**The Light at the End of the Tunnel**

**I have often observed that a farmer’s calendar marks time by seasons rather than by days or months or weeks. The simplified version might look something like this:**

**Winter: Planning Season**

**Spring: Planting Season**

**Summer: Growing Season**

**Fall: Harvest Season**

**Since we find ourselves right near the end of Fall (Harvest Season), it’s worthwhile to note that this may well be the favorite of some in the business, since it’s the one that brings the payoff for the other three. During winter, life tends to be mostly expenditure, as heating, equipment purchase and repair, and advance purchase of supplies are the order of the day. Spring means plenty of labor intensive man hours, fuel for tillage and planting, seed and fertilizer costs, all of which fall on the “outgoing” side of the ledger. Summer means more fuel, chemical, and other expenses for the “growing” season. But, finally Fall arrives, and the big push begins to retrieve some of that expenditure by harvesting all of those crops that had occupied the farmer for the previous three seasons. Finally, it’s payday ! The time leading up to it can be a long, hungry stretch for those who wrestle a living from the soil. Three seasons of worry, wondering if all of those gambles will pay off in the end.**

**Much has changed in the world of Agribusiness over the last 100 years (roughly the span of the era of mechanized farming) but the one constant is the seasonal aspect of it all. That will forever remain.**

**Those of us in the MMOGTA who have seen a few too many of these seasonal cycles, have some fond memories of how things transpired on the farm during the early and middle years of the last century. Among those with a reverence for the bygone era is long time member Roger Birchmeier of Maple Grove Twp., just east of Chesaning. A few decades back, Roger and some friends and neighbors decided to hold back a little of their corn crop to be processed the way it might have been done in the 1940’s. The process includes vintage tractors, corn binders, corn huskers, and corn shellers, items which have been kept or restored by those in the Club. Like many around the hobby, we tend to believe that seeing vintage machinery actually doing the jobs for which it was designed is much more instructional than simply having it shined up and shown as a display.**

**The size of the operation varies from year to year, but the spirit remains the same. It entails more than just some nearly retired hardware, it also recreates the social nature of how major farm operations used to be, with neighbor helping neighbor, along with extended family participation. Roger’s tool shed is transformed into a temporary kitchen and all of the ladies pitch in with their favorite farm kitchen menu items, reminiscent of the era when threshing crews moved from farm to farm during the harvest. It’s a great time for story-telling, re-living old memories, and making new ones. A time for passing on the legacy to the kids, who still just think they’re having fun. [click to enlarge photos below]**