

Ushering In The Era Of Modern Agriculture

(NAPSA)—Two North Dakota farmers tinkering in a shed assembled the prototype of the first self-propelled sprayer of its kind—a high-speed, low-clearance, self-propelled sprayer for agricultural use—more than half a century ago.

Little did they realize their invention would revolutionize agriculture and become a mainstay on more North American farms than any other sprayer in its class.

It took about three years of tinkering for brothers John and Jake Kirschmann to put together the first “SpraCoupe.” It was, granted, an odd-looking machine, looking like a small airplane fuselage without the wings, with the operator comfortable in the cockpitlike cab with dedicated controls. The original prototype still exists and is on display at the AGCO assembly plant in Jackson, Minn.

Once it was perfected, they sold the newfangled sprayer to farmers on a small scale. Recognizing a good thing, it wasn’t long before the agricultural equipment industry caught up with these innovative brothers. The rights and design of this new machine were purchased by several influential equipment companies.

Today, the SpraCoupe continues to be manufactured and sold by a leading manufacturer and marketer of advanced farming equipment, including tractors, dry and liquid application floaters and sprayers, combines and other essential farming equipment.

“The SpraCoupe was a first in many ways—it was the world’s first low-clearance, high-speed, self-propelled applicator of its kind for fertilizer and chemicals and it was much easier to use and more efficient than tractor-mounted spray booms,” says David Webster, AGCO Application Equipment director of sales. “It burned considerably less fuel, yet



A clever couple of brothers created a new kind of farm machine that revolutionized agriculture.

covered acres so much faster, allowing farmers to manage more acres and different types of crops.”

Webster says the SpraCoupe was a bellwether for what was coming in American agriculture—fewer producers farming larger tracts. “Today in the United States, farmers comprise less than 2 percent of the overall population and that percentage continues to shrink,” Webster explains. “Yet this small percentage of farmers is able to feed and clothe the remaining 98 percent of the population. It is because of equipment like the SpraCoupe that this is possible.”

The resulting evolutionary chain in farm application equipment led to the much larger, even higher-volume monster application rigs, such as the TerraGator and RoGator, that evolved to meet the demands of today’s high-intensity agriculture.

There are SpraCoupes still running today that are 20 to 30 years old, though farmers and professional applicators continue to purchase new ones. Besides being popular in the U.S. and Canada, the machine can be seen working farmland in South America, Europe, Russia, Australia, New Zealand and South Africa.

The SpraCoupe has continued to evolve to meet the special demands of today’s agriculture but the basic design in many ways has stayed the same. You could say that the Kirschmann brothers got it right the first time.