**2020 Haymaker of the Year-John B. Randall**

This haymaker was not born into a long tradition of American agriculture, but instead, to a pair of high school sweethearts of city dwelling business owners. They married just before his dad shipped out to Europe in World War II, and when they emerged from the war, they decided to leave the life they knew. They bought a homestead and raised two sons with farming in their blood.

The boys finished agricultural colleges and their father died soon after at the age of 52. The farm animals were replaced with crop-farming grain and dry beans and a new grain system and drier were put in place. The brothers continued parallel operations but eventually, the older brother took fulltime work in town and the younger brother took over the home farm’s operation and began buying nearby farms.

The farmer acquired an old John Deere baler, New Holland rake and a pull-type wagon. Wheat and oat straw were chopped by a combine, as there was no market for straw bales.

In 1987, his first baby daughter arrived and the realization that the little house he and his bride lived in was becoming too small, so plans began to design a new homestead. A barn that had been built to store grain, now became a shop as well as bale storage. By 1990, a new home was built, with the farmer designing it and doing much of the work himself, and another baby girl arrived. The family moved into the big house in the little woods on Christmas Eve.

As he always had, the farmer kept improving machinery with his engineering skills, to make jobs more efficient and products better. He gradually grew more hay and less grain. There was never enough barn space for the increasing number of bales and so in the mid-90’s he used 100-foot laminated wood trusses from a bowling alley to build a barn. He designed the barn, figured out how to move the heavy trusses 15 miles, and created bi-fold doors run on hydraulics to get air flow to the hay bales. Eventually, a truck scale and another barn were built and by the late 1990’s, his operation was all hay and straw.

Through the years, this innovative farmer developed ways to use sensors on balers, run by Ipads in tractors, to make sure bales were uniform in length and tension and had the proper moisture. He invented systems to load vans mechanically and to efficiently and safely stack bales. And he conceived a system to allow brokers to place deposits on specific loads of hay when harvest was done in the fall using a sophisticated scale ticket/invoice/inventory system.

While this farmer will tell you he’s not a “people person”, most who visit him, leave better than they came. Whether it’s a highway crew needed to park equipment, a fireman with a blown hydraulic hose, a neighbor looking for machinery diagnosis or repair, farmers with drainage dilemmas or a grain dryer crisis, they know a farmer who will help them.

Over the last few years, his idea for a plunger-less, knotter-less baler has become a prototype machine that undergoes continual evolution. His vision requires unique parts to be created, drawn, tested, modified, sometimes discarded, or revised. In 2019, he began work with some Montana agricultural engineering students to improve technological developments he began for incorporating strappers on bale wagons.

Whether he is improving equipment for the forage industry, solving a neighborhood problem, or working to strengthen the NHA, he does so with intellect, thoroughness and integrity. I am proud to announce the 2020 National Hay Association Haymaker of the Year-**John B. Randall-Randi B Farms in Bloomfield, New York.**