

FROM THE DESK OF SAVVA - 4



RIDICULOUS OBSESSIONS

Sent in by – he'd rather stay anonymous:

How often have you seen a thingy or a whatsit and thought to yourself, that's great, one day I'll have to get one of them. Meanwhile, you have little or no use for one, it's just a case of unjustified ownership. For some reason unknown to mankind it is that ridiculous desire to want to own something that invariably is totally useless and superfluous to your needs or requirements. To our partners and friends we justify this possible ownership by calling it a goal, or, as we tell our children, you have to have a goal in life.

Here is one of mine: Have you ever been to a motor show where the Stationary Engine chaps have their toys displayed and puffing away merrily for all to admire. There is always a group of male on-lookers (rarely female), standing around, hands clasped behind their backs, admiring the engines doing their puffing thing. Maybe it's a masculine thing, the smell of petrol, diesel oil and paraffin that attracts us. Well, I'm one of those victims of circumstance having often stood around watching these stationary engines doing their thing



Some time ago I spotted an advert in a club newsletter advertising a gaggle of stationary engines for sale at a ridiculous low price. At about the same time I was speaking to a member of the club and expressed my deep desire in the possible ownership of one of the "said" engines. To my surprise, they came back to me requesting I deposit the necessary funds into the farmer's bank account as I had purchased one. I was now the proud owner of a stationary engine of unknown age, make, size or condition.



That's when reality raised it's ugly head. – where in the Free State do I find this farmer who was selling the engines and how in heavens name am I going to transport the "object de art" back home, let alone where am I'm going to put it when I get it back.. When I excitedly advised the family of the pending addition to the family treasurers and how great it would look on the back stoep I found the missus didn't share my enthusiasm. It was made very clear - it goes into the garage with the other "stuff".

Any rate, at this point, my faith in humanity was restored. A chance meeting with Siggie Duval from the Vaal Club solved this problem. I told him about my dilemma and he said not to worry he'll sort something out. A week or three later, I received a call from Siggie to say he had picked up the engine and it was now at the Club in Vanderbijl Park and he would bring it through to Jhb for me. Two weeks later Siggie arrived in his monstrous Ford F250 truck with the well travelled engine on the back.

I expected a rusty old engine but instead here was a complete unit that not only “turned over” freely, but came with a spare crankcase, magneto and numerous other spares including a new gasket set. At this point, the wise thing would have been to take it off the rather rickety trolley and check it through, but no, I couldn’t wait, so I poured a gollop of petrol into the carb, cranked it and – walla - off it went with a bang, a cloud of smoke, and then it settled down to a very fast running pace.

That’s when I nearly had a woopsie. You see, it was still standing on this wheelie trolley of dubious durability so I could move it into the garage, unfortunately when it started, the heavy flywheel caused it to start wriggling its way off the trolley which would have been a disaster. Can you imagine that massive flywheel hitting the ground at a rate of knots - I shudder at the thought. I had however spotted a metal plate that you push to short the spark plug and stop the engine, so, holding the engine onto the trolley with my knees, I pressed this engine stop but my finger ended up between the plate and the spark plug shocked the hell out of me, I had forgotten how potent these magnetos are. At that point I was contemplating letting go of the entire contraption and running for it when it shuddered to a stop. The fuel pipe from the tank to the carb was leaking and it had run out of petrol.

By the way, the farmer must have painted his roof at sometime and had paint left over, so he painted the engine “farmhouse roof green”, and I mean everything – tank, carb, flywheel the lot. One thing, it’ll never rust.

Now comes the big question – what now? I have achieved the ridiculous goal of owning a stationary engine and don’t know what to do with it. Perhaps come summer I can invite fiends around for a braai and we can all stand around with our hands clasped behind our backs watching it chug away.

p.s. A gentleman farmer has now purchased it.

