

Farmer Blossom

Growing up on a dairy farm, I was excited about driving tractors. Not old enough to drive, I'd ride the tractor with my dad while he did his work... whether it was plowing in the spring, baling hay in the summer, cutting corn in the fall, or pushing snow out of neighbors' driveways in the winter. Anxious for the moment when dad would let me steer while I sat in his lap, not able to see where I was going or able to reach the clutch or brakes. I "drove" pulling the throttle wide open, while dad would keep us going straight.

The enchanted moment came when I was eight years old. Dad asked me to run across the field where we were baling hay to the waiting tractor and empty wagon that my grandfather had left there. I jumped off my dad's tractor and flew across the field.

Excitedly, I climbed up and jumped into the tractor's seat. My mind racing with all the things I had seen my dad do in starting a tractor. I stretched my left leg out to reach the clutch. Too short. Again, with my body straight under the steering wheel, I pushed in the clutch. My leg muscles were shaking as I turned the key, and the tractor roared to life. Startled, I sat up jerking my foot off the clutch. The tractor jumped three or four times with the wagon banging in the back and then stalled. I stretched my aching muscles three or four more times for the clutch until I was able to get the tractor moving across the field towards my dad.

I saw him waving for me, stretched my aching leg again for the clutch, and put the gearshift into the highest gear. The tractor took off like a wild rabbit with the wagon barking after it. I bounced like a ball on the seat with my fingers digging into the steering wheel. Attempting to reach the clutch... my chest banging into the underside of the steering wheel, I was finally able to push the clutch down and shift into a lower gear.

As I pulled up to where my dad was working, he asked what had taken me so long as a smile broke across his face. My leg muscles twitching, clothes soaked with sweat and chest sore, I smiled weakly... knowing I wasn't a little boy anymore—I was a farmer!