



Lenwood Holo, “The Combine Man,” unloads his 1944 Massey-Harris 21A combine into a grain cart as he cuts in a wheat field at the Ron Misener farm south of Troy last week. Holo, of Eau Claire, Wis., is on the final stages of a tour with the old combine, having traveled from Texas north in what he calls his tribute to the “Harvest Brigade” that was created 60 years ago to help with the harvest.

TROY — The relic is dwarfed by its modern-day counterparts, but when the cutter gets started, it still evokes the image of custom combiners roaming the countryside of mid-America 60 years ago. The Massey-Harris 21A combine was the first of its kind, built in 1944 as part of the “Harvest Brigade,” the brainchild of Joe Tucker, sales manager for Massey-Harris USA.

Tucker’s idea was to ask the federal government to allocate the steel and other materials needed for 500 of the new combines at a time when both material and manpower were in short supply. At the height of World War II, the Harvest Brigade became reality as the 500 combines fanned out across the central United States, cutting wheat from Texas to North Dakota. Last week, a crowd gathered in a wheat field at the Ron Misener farm near here as Lenwood Holo mounted the seat of one of the original Massey- Harris machines, fired up the engine and turned the swather into the field, chaff flying from the spinner on the rear and grain gathering in the tank. “The Combine Man,” as Holo has come to be known, opened the edges of the field and then smoothly began cutting the ripened wheat, one of the last stops on a months-long journey he calls a “tribute to the Harvest Brigade.”