with the Fordson Tractor.

•

**WADE TRACTOR & EQUIPMENT CO.**

322-330 Hawthorne Avenue  
PORTLAND, OREGON, U. S. A.

VULCAN PLOWS    RODERICK LEAN HARROWS    DETROIT MOWERS  
FERGUSON PLOWS    PEORIA DRILLS    NEW IDEA EQUIPMENT

Illustration Subject, Tractor and Field Equipment. Based on the data as well as actual in the Portland, Oregon, Oregon, Washington, Idaho, and Alaska. Subject as mentioned in the text and in the Portland, Oregon, Oregon, Washington, Idaho, and Alaska. Subject as mentioned in the text and in the Portland, Oregon, Oregon, Washington, Idaho, and Alaska.

Wade Tractor Sales Division ad for Fordson Tractor.



A highlight of Margaret's and my visit was a tour of Dearborn Village and Museum where we saw farm equipment from the first crude wooden plows to modern steel plows. The same evolution occurred with tractors and all other farm equipment. Because we were with Mr. Rice, a Ford official, we were able to go places closed to most tourists. At the Edison Laboratories we were escorted upstairs to a room where one of Edison's original employees was still working. He ran Edison's old phonograph which was thrilling to hear. While we were in Dearborn Village, we caught a glimpse of Henry Ford as he drove by. I will always treasure the memory of this visit.

Later in the 30s, the distribution of Fordsons in the U.S. shifted from the Ford Motor Co. to a New York company, Sherman and Shepherd. Margaret and I visited Eber Sherman, president of the company, and in the evening he entertained us at the very formal Rainbow Room in Radio City where Ray Noble's orchestra was playing. There I ran into Simeon Cantril, my Jefferson High classmate and friend. He was just back from Paris where he had studied under Mme. Curie. Later Dr. Cantril operated a million volt x-ray machine in Seattle and became the leading cancer radiologist on the Pacific Coast. He also worked on the atom bomb. We remained good friends through life.

I wanted to return the Shermans' hospitality and when I asked them to recommend a place for dinner, they suggested the Ritz Carlton. Well, I was really shocked by the bill — \$50 for four people for dinner. Luckily I had enough cash with me. I gave the waiter a \$5 tip and was royally snubbed. How times have changed with inflation!

We worked very closely with Sherman and Shepherd. One reason for the Fordson tractor's decline in popularity was the lack of a cultivating-type tractor. Sherman and Shepherd developed a three-wheel conversion and thought they had a good solution. I was taken out to their experimental farm to see this new tractor and give approval to the conversion. It looked fine until they finished the demonstration and drove the tractor into the barn. There it hit a manhole cover and the conversion dramatically broke in two, thus ending the attempt to build a cultivating Fordson.

In 1939 I received a call from Eber Sherman, by now a good friend. He wanted me to meet him in Salt Lake City and there he told me the story of the Ferguson tractor. Eber had been a partner of Harry Ferguson in the Ferguson-Sherman Company that

developed the Ferguson plow for the Fordson. (R.M. Wade & Co. handled this plow over the years.) The plow was attached directly to the tractor and had a hand lever to lift it. It was somewhat successful but limited in sales because, being rigidly attached to the tractor, it plowed in varying depths depending on the terrain.

Henry Ford, who was still greatly interested in the conversion of farms from horses to tractors, was trying to develop a new tractor to replace the Fordson. An engineer by the name of Simpson was designing the tractor, and Mr. Ford thought the Simpson-designed tractor was the answer. He announced that Ford was coming out with a revolutionary new machine, but the Simpson-designed tractor was not satisfactory after all.

Eber Sherman, on learning of the failure of the Simpson tractor, met with Henry Ford whom he knew well from the time he, Eber Sherman, had been export manager for Ford Motor Co. Sherman told Mr. Ford about a tractor built in England by David Brown for Harry Ferguson. The plow was like the hand-lift Ferguson plow but with the change to a three-point hydraulic lift control system. The implements worked under draft control. This tractor was already being sold in England, and Mr. Ford told Sherman to bring Ferguson tractors to the United States immediately and under cover. This was done and demonstrations were held on Henry Ford's personal farm.

Various versions are told of what happened, but I heard that after a short demonstration, Henry Ford went over and sat down. His son Edsel said, "Father, aren't you interested in the Ferguson tractor?" Henry Ford replied, "I've already decided. I'm just waiting for you to make up your mind."

Mr. Ford and Mr. Ferguson sat down at a table right in the middle of the field and worked out a partnership agreement. Ford Motor Co. would manufacture the tractor and Ferguson-Sherman Co. would distribute it throughout the world. My good friend, Eber Sherman, was elected president of the Ferguson-Sherman Co.

After telling his tale, Eber pulled out a toy tractor that demonstrated the revolutionary Ferguson principle of tractor and equipment. He asked me what I thought of it. I said, "Either it is a farce or it is the answer to the farming problem of combining equipment with the tractor." Time proved that it was indeed the answer.

Our company received an invitation from Henry Ford for lunch on June 12, 1939, to be followed by a



demonstration of his new tractor. I will never forget that day. There were Ferguson tractors (manufactured by David Brown) and Ford-Ferguson tractors. After the demonstrations, each distributor was invited to drive the new tractor.

I had the honor of being first and I was thrilled by its performance. Mr. Sorenson, Manager of Ford Motor Co., was there, as was Harry Ferguson who supplied us with complete information on the features of his tractor. I had the pleasure of meeting both Henry and Edsel Ford. Mr. Henry Ford, on learning I was from Portland, said, "We closed our manufacturing unit in Portland, didn't we?" It was interesting to me that he was that close to his operation. I confirmed that his assembly plant was closed but he still had a branch in Portland for parts and sales.

The next day Mr. Ford hosted another lunch and demonstration for the press and public. The following quotation comes from the announcement of his new tractor:

The Land! That is where our roots are. There is the basis of our physical life. The farther we get away from the land, the greater our insecurity. From the land comes everything that supports life, everything we use for the service of physical life. The land has not collapsed or shrunk in either expanse or productivity. It is there waiting to honor all the labor we are willing to invest in it, and able to tide us across any local dislocation of economic conditions. No unemployment insurance can be compared to an alliance between man and a plot of land.

The reaction of our competitors to the new tractor was disbelief that it could do what was claimed for it. They thought it was a fake. However, they had to eat their words because today every tractor



L-R, Mr. Ford, son of William Ford; William Ford, Henry Ford's brother ; Wade Newbegin; with the Ford-Ferguson tractor. Taken on the occasion of the Fords' visit to Wade Newbegin in Portland.



L-R, Wade Newbegin Sr., Wade Jr., and Ed Newbegin on ramp with pilot of the plane that delivered the tractor from Detroit. This tractor was used for first demonstration of Ford-Ferguson tractor to Wade's Pacific Northwest dealers.

employs a version of the Ferguson system.

It was our job as distributors for Oregon, Washington, and western Idaho to introduce the Ford-Ferguson tractors. We already had the Fordson





The Wade Ford-Ferguson tractor dealer organization for the Pacific Northwest, photographed on the Bybee-Howell Farm on Sauvie Island. Ray Letson, Education Mgr. for Wade's Tractor Sales Division, is seated on the tractor.

tractor dealer organization and Ford car dealers were all interested in becoming dealers for the Fordson too.

In the summer of 1939, soon after Mr. Ford's introduction of the tractor, we held a big demonstra-

tion on the Bybee-Howell Farm on Sauvie Island. One hundred percent of our dealers attended. We required each dealer to plow with a tractor, just as Ford had done with distributors. An incident occurred that could have been serious. The last dealer to drive the tractor plowed into a hornet's nest. We saw him jump off the tractor and run, swinging his arms wildly. He had numerous stings and we rushed him to the hospital where the doctor asked, "Were you drunk last night?" The answer was yes, so the doctor said, "Forget it. You won't have a bad reaction." And it did turn out all right.

One of Ferguson's strong points was that everyone connected with the sale or service of the tractor had to be fully trained in operation and demonstration. In 1939, as a hedge against inflation, I had bought a farm two miles out of Carver. There we built a school house and devoted twenty acres to training dealers in sales and service. As soon as dealers were able to get tractors, they had open showings and success was immediate. Our only problem was that we did not have a complete line of implements. We did have a plow, a spring-tyne tiller, and



Product Education Farm Building located near Carver, Oregon, on Wade Newbegin's farm. Dealers from all over the Pacific Northwest came to this schoolhouse for complete field experience with the Ford-Ferguson tractor.



another tiller, which was a rigid spring-release tiller. And, of course, we had the Ferguson plow.

During the initial stages of selling the tractor, Harry Ferguson asked to come to Portland to talk to the public and our dealer organization. He was a master at promoting his tractor and his plan to revolutionize agriculture. We arranged a large luncheon in the Multnomah Hotel ballroom and invited public officials and industrial leaders. Then we discovered that Mr. Ferguson would not talk unless he had a tractor on stage behind him. There was no elevator to take the tractor to the ballroom, so we solved the problem by disassembling a tractor and then reassembling it in the ballroom.

The next day all our dealers attended a meeting in the ballroom of the Masonic Temple and Mr. Ferguson gave an inspiring talk again. He spoke quietly, but with conviction, and sold his audience on the tractor and his program. It was at this impressive meeting that Harry Ferguson launched his crusade to revolutionize agriculture.

Margaret and I were still very young — I was about 31. We invited Mr. and Mrs. Ferguson and their daughter for dinner at our new house in Green Hills. The evening was somewhat traumatic for Margaret but she rose to the occasion. All through life Margaret has helped me in my business connections by becoming acquainted with the principals' wives. Often we all became close friends.

Harry Ferguson had a long career with a sad ending. He invented the Ferguson-system tractor. He formed the Ferguson-Sherman Co. to distribute nationally the Ferguson tractor that was built by Ford. After a break-up with Ford, he formed Harry Ferguson, Inc. of the United States and manufactured his own tractor. At seventy years of age, he worked out a merger with Massey-Harris, a large worldwide manufacturer of tractors and farm equipment. The company then became Massey-Ferguson Co. and produced a full line of tractors and equipment. In 1960, Ferguson worked on a new tractor design.

The following is a quote from Colin Fraser's biography, *Harry Ferguson — Inventor and Pioneer*:



Harry Ferguson, standing, explaining the Ferguson system to Henry Ford, seated on the new Ford-Ferguson tractor on Ford's farm.

By the late summer of 1960, his last burst of energy was exhausted; gradually he sank back into a bout of depression again, and more shock treatment was prescribed. He finished the series of treatments about October 22nd and on the 23rd, a Sunday, his daughter Betty visited Abbottswood to see him. She was distressed to find him inert and suffering from the characteristic loss of memory that usually follows shock treatment. He lay on his bed listless and remote and his daughter returned worried to London where she was living. She telephoned her mother on Monday and was delighted to hear that her father had left his bedroom and was jauntily taking up his activities again.

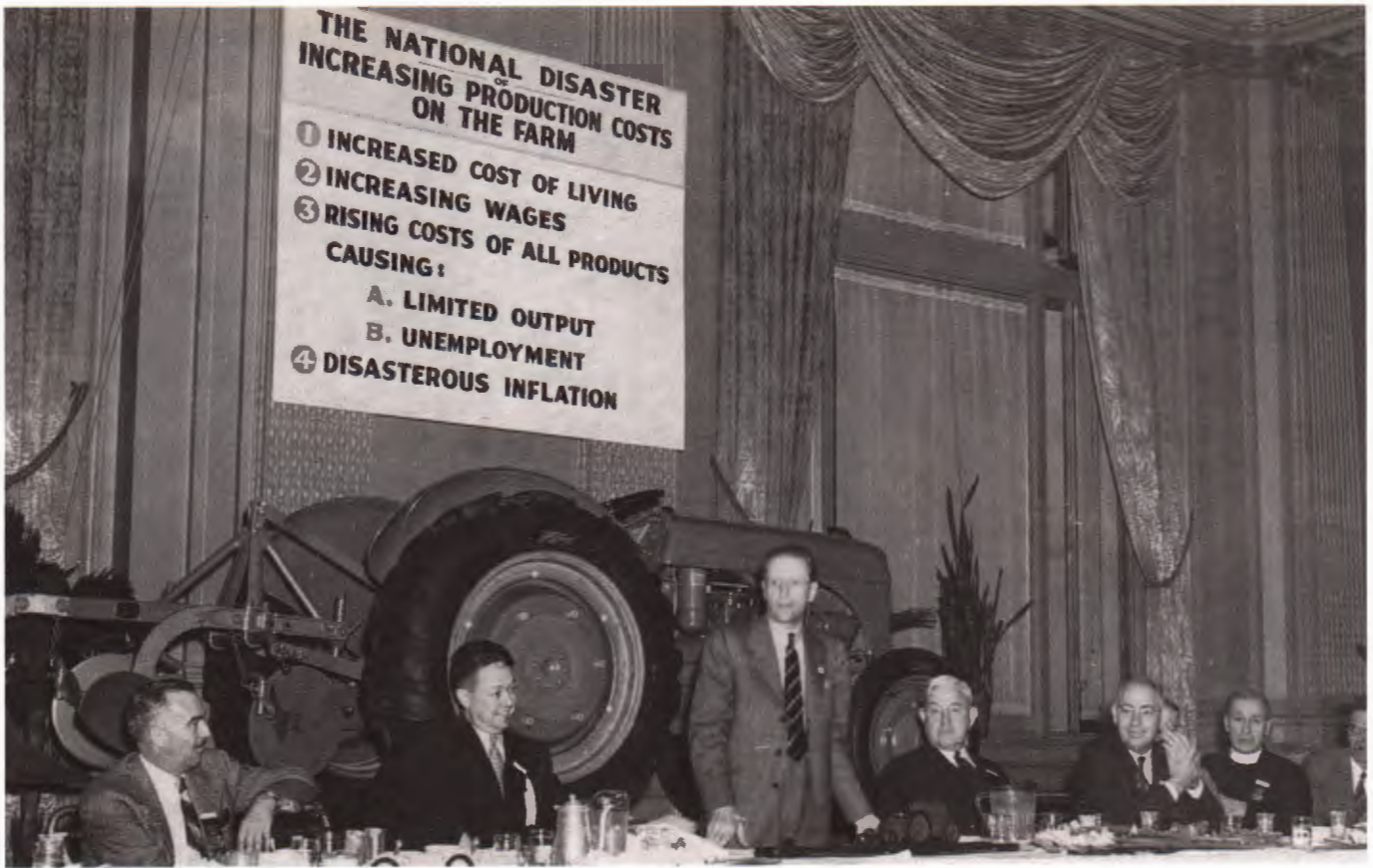
The next morning, October 25th, the footman Scott took Ferguson his shaving water at precisely 7:45 as usual and drew back the curtains.

"Good morning, Scott. What kind of day is it?" Ferguson asked brightly.

"It's not too bad. How are you feeling, Mr. Ferguson?" Scott asked, encouraged by his employer's apparent cheerfulness.

"I'm getting better," Ferguson replied, pulling on his dressing-gown and making for the door. For every day as soon as he had





Meeting in the main ballroom of the Multnomah Hotel where Harry Ferguson launched his program for lowering the cost of farm production in the world. L-R, Ernest Crichton, Sales Mgr., R.M. Wade Tractor Sales Division; Wade Newbegin, President, TSD; Harry Ferguson, inventor of the Ferguson tractor; Senator Rufus Holman; and Charles Hall, father-in-law of Wade Newbegin.

been called he went to his wife's room to wish her good morning with a kiss. His unvarying habit thereafter was to return to his bathroom to shave and bathe. In the meantime, the domestic staff prepared breakfast and at 8:30 precisely carried it to Maureen Ferguson's room; her husband joined her there for his fruit, scones and punctiliously prepared coffee and his arrival seldom missed coinciding with that of the breakfast by more than a minute or so. On that morning of October 25th, 1960, however, the breakfast arrived in Maureen Ferguson's room and the coffee had been cooling for close on five minutes, yet there was no sign of Ferguson. His wife went to investigate this uncharacteristic tardiness: She found him submerged in his bath water. The butler and footman came rushing at her frantic summons. Tenderly they lifted the slight body from the bath, but it was too late. Harry Ferguson was dead.

A post-mortem examination was carried out, and on November 8, 1960, an inquest was held at Cheltenham. The pathologist stated that Ferguson had been in good physical health for his age but that "from a toxological examination of the organs it appeared that he had taken the equivalent of 57 three-grain tablets of Phanodorm and 57 one-grain tablets of sodium amytol." This amounted to about twice the lethal dose. "He died from an overdose of barbiturate tablets but there is no evidence to show whether they were self-administered or ingested accidentally," the coroner said.

During the two-hour hearing Ferguson's own doctor described how his patient had been found unconscious in his bath, in very similar circumstances, in July 1959. On that occasion he had been rushed to Moreton-on-the-Marsh hospital and revived. The doctor also related how Ferguson had always kept a record of his drug consumption and tried



to reduce the dosage. Before the jury left for their fifty-minute deliberation they were reminded of the absence of any written or verbal statement by Ferguson indicating an intention to take his own life. They returned an open verdict, and thereby the mystery was officially left unresolved.

Among people who were close to Ferguson there are those who say that he would never have committed suicide; others state that they have no doubt he did. His doctor was never able, despite repeated attempts, to make him talk about the occasion in July of the previous year when he was found unconscious in the bath. On the other hand, most sufferers from depression make an attempt on their life sooner or later unless carefully controlled with the modern drugs that were not generally available in 1960. Maureen Ferguson, who was devastated by her loss, steadfastly maintained that he had not deliberately taken his life. This calm and gracious person who had dedicated herself to help her husband achieve his ambitions suddenly found herself without a goal, without a reason to live. She never fully recovered from the shock, but with great fortitude she struggled on through a serious illness of her own. She died some five years after her stormy-petrel husband.

It is worth recording that Ferguson remained an agnostic to the end. Not for him the change of heart that impending death brings to many. As per his instructions, his body was cremated and the ashes spread from an aircraft over Abbotswood."

This was a very sad ending for a great man. Harry Ferguson should rank with the great inventors of our time. He completely revolutionized farm tractor design and also farming practices with great benefit to farmers.

Back to Wade Tractor Equipment (later called Wade Tractor Sales Division) which became a large operation. It was still located in the Wade building on Hawthorne. Our Operating Manager was Paul Henry from the Department of Agriculture in Washington, D.C. I had become acquainted with him during the war years. Ernest Crichton was Sales Manager and I was President and General Manager.

While the war was being fought, all tractor production had been limited to a percentage of past

production. Ford had no track record, but through efforts of Harry Ferguson and other officials, Ford was awarded a good quota of tractors and we built a fine dealer organization. We had some independent dealers and some separate tractor dealerships owned by Ford dealers.

In covering the Pacific Northwest, we worked with about 75 dealers, 30 of whom we call "A" dealers and 45, "B." If a dealer sold 50 or more tractors in a year, we designated him an "A." "B" dealers sold fewer, but we needed them in small or isolated communities. We had a "B" dealer in Tillamook for instance, because the mountains cut the area off and made it inconvenient to cover from McMinnville or anywhere else.

At Ferguson-Sherman Co., business was not going as well as projected. Roger Kyes came in as a consultant and he replaced Eber Sherman as President. Kyes had been President of Empire Plow Co. and he was a brilliant man and a terrific driver. My friend, Eber Sherman, took over a distributorship in New York. I am sure that was a relief to him as he had a nice home in Larchmont and now could enjoy it with his beautiful wife Alice.

I was appointed to the Advisory Committee of Ferguson-Sherman along with four other distributors. I got along well with Roger Kyes and I think he respected me for my knowledge and modus operandi. He was a good friend to me, but many people disliked him because he was ruthless. In one of the Advisory Committee meetings Roger presented a new finance plan for dealer flooring and retail sales. He asked my opinion, and I told him we would not use it because it would require our company's endorsement of all the paper. That was against a principle that I would never violate as I had seen what happened in 1932. He said, "What if we cancel your franchise as a distributor?" My reply was, "That is your right."

At the next meeting a month later, Kyes started out by saying, "That SOB Wade Newbegin made us change the whole finance program but now he will like it." It did not require our endorsement so it was very helpful in the merchandising of tractors.

Here is a story to show how tough Roger Kyes was. During World War II, our sales force was required to make a survey of the territory. Our salesmen were trained by a professional and they visited every farm equipment dealer in the territory, and we then tabulated the results.

I went into Kyes' office to make the presentation of our findings and he was laughing, which was



unusual for Roger. I asked him what had happened. He said, "The distributor ahead of you proudly pointed out a county where 70 tractors were sold and 69 were Ferguson." Roger, instead of complimenting him, said, "Why in hell didn't you sell the seventieth?" They got into a big argument and Roger thought it was hilarious. I've often quoted this as the philosophy of a real Simon Legree.

Another incident occurred when Kyes and I had dinner together in Washington after a War Production Advisory Committee meeting. Roger had just appointed a new general sales manager. I suggested that I had better change my route home and go by Detroit to meet the new man but Roger replied, "Don't bother. He isn't any good and I am firing him at the end of the month."

Kyes left the Ferguson-Sherman Co. as soon as the decision was made not to manufacture their own tractor. He went with General Motors as a top vice president in charge of the truck and bus division and later he became a vice president at General Motors headquarters in New York, where I visited him. It was rumored that Roger was to be the next president of General Motors but unfortunately he suffered a heart attack which eliminated his chance at the presidency. He died a few years later.

After World War II ended, we instituted numerous sales promotions, one of which we called the trainload program. Each dealer was supposed to order a freight car full of tractors, and the total added up to a complete train. At a big dealer meeting, cards were displayed with a dealer's name and a picture of a railroad car on each one. In our territory one railroad does not serve the region, so it never came out as an entire train.



Wade Newbegin watching Frank Pierce, President of Dearborn Motor Corporation, land a salmon off the Oregon coast.

Another fine promotion was the National Farm Youth Program. The goal was far-reaching — to sell the farm youth on Ferguson tractors and to encourage them to remain on the farm. Each dealer was asked to set up a chapter, probably in connection with 4-H or Smith Hughes, and sell a tractor and equipment to the chapter at cost. Finally, a Pacific Northwest plowing contest was held on a farm near Portland, with the winner competing in the national contest. It was a successful promotion on both counts of keeping young people on the farm and publicizing the Ferguson tractor.

I remember an outstanding meeting of distributors that was held in Phoenix, Arizona, where all tractors and equipment were demonstrated on a farm. Harry Ferguson arranged everything and it was a great show. I was complimented when Mr. Ferguson asked me to have tea with him during the afternoon recess. Also, I was invited to dinner with his wife and daughter at Camelback Inn, the first time I visited that beautiful resort.

Business was going smoothly for Ford-Ferguson and Wade Tractor and Equipment. Then the Ford and Ferguson managements got into a brawl over who would make the profit, Ford or Ferguson-Sherman. Ferguson had the patents but they were expiring in a few years. Finally it was announced that Ford would supply tractors to Ferguson-Sherman for one year and then bring out their own Ford tractor and market it through distributors.

Ferguson's chairman announced that they would buy a factory and build their own tractors. Each distributor was asked to decide which line he wanted to handle. This was difficult for me because I felt strong loyalty to both Ford and Ferguson. No decision had to be made for ten or eleven months, so I told them I would postpone the question for the time being. This worked out well as toward the end of the period Roger Kyes called me to say they had dropped their plan to build tractors, so we should continue with Ford. Ferguson would have only farm implements to distribute and they of course would be competitive to Ford. We notified Ford that we would stay with them.

One valuable principle I learned from this was to avoid making a decision until the deadline or until all facts are known.

Ford had hired Frank Pierce to head up the new tractor distributing company called Dearborn Motors. Pierce's background was in merchandizing Frigidaires. The Sales Manager was Merritt Hill who had been West Coast manager for Ferguson before



he began his own sales consulting firm, which we had used occasionally. Our connection with Merritt Hill was close.

The changeover from Ferguson to Ford went smoothly as we maintained all our dealers. During the first year's production of Ford tractors, our sales department reported to me that the tractor wouldn't steer in a straight line down a row. I couldn't believe it and had our service department manager check it out and document the facts. I made an appointment to meet with Frank Pierce, President of Dearborn Motors, to be sure this serious problem was corrected right away.

When I told Pierce, he was shocked. He picked up the phone and called the chief engineer into his office. The engineer admitted my facts were correct. Mr. Pierce then asked, "Why haven't I known of this, and why hasn't it been corrected?" The engineer said their engineers and those of Ford were not too friendly and he had been afraid to present the problem to them. Mr. Pierce then called the chief engineer of Ford tractors and told him the story. Before I left Detroit, I was promised a corrective kit within a week. The correction worked and was put into production immediately. Thus was solved a serious problem that could have really hurt tractor sales.

All through my business life I maintained contact with the heads of the companies from whom we were buying. Whenever a serious problem arose, I took it direct to the top, and it always paid off in a quick solution.

Frank Pierce was one of the finest executives I have ever known. He was exceptionally good at building an organization which was necessary because he had none when he started Dearborn Motors. Frank and I became close friends and I learned a great deal from him. He came out and went salmon fishing at Astoria with me and I also enjoyed playing golf with him. I introduced him at the Farm and Industrial Equipment Institute, to which all the manufacturers belonged.

A funny incident occurred at the annual formal banquet of FIEI. Tables were assigned by the supplier companies, not by FIEI, and I found that we had a poor table. I told the FIEI man in charge that the table was all right for me, but Frank Pierce, one of the leading men and new in the industry, deserved a top table. They moved some people around and when we went to the new table, Frank offered the FIEI man a tip, thinking he was the maitre d'. The FIEI man was insulted but he should have ac-

cepted it as a joke and we'd all have enjoyed a hearty laugh.

One fall I was in Chicago and Frank Pierce called me to say he had two tickets to the Oregon-Michigan football game and he would send his company plane over to pick me up so we could go together. I told him there was nothing I would rather do but I didn't fly in company planes because some good friends had been killed that way. Sad to say, this same plane later crashed on takeoff, causing the death of Frank Pierce.

A tragedy of the Ford-Ferguson breakup came as a result of a lawsuit over Ford's violating the patents of Harry Ferguson. I was never asked to testify but a good friend of mine, Phil Paige, who had been educated by Ford and now was with Ferguson-Sherman, was subpoenaed for the trial in New York. He had violently mixed emotions. Rather than testify, he jumped from a hotel window and killed himself. Eventually the suit was settled by Ford paying Ferguson a sizable sum.

I was honored when I was asked to speak on our organization and selection of personnel at a distributor meeting in Detroit. This was the only time a distributor ever spoke to his peers. Professionals were handling the meeting and I learned a great deal about putting on sales meetings. Our company, throughout the years, was noted for its excellent dealer meetings. Many of the factories we represented copied our format and used it nationally and internationally.

Our relationship with Dearborn Motors was excellent. When I was on the Distributor Advisory Committee, we developed our dealer organization to have 100 percent coverage of our territory.

The R.M. Wade Tractor Sales organization expanded greatly about this time. The sales team was headed by Ernest Crichton and Paul Henry, Operations Manager, both of whom reported to me. ("Tink" Smith was the General Sales Manager for R.M. Wade & Co.) A problem developed within our general line distribution sales organization and also at the dealer level. A Ford tractor dealer thought he should have all the R.M. Wade lines for his territory. The other dealers who had built up the sale of these products naturally thought they should not be cancelled, but should continue to represent these lines. The only joint employee of R.M. Wade Tractor Sales and R.M. Wade & Co. was myself. As this friction developed, I decided that we would have to get rid of the Ford tractor distribution, or else R.M. Wade & Co. would be completely tied to the tractor dealers



for distribution. I never had friction at home, and I did not want to be the focus for friction at work.

Another major difficulty was that Ford was rapidly acquiring implement lines which would be competitive to R.M. Wade & Co. general lines. Because R.M. Wade & Co. and R.M. Wade Tractor Sales were owned by the same people, eventually we would lose our best lines at R.M. Wade & Co. After analyzing the situation carefully, I reached an important decision; we should resign from the Ford tractor distributorship. I wrote a letter of resignation and the day the letter was delivered, Frank Pierce was fishing off the coast of Florida. He came in immediately and phoned me to say we could not resign; we were one of their best distributors. He asked if I was mad at any of their people — if so, he would fire them. He asked if we needed money — if so, he would supply it. Finally he said he would fly out and meet with me right away. I told him everything was all right with our relationship but I had decided to resign and it was a final, well-thought-out decision, not a spur-of-the-moment one. I said I would fly to Detroit, which I did, and Frank still tried to talk me out of resigning, but to no avail. We then discussed the transaction and I told him to make Paul Henry head of the operation and we would turn over to him all of our Tractor Sales Division employees except Ernest Crichton who would retire to California.

Mr. Pierce sent his right-hand man, Tom Farrell,

to handle the transaction. I had heard how ruthless big corporations can be, but Tom Farrell told me his only instructions from Pierce were that "Wade Newbegin is to be pleased with all arrangements." What more could I ask? Of course, this made me lean over backwards to be fair with Dearborn Motors.

We held a dealer meeting jointly with Dearborn and announced the change. It was a sentimental time as our relations with our dealers were close and they hated to change.

Time proved my decision correct. Our general line company, R.M. Wade & Co., prospered and in one year our profits equalled the profits of both Tractor Sales Division and R.M. Wade & Co. A few years later, Ford cancelled all distributors and put in their own branches, so if we had stayed with the tractor distribution, we would have had a serious problem.

The Ford Tractor Division of Ford Motor Co. continued to expand. In 1988 they bought the New Holland Machine Company, the originator of the pickup baler and the leading grass line farm equipment manufacturer. This gave Ford a complete line of fine farm equipment. The Ford Co. was one of the world leaders in the manufacture of tractors and equipment. Sadly, in 1990, Ford sold out its entire tractor and implement business to Fiat of Italy. With that, Henry Ford's dream of helping farmers ended.