



On the Road

by Darrel Darst

I have decided to start writing this article in the hopes of learning more about the places my family and I have visited. Information is hard to find on the various factories and other places, etc., to do with International Harvester. I thought that writing of our trips would maybe interest IH members and help to learn more about the places we have been. I would be pleased if anyone has anything to add by writing into this newsletter or by contacting me at my home.

My wife and I enjoy making any kind of trip into trying to find old IH factories. The anticipation to see if these places are still standing or not is probably what drives us to keep going until we find out all we possibly can about the operations at each of the plants. Even if they have been torn down, it is interesting to see where they once stood along with the surroundings that took their place. For some reason, I like to see where our tractors first started out. As long as I have a story to tell, we will try to write about a trip in each newsletter.

About two years ago in January, my wife and one of our daughters, Ashley, started out to Louisiana to pick up an MDV that I had bought a few months earlier. We had decided that we wanted to find the IH Twine Mill in New Orleans, or at least where it once stood. I made a few phone calls before we left, but no one knew if it was still standing or even if it had ever existed. A New Orleans history museum found the address in an old phone book so that was all we needed to get started. After we picked up the tractor, we made a stop at Baton Rouge to rent a car at the airport. A truck

and trailer in a major city was not what we wanted, especially since we had no ideas on where we were actually going, let alone that we were from Troy, Missouri. After arriving in New Orleans, we got a street map and had no problem in finding the street. The only obstacle was that the street was a dead end at the railroad tracks. We circled numerous times because we just knew that the old factory had to be in this vicinity. The neighborhood was quite run down, but I decided to stop and ask for some more help anyway. The same time I got out of the car, I noticed some buildings across the railroad yards that looked like several other IH factories I had been to. So, after asking a man in the old neighborhood, I found out the road continued across the tracks when the factory was open in the 60's. We found our way around the tracks, which wasn't the easiest task, but the further we got into where all the old buildings were, the more excited we became; and sure enough, the old plant was still intact, including the "ice cream parlor" glass window effect in the office buildings. It sits right on the Mississippi River and is still used for storage today by some other company. There is no IH on the building anywhere that we could find, but there is no mistaking that it was once an IH factory. It was still the original colors and it was really fun to dream of how it once was a busy place. I'm sure that there had to be a lot of local workers from the nearby neighborhood.

IH plants were similar to the way an early McDonald's Restaurant could be recognized without an emblem on

it; just the design of the building could tell you what it was. We haven't been able to find much about this plant, but I think it was opened after the Chicago Twine Mill closed. I'm sure after this plant closed, it was moved overseas. We have some original movie footage of the plant in operation and it was mostly women that worked in the plant. If anyone reads this that worked there or has anything about the plant, I wish they would contact me.

Maybe I shouldn't talk much about our trip home, but after what happened I can't keep from telling about the rest of the trip. I decided to drive all the way home non-stop, which is kind of typical for us, when the fun is over, let's go home. When we reached Memphis, TN, it was raining, but the roads seemed fine. The further we got up into Arkansas, the colder it got, and all of a sudden the road was solid ice. I don't know if any of you have ever been to Arkansas, but they rarely have bad weather, so they don't have any equipment to deal with it. We were down to 20 MPH on a flat highway and started to jackknife with the trailer and our MDV was on that trailer. I coasted to the side of the road, along with lots of other people and loads of truckers. When I got out of the truck I couldn't even stand up because of all the ice. Needless to say, we spent the next 8 hours in the truck along with lots of other motorists. We were truly stranded, with not a hint of how to go anywhere else, not even to use a phone to call home. Well, we spent a rather restless night in the truck. Our daughter, Ashley, who was 4 at the time, slept peacefully in the back seat with all her blankets and pillows, oblivious to what was going on. When she woke up the next morning on a highway in Arkansas, it was time to go home. We saw lots of accidents just ahead of us on the highway and were thankful that we were now headed home for Missouri.

Next time, we will travel to the Memphis Plant. As I am writing this article, the Louisville Cub Plant is being torn down. How sad to think of all the history there was in that building.



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