

North Collins inventor sharing farming ideas overseas

Frank Faulring's device will change the way Chinese farmers approach agriculture

By HEIDI KURPIELA

Somewhere in North Collins, at the end of a very long driveway lives a man who invents things.

His swimming pool has a spacey solar bubble hovering over it while his wood stove has an elevator that carries logs up from the basement to the living room.

His Christmas display shoots sparks and 24 years ago he invented an automatic rocking buggy for his son.

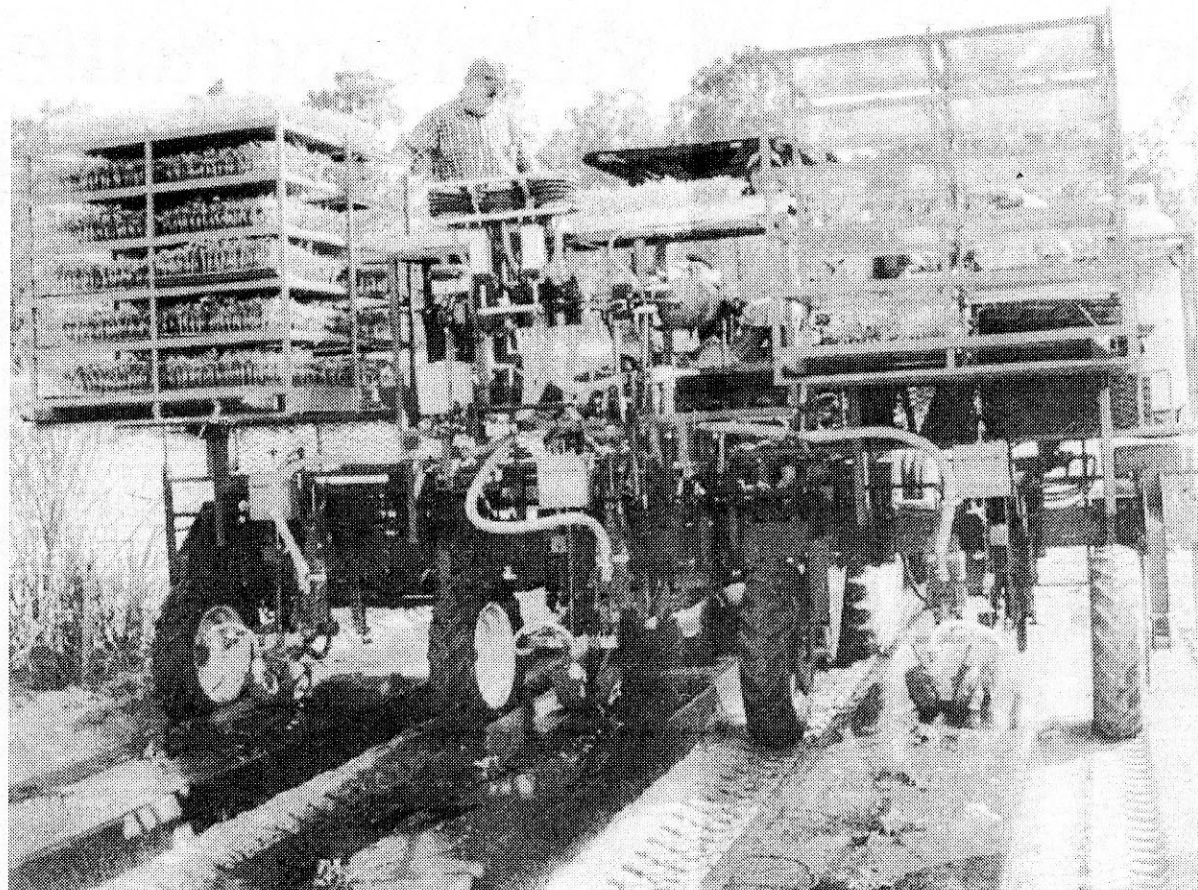
His name is Frank Faulring and soon his devices will change the lives of thousands of Chinese farmers.

After winning top honors at the American Society of Agricultural Engineers' Convention earlier this year, Faulring unexpectedly received a phone call from China.

"I'm sitting in my living room watching TV when I get a phone call from a company half way around the world that is interested in my work," recalls Faulring.

It turns out that one of the other award winners from the ASAE convention was a Chinese engineer who works for a private company in China. The company was recently prompted by their government to hire companies and/or individuals to help develop farming equipment and machines for small Chinese farms. The other award winner viewed Faulring as a good candidate for the job.

"China is bubbling over with economics but agriculture is locked in the past," explains Faulring. "This company (Gold



Frank Faulring of Genesee Road in North Collins takes a 'trial run' with his posi-flow automatic planter during a recent field trial in Florida.

Harvest Agricultural Equipment Limited) is going around looking for the best of the best to dig them out of that rut."

The Chinese government has offered him a commission to engineer a series of projects that a manufacturing company can develop and then distribute to low income farmers across China. Faulring says the projects will be like a beginner farming kit for small Chinese growers who are struggling

without any advances in their country's farming technology.

"This is rice paddy culture," says Faulring, who visited China back in February. "A valley might have 500 acres but it's all split up into a few square feet of tiny farms. The country is trying to jump start their agriculture. When you look at their land you see a skyscraper next to a wheelbarrow."

His first project looks a lot like a rototiller. He describes it as a

walk-behind planting machine and he's just about finished production on it. Right now the Chinese government has a standing purchase order for 5,000 of them.

This international venture seems to cap off the achievements of one man who has managed to turn a hobby of inventing household gadgets into a career in worldwide technological advances.

"The family room is starting

to run out of wall space for all the awards, patents and feature articles that have accumulated throughout the years," says Faulring.

This year he received two of the 50 outstanding achievement awards presented by the ASAE, marking his fifth recognition from the organization. In the late 1980s and early 1990s Faulring's Posi-Flow planting system received similar awards. Every year the ASAE reviews projects internationally before determining the top 50, which means Faulring was up against big-name companies like John Deere and Case International.

The first award was for his fully automatic plastic-mulch transplanting system, the second was for his root harvesting system. His automatic planter, utilized by over half of the corporate farms in this country, has increased crop yields in some states by as much as 65 percent. These increases have affected high-value crops like tomatoes, peppers, melons and cucumbers.

With the financial backing of his former North Collins employer, Renaldo's Sales and Services, Faulring has built around 300 automatic planters over the years.

"The Posi-Flow system is part of an overall trend in agriculture that utilizes plastic mulch," says Faulring. "Plastic mulch is quickly becoming the industry standard for growing high value, fresh market vegetables. With plastic mulch and raised beds, moisture is better controlled than on bare ground."