

Soldier, Farmer, Innovator

BEN GRANT, who died in 2014, epitomized the heroism and can-do attitude of the greatest generation. An Oklahoma native who farmed in Pasco, Wash., Grant was commissioned in the Second Infantry Division in 1941. Soon after, Pearl Harbor was attacked.

He became a pilot, flying a Douglas A-20 light bomber. Once, he and his fellow squadron pilots were refueling before crossing the Atlantic en route to Tunisia. “Save fuel however you can,” they were told. “You’re likely to run out.” Only 45 of the 65 planes on that nail-biting flight made it to land. Grant’s was one of them.

Grant, with wife, Alma, set out to farm in 1946, ending up where the Grand Cooley Dam had made desert land arable with irrigation. He became one of the largest custom cutter operators in the Pacific Northwest.

First, though, there were obstacles. Farm equipment after the war was hard to come by, and Grant was turned away by other brands, recalls his friend Steve Bughi with Walla Walla Farmers



Co-op, Inc. Bughi says a “Massey dealer said, ‘We put you at the top of the list.’” Grant remained loyal to the brand, starting with that Massey-Harris Model 26 combine, a pre-production machine.

The Massey Ferguson® combine engineers were on a first-name basis with Grant, frequently testing in his fields. All together, Grant held 14 patents, seven in the U.S. and seven in Canada.

Bughi praises his friend’s generosity—he gave more than \$1 million to Oklahoma State University—and Grant’s accomplishments. “Besides being a World War II hero, you’d have to go a long way to find someone who had more to do with Massey combines,” Bughi says. —Nancy Dorman-Hickson



Ben Grant’s Massey Ferguson 750 prototype combine, now on a farm near Pasco, Wash. Before being retired, it logged 24,000 hours and traveled around the world twice.