



Ron Swindler

Pioneer No-Till Farmer



Ron and Jan Swindler
Rick and Desree Poehls, son-in-law and oldest daughter.
Mott, North Dakota....Southwestern North Dakota.
Saturday, September 29th, 07, Clear Skies, Windy and 79 degrees F.

The Winter Wheat capital of North Dakota.

Ron and Jan go from the most advanced No-till producers in the world to well established landlords on September 29th, 07 as Ron opens up a new chapter in his career.

Rick Poehls, Ron's son-in-law made the decision not to move ahead following the 2006 crop year. Young farmers have had a very tough time in Hettinger county with seven years of drought and low....I mean really low.... commodity prices in typical 35 bushel spring wheat and 40 bushel winter wheat country. 2005 and 2006 crop years reduced balance sheets to ashes for young farmers trying to get a start in a drought on the Great Plains.

This is not the first time that the Swindler's have faced drought.....but it is the first time with high input costs and virtually no way to cash flow the inputs due to low commodity prices....It is way to difficult for a young farmer to start a farming operation with \$2 and \$3 wheat. One thing is for sure, Rick's potential is still in place and his family is together.

All of Ron and Jan's family were present...to help with the big machinery sale. All three daughters and son-in-laws....all the cousins and nephews...the brother-in-laws and sisters. It was more like a big community reunion. Three generations were present to carry out all the support activity for Rick and Ron.

Ron did some custom seeding for his new tenant Kerry Swindler this spring and timed the auction sale for this fall.



Ron's neighbors came to make most of the purchases....since Durum Wheat is \$13.00 per bushel and the \$9.00 per bushel Hard Red Winter Wheat crop was a record for the area...good rains and excellent growing conditions for 2007 winter wheat crop produced one of the best winter wheat crops on record in North Dakota. Many area producers still hold a good portion of their crop. Don't forget the railroad...they get a \$1.50 of every bushel shipped to the west coast or the Great Lakes. So margins are always close in Mott, North Dakota.

Ron's is well known for having the best in machinery. The machinery is always in top notch condition, well maintained to say the least.... and the most advanced designs in the market.

Ron is considered the "Pioneer of No-till" in North Dakota having started in 1976 with the Bettison Drills....He ran the Melroe Bettison drills in a triple hitch arrangement and Frank Lessiter of the No-till Farmer would often write articles about Ron Swindler. And of course the professor at NDSU that stated that No-till would never work in southwestern North Dakota. He is probably the same professor that promoted the canal system across the northern part of the state. Plow, pack and pony was the best option of the time when Ron went No-till.

Ron was one of the first owners of a Yelder Drill in North Dakota in 1982....Ron brought in most of the early No-till farmers in the southwestern part of the state....and also quite a few Exactrix sales.

In fact Ron Swindler has received awards from the ManDak Zero Till association and is also recognized nationally for his achievements in the conservation movement.





Ron and Jan's youngest daughter Cameo works for the NRCS and coordinates the conservation programs for the Hettinger County area. Cameo knows the importance of conservation having seen only stubble stand in the gigantic wheat fields of the west. As a small girl growing up she never saw bare soil or tillage. She has only known her dad as No-till farmer watching those Yelder Drills and Case SDX seeders seed up to 10,000 acres annually across the rolling landscape of North Dakota.

Southwestern North Dakota is known for its beautiful landscape. The Cannon Ball River country is full of pioneers such as the Teddy Roosevelt cattle ranching experience and George Armstrong Custers influence. Jedediah Smith, John Colter, Jim Bridger all trapped and scouted the area. This is productive and beautiful rolling land with up to 30% slopes in production. The view is breathtaking with elevated and stranded plateau buttes at 1,000 to 2,000 feet above the prairies. You can obviously appreciate the power of the last ice age and time required to develop the productive soils following the last recession. This recession formed the bad lands of the Teddy Roosevelt National Park. This part of North Dakota is well known for excellent pheasant, antelope and deer hunting. In fact hunting clubs now buy up the CRP land.

At one time southwestern North Dakota was 50% fallow and full of wind and water erosion. I can remember mud over the road in the 1980's from the summerfallow fields. Just barely being able to see the white line on the highway going out of Bismarck down Interstate 94 to Richardton and turning south to Mott. The blowing dust is gone. That all started to change when Ron Swindler paved the way for the neighbors, his brother Marion and nephew Kerry and his brother-in-law, Ray Bieber and Tim. All the farming practices changed thanks to Ron Swindler and his persuasive outlook on the future of farming.

The power of No-till fertilizer placement and paired row seedings forever changed the landscape of Hettinger county North Dakota. Today you might have to drive 50 to 60 miles to find a black fallow field. The world changed so fast in this part of the state. In fact I never met a producer in the last five years that uses black summerfallow in North Dakota.

As Roundup prices came down in the 90's the whole area went wholesale to No-till farming ...there is no doubt that Ron was the man to call if you had a No-till question. Ron's pioneering work drove the entire southern and western part of the state into No-till.....Ron's No-till system was all about the improved margin, the lower risk, and chance to forever bring the summer fallow rotation to a halt.



Ron was also one of the first producer's to No-till sunflowers....and he made No-till corn a possibility with the SDX and the Exactrix system....something I would have never tried. I about fell off the cell phone when Ron called and said he had seeded expensive hybrid corn (not planted corn) with the SDX and wingless injection of NH3.... and furthermore the corn looked pretty good....boy was that an interesting phone call and well worth going out to see what he had done.

Ron's dad John Swindler and mother watched their youngest son with pride. Their outspoken and dedicated son led the No-till Revolution in North Dakota and Canada. In fact Ron's dad in retirement often ran the big tractor and Yielder drill getting a real kick out of the productive aspect of good crops in standing stubble. Crops raised annually and saving the precious topsoil of North Dakota. Ron's dad, John barley survived the dust bowl and great depression. The Swindler family actually moved to Coeur D Alene, Idaho and lived off the land while their farm lay at rest in the dirty thirties. In fact Ron's brother Marion started school in Coeur D Alene. Marion was 11 years older than Ron and no doubt a compatible leader and a good follower.

Ron was one of the very first Exactrix owners in North Dakota....seeing the potential in reduced Nitrogen use and fertilizer placement with pinpoint nutrient geometry and precision seed placement....and the technique did improve yields and reduce risk.....Ron took to the Exactrix and made the system work perfectly for his rolling landscape conditions with the wide and long airseeder. He took the system into the Variable Rate, Site Specific advanced technology....saving precious dollars on the non productive areas.

Ron drove Exactrix hard in 2004 to develop the SDX liquid NH3 wing injection technique which is now termed wingless injection...In fact Ron was so persistent about the SDX I could not refuse an old friend. Out of the hard work came a patent specifically for the SDX seeder. We are still not done with the SDX and we hope to make the SDX an even better seeder. As Ron informed me about 3 years ago...nothing yields like the Yielder. Ron is correct and the solution is inside the problem. Hopefully there will be a breakthrough for the SDX and maybe some more improvements for the Deere single disc seeders.





The story of Ron Swindler will continue as he teaches and educates younger and older producers. Ron and Jan continue to bring their family together in search of a good life. Ron and Jan's contributions to society are greater with each day. So one chapter closes and another chapter opens.

As I left the Swindler sale about 3:00 PM in a 30 to 40 mph wind, I drove north from Mott to Richardton and then due west on Interstate 94 for Spokane, I did reflect how beautiful North Dakota is on a windy day and how great the people are....How beautiful the wheat stubble fields are as the pheasants fatten up on the grain.... and the mind boggling view of the Bad Lands in the Teddy Roosevelt Park....there was no blowing soil and a very beautiful Montana sunset on the Yellowstone River.

Thomas Jefferson and Lewis and Clark would be proud that their exploratory journey opened the west and made a better life for all Americans.

Reporting from the breadbasket of America.....where pasta is a little more expensive and young farmers can finally move ahead.

Your Great Plains Reporter.

Guy Swanson

How did the free auction go?

The NH3 trailers and tanks came in as follows.

Single 1500 gallon bottom outlet valves, with mud grip tires on the trailer. \$3,700

Rick Poehls' North Dakota Switch Back, Twin Tank NH3 trailer, with bottom outlet valves for slopes, combine steer axles, \$7,000.

Skid Mount, NH3 Farm Storage Tank, 12,000 gallon with transfer pump and pedestals, \$18,000.

Truck mount, twin slip tanks, 3,000 gallon, McGregor, 3 inch transfer pump, 265 psi rated tanks. \$7,000

Primary Tools.

SDX, 10 single disc seeder with Exactrix system and Wingless Injection, Dutch air brakes, Variable Rate Application....\$122,000

Cat 95E, 2,600 hours, 65 gpm hydraulic system developed by Butler Machinery for airseeders.....\$128,000

Kerry Swindler bought the sprayer support trailer and the Deere Tractors....something about the history in those old green tractors.

The Yelder 2020 drills were held in reserve.

The neighbors liked Ron's equipment and will receive many years of service from the well maintained equipment.