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# PERFORMANCE

THE PEOPLE • THE PASSION • THE PRODUCT

**GREATER  
EXPECTATIONS.**  
FOR THE HEIDT BROTHERS,  
GROWING IS THE KEY  
TO SURVIVAL.

**SAYING THANK  
YOU MACDON  
STYLE.**  
MACDON CELEBRATES  
65 YEARS WITH DEALER  
EVENTS IN NASHVILLE  
AND MELBOURNE.

## MAKING THE CUT.

MUCH OF AMERICA'S WHEAT CROP IS CUT BY PROFESSIONAL  
CUSTOM HARVESTERS LIKE KENT BRAATHEN.

KENT BRAATHEN

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## MacDon® PERFORMANCE

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From left to right, Kent Braathen, his brother Gordy and his father Gordon.



# MAKING THE CUT.

MUCH OF AMERICA'S  
WHEAT CROP IS CUT  
BY PROFESSIONAL  
CUSTOM HARVESTERS  
LIKE KENT BRAATHEN.

Every spring a dedicated group of people descend on the wheat fields of Texas and Oklahoma hoping to find work. If there is crop to harvest they will find it. If not they will need to look elsewhere; such is the risk in their line of work.

But these aren't transient laborers looking for a no questions asked paycheck. Rather, these are the custom harvesters that much of North America's annual wheat harvest depends on to find its way to the world's tables. Many of them have been returning to the same fields for decades and they not only bring with them their own crews but also millions of dollars worth of combines, trucks, trailers and support equipment. Truly, their stake in the wheat harvest is as deep as the farmers who contract them.

Continued

## MAKING THE CUT.

Among this group of agricultural “guns-for-hire” you will find the President of the U.S. Custom Harvesters, Inc. (USCHI), Kent Braathen\*.

A second-generation custom harvester himself, Braathen has been cutting since 1971 when he started helping his dad with local contracts near the family’s grain farm at Starkweather, North Dakota.

“I grew up doing this,” said Braathen who adds that the lifestyle is definitely not for everybody. “It’s either in your blood or you absolutely hate it.

being a kid and getting to play with the big toys everyday!” Those hardships and challenges just make the whole experience more of an adventure.

“You can get addicted to it; the chance to go harvest different areas and different crops. You make a game out of it to see how many acres you can do each year, and if you can do more than last year.”

Over his more than four decades of cutting, Braathen says that he has seen a lot of changes

the foreign workers they need. First, they are working one on one with harvesters to navigate the labyrinth of regulations and paperwork involved in securing H-2A temporary agricultural work visas for their foreign workers. Second, USCHI is working to educate the federal government about the importance of these workers to the industry, so that they are not unnecessarily affected by legislation designed to address security issues.

“We are just trying to maintain what we have as far as the H-2A program goes so that we can cross state lines with our employees. Washington has some changes that they want to bring to that, but we’ve been trying to tell our side of the story.”

It has been an uphill battle, but they are making headway.

“When we (USCHI) first started going to Washington in 2009 nobody knew who U.S. Custom Harvesters, Inc. were, or what we do. Half of the time we had to explain what a combine is because who we were talking to didn’t come from a farm. It has been interesting to see how that has changed in just a few short years. Now we try to make two or three trips a year, and when we go, there is a much better understanding of what we are about.”

It is important that awareness in Washington continues to grow. According to USCHI, its almost 600 harvesting members are not only providing an indispensable service to US agriculture, they are also contributing an estimated \$87 million to the economy each year.

Another side effect of custom cutters’ labor challenges, is that many must rely on workers who have little or no experience harvesting. This means that they are forced to spend time and money educating their workers. Braathen says that he not only invests about a month every year training his new hires, he must also ensure that his equipment is as easy to operate as possible. Here, new technologies such as auto-steer and MacDon’s D and FD Series Draper Headers are essential to that purpose.

“Technology is making up for the lack of training in the workforce. Things like auto-steer have become

## “I JUST LOVE BEING ABLE TO GET OUT ON THE ROAD, AND SEE ALL THE PEOPLE AGAIN WHO I’VE MET OVER THE YEARS.”

For me I just love being able to get out on the road, and see all the people again who I’ve met over the years. You make a lot of friends in this business.”

“In Kiowa, Kansas, I’m still working for one of my Dad’s original customers. It’ll be around 40 harvests that we have gone there. They probably look at me like their son. It’s relationships like that, that make this business so rewarding.”

Braathen now runs his business out of Grand Forks, North Dakota, and partners with Scott Brown from Devils Lake, North Dakota, says that the wheat harvest will take him from Vernon, Texas, all the way back to Kenmare, North Dakota, in the fall. After that, he will head back down to Onida, South Dakota, to harvest later ripening crops like corn, soybeans and sunflowers.

“We leave home around the 20th of May and get home around the 20th of November. I’ll get home a few times during the season to see my wife Sandy and son Jace, but spend most of the time on the road with my crew. You’re living in campers with other people away from your family. It’s not an easy life for some.”

But for Braathen, who’s in it primarily because he loves to drive the equipment says, “It’s like

in harvesting, and one of the biggest is the increasing size of the farms he cuts for.

“When I was a kid in the 70s if we could find a farmer with 1,500 acres (607 ha), that was a big farm. Now a typical farm size is about 4,000 acres (1,619 ha) average and one of my customers has a farm of over 40,000 acres (16,187 ha).”

Larger farms are, of course, the result of the spiraling costs of agriculture production; costs that have forced farmers to get bigger, or get out of the business altogether. An unfortunate side effect of this trend has been fewer farm families in North America, and that means fewer sons and daughters learning to drive combines. Braathen says that this is having a significant impact on custom harvesters.

“The biggest issue facing our industry today has to be labor. There aren’t as many kids who have grown up on the farm enjoying the harvest. That makes it harder for guys like me to get people to come out and do this kind of work. Of course we are always actively looking for US employees, but a lot of us now rely on foreign workers.”

Braathen, who had four South Africans on his crew in 2014, says that USCHI is working on two fronts to help custom harvesters acquire

very important. The simplicity of MacDon's header is also a big benefit because it is so much easier for the guys to learn and operate."

But simplicity isn't the only reason he likes his MacDon FD75 headers.

"You can always tell where a MacDon header has cut because it is as even as a table top. A MacDon always follows the contour because it has the wheels and the adapter on it. MacDon is the only one that gives you that kind of flotation. MacDon's reel is also better. I've been in fields that I know that I couldn't have cut with any other header, just because the crop is so flat on the ground and you wouldn't be able to cut it without MacDon's reel to pick it up."

"MacDon's pioneering work in the development of wider headers has also been huge for our industry. It allows us to cover more ground per hour, work longer days and take a bigger cut. It's made a huge difference."

And being able to take a bigger cut will only become more important says Braathen, as more and more of the harvest seems to depend on fewer and fewer people.

"The demand for custom harvesting is not going away. There will always be a need to get the crop off in a timely manner, and with less farmers to do it our services will only become more important."

*\*At the time this story was written, Kent was President of USCHI, now John Orr is the new President of USCHI.*



*MacDon booth at the USCHI Convention, Paul Steiner presenting to the group.*



**Visit [MacDon.com/testimonials](http://MacDon.com/testimonials)**







Kent Braathen.

Kent's 2014 Custom Cutter Crew.

Kent's custom cutting equipment.

Kent Braathen, his father and brother.

## FOR CUSTOM CUTTERS LIKE KENT, JOINING USCHI MAKES SENSE.

It doesn't matter if you're just cutting a few extra fields for your neighbors, or running a full fleet of combines on the wheat harvest run, you are a custom harvester. And as a custom harvester, Kent Braathen, President of U.S. Custom Harvesters, Inc.\* (USCHI) wants you to know that it is in your best interest to join and make it your organization.

"Some people think that if they only harvest locally that they can't be a member, but they are definitely custom harvesters and they should join," said Braathen. "One of the big benefits of joining the association is being able to share best practices with other members and learn about how they run their businesses."

Even more important to some members are the business leads they receive.

"Farmers looking for a custom harvester tend to call our office first. That lead then goes out in a mass email to all members. Any member within the area looking for a job can get tied together with that farmer within minutes."

That may sound like members are tripping over each other for business, but Braathen says that just isn't the case.

"In business, we're more of a brotherhood rather than competitors. It's a family type organization. For example, if there is a job that I need help with I can just pull out my book and I can call someone from the organization. You're going to call a member first before you call someone else."

Braathen says that their membership includes grain, forage and cotton harvesters from

37 states, plus about 100 associate members such as equipment manufacturers like MacDon. The close affiliation with manufactures is an added benefit because it provides members with even better access to the people who make the machines and products they depend on.

"Having the manufacturers as part of our family is very important. We buy their products and they give back to us. They really take care of us and we appreciate that very much."

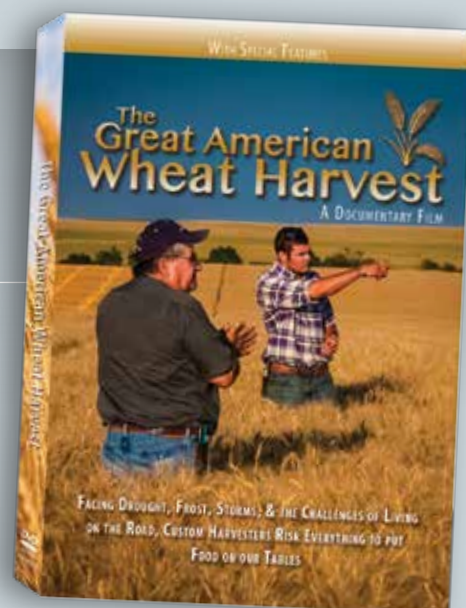
For more information on USCHI visit their website at [USCHI.com](http://USCHI.com).

*\*At the time this story was written, Kent was President of USCHI, now John Orr is the new President of USCHI.*

## TO LEARN MORE ABOUT CUSTOM HARVESTERS, GET YOUR COPY OF THE GREAT AMERICAN WHEAT HARVEST

This documentary tells the story of hard working custom harvesters, who travel from the southern US to the Canadian Border harvesting the wheat that feeds the world. It follows them through all the challenges that threaten the way of life that was passed from generation to generation.

Along with the documentary, the DVD and Blu-Ray contain footage, interviews, and extra content that does not appear in the film. Purchase your copy on DVD or Blu-Ray today from the film's web site: [GreatAmericanWheatHarvest.com](http://GreatAmericanWheatHarvest.com)



A photograph of four men standing in front of a corrugated metal wall. From left to right: an older man in a dark jacket and jeans; a younger man in a black jacket and a red, white, and blue striped baseball cap; a man with a beard in a blue jacket and a tan vest; and a younger man in a dark jacket. They are all smiling at the camera.

# GREATER EXPECTATIONS.

FOR THE HEIDT BROTHERS,  
GROWING IS THE KEY TO SURVIVAL.

Family farms are disappearing. It's a common lament heard in rural coffee shops across North America. And even though it is true that the number of farm families has declined sharply over the last two decades, it can also be argued that the family farm is not so much disappearing, as it is evolving into a larger version of itself.

A good case in point is the fast growing Heidt farm in western Saskatchewan near the town of Kerrobert. First homesteaded by their great-great grandmother in 1907, this fourth generation farm is run by a trio of brothers, all in their twenties, along with their father Brad.

"We've all stayed farming mostly because of dad," says Josh Heidt, the youngest of the brothers at 25. "He always wanted to keep us together so he got us involved in the farm to a degree that we couldn't turn away from it."

Now that all three of them have committed to farming as their livelihood, Josh says that they've come to appreciate some of the advantages to the lifestyle.

"Besides mother nature telling you what to do, we like being our own bosses. You can pick your own hours, or what you are doing in a day. Farm life itself is also nice. Growing up on a farm, you really can't imagine being anywhere else."

Together, the Heidts cropped about 22,000 acres (8,903 ha) last year, an amount that would have seemed almost unbelievable for most family farms twenty years ago. Now it is quickly becoming the norm.

"A typical farm in our area would be just under 10,000 acres (4,047 ha), but there are some bigger farms that make us look small."

Even though Josh and his brothers—Drew (28) and Mitch (29)—each have their own land and separate businesses, Josh says that in reality they work all their land together with their father. This not only allows them to benefit from each other, but also from the scaled up economics of their combined operations, something Josh says is entirely necessary given the increasing costs of farming.

"On any given day we are out doing everything as a whole. It all just gets mixed in together. We care about each other's land equally."

As young farmers, Josh says that he and his brothers feel pressured to take on as much land as possible to keep each of their businesses viable.

"Now it seems like if you are not growing, you're just on your way to being taken over by someone bigger. You've got to grow or become obsolete."

Continued





"When we were kids the farm was about 8,000 acres (3,237 ha), but when we started to help out on the farm in our mid teens, that's when the growth really started to happen. About six years ago we made our big jump when we went from 11,000 acres (4,452 ha) to 18,000 acres (7,284 ha) by taking on a

"It's all about the margins when you are doing that many acres. We try to be as efficient as possible including trying to maximize our machines to get the absolute most out of them."

And Josh says that a big part of that efficiency is their MacDon equipment, especially their FD75s.

trash, but no more. The difference was pretty noticeable right from the start. I remember our field would be next to some other farmer who was not using a FlexDraper® and it was just night and day how much less trash there was in our field compared to theirs."

But the difference wasn't just cosmetic.

"The trash was a problem when we went to seed around field edges and sloughs the following year. Seeding is now a lot easier for us."

As much as they appreciated the benefits of their first FlexDrapers, Josh says that he and his brothers have become even more sold on the product over the years.

"We've seen drastic improvements over the years we have been using them. One of the biggest has been the addition of the reversing knife. When cutting peas, I remember having to get out a lot to clear the knife by hand when going through tough conditions. Now you can just do it from the cab and that saves tons of time."

In the past, the Heidts have swathed all of their canola, but last year they experimented with a new variety that is more wind and shatter resistant.

## "WE'VE BEEN USING MACDON FLEXDRAPERS NOW PRETTY CLOSE TO TEN YEARS."

neighbor's farm. Since then we've had a slow steady growth, taking on an additional 500 acres (202 ha) to 1,000 acres (405 ha) every year."

Last year their rotation included 8,500 acres (3,440 ha) of canola, 5,300 acres (2,145 ha) of yellow peas, 6,500 acres (2,630 ha) of wheat and 1,600 acres (647 ha) of lentils. To harvest the peas, lentils and wheat they relied on five John Deere S690 combines mounted with 45 ft (13.7 m) MacDon FD75 draper headers and two MacDon M150 windrowers with 35 ft (10.7 m) drapers to swath most of the canola.

"We've been using MacDon FlexDrapers now pretty close to ten years. In fact we've run all three generations: 974s, FD70s and FD75s."

He says that even though he and his brothers weren't in on the original purchase decision with their dad, all three of them agree that the FlexDraper® was one of the better equipment decisions made for their farm.

"Initially, their biggest selling feature for us was how well they follow the ground in peas and lentils. With the old kind of conventional flex header we used to have a lot of trouble with





*The Heidts, from left to right Mitch, Josh, Drew and their father Brad.*

"We planted 160 acres (65 ha) of that new variety and we straight cut that along with a couple strips of our regular variety that we had missed. We were really impressed with how the FD75 performed. So this year we are talking about doing a whole lot more straight cutting."

Now after using FlexDrapers for just over a decade, Josh says that they have become an indispensable part of their harvest strategy. He points to the set-and-go simplicity and in-field reliability as two key advantages for their operation, which relies on seasonal workers during harvest.

"There's only so much time in a day, and you need everything to work perfectly to keep your combines moving. With these MacDon FlexDrapers, once you have them set, you can put anybody in the cab and they can go trouble free all day. That's fewer headaches for us. We can now sit on our own combines without worrying about how others are doing."

Just as important, says Josh, is the productivity bonus they receive with their FlexDrapers.

"No question, MacDon headers help us get more acres of peas and lentils done in a day.

That allows us to shave maybe a week off harvest, which can be a huge deal."

Josh says that they typically start their harvest around the end of August or early September, and then run straight for seven or eight weeks. That takes them close to the end of October when snow starts to become a concern.

"In the past ten years we probably had two or three harvests that we missed the snow by two days. That's one of the main reasons we run MacDons, so that we don't have to go when there is snow on the ground."

And it's a good thing that the Heidts are left with no worries when snow flies, because all three brothers share a passion for curling, like many people in Saskatchewan.

"Curling brings us together through our cold winters. If I didn't have curling I might go crazy. Otherwise I would probably just head south."

People who follow the sport may find the Heidt name familiar.

"We've had a little bit of success. Back in 2004 Mitch and Drew were on a rink that won the

Canada Winter Games, and in 2007 I also went to the Canada Games, but didn't win."

Josh says that they inherited their love of curling from their dad, who represented Saskatchewan in 1996 at The Brier, Canada's premier curling event.

"He made it to the finals, and all three of us would like to get there ourselves."

Such goals are indicative of the high standards all three brothers set for themselves, both in the field, and on the ice.







**SIXTY-FIFTH  
ANNIVERSARY  
DEALER MEETING**

**MACDON WELCOMES  
OUR GUESTS TO  
NASHVILLE**



**SIXTY-FIFTH  
ANNIVERSARY  
DEALER MEETING**

**MACDON WELCOMES  
OUR GUESTS TO  
NASHVILLE**

**THE STAGE**

**N BROADWAY**

**ROCK  
BAR-B-QUE**

**HONKY TONK  
GRILL**

Ryman  
Auditorium



A photograph of a building facade at night, featuring a large, illuminated neon sign that reads "MacDon est 1949". The sign is red and white. Above the sign, there is a large, oval-shaped window with a yellow light. The building has a classic architectural style with stone or brickwork.

MacDon  
est 1949

# SAYING THANK YOU MACDON STYLE.

MACDON CELEBRATES 65  
YEARS WITH DEALER EVENTS IN  
NASHVILLE AND MELBOURNE.

Sixty-five years strong. It's an age for many to hang up their spurs and ride off into the sunset. But MacDon is far from ordinary. After all, this is the company responsible for introducing the self-propelled windrower to North American farmers and inventing the world's first flexible draper platform, the company that has supplied many of agriculture's most iconic brands, and the company that has survived numerous economic downturns and market challenges, coming back more fit and stronger every time.

"IT WAS OUR CHANCE  
TO SHOW HOW  
GRATEFUL WE ARE."

So how did MacDon celebrate its 65th Anniversary? Simply by hosting the largest dealer events it's ever held in both North America and Australia, showing just how much the Company remains vibrant and its products relevant in today's agricultural market.

The larger of the two get-togethers was held in Nashville, Tennessee, November 20th–21st, 2014, while the Australian event took place six months earlier (May 7th–9th) at the RACV Healesville Country Club near Melbourne, Victoria. Both events marked the largest attendance yet for MacDon dealer events in their respective countries.

"At our 60th Anniversary event in Las Vegas we had approximately 750 people," said Gene Fraser, MacDon's Vice President. "This time around in Nashville we had over 1,200. That's a significant growth in just a five-year stretch, and it indicates not just how many of our dealers wanted to attend this event, but also how large our extended family has become."

Continued



The Nashville and Melbourne events provided dealers with an in-depth look at the current state of all things at MacDon. Included were presentations on MacDon operations, engineering and marketing, as well as product updates on windrowers, hay products and combine headers. MacDon's current equipment line was also on display for tire kicking. And at the Nashville event, a special exhibit of historical equipment and promotional merchandise.

In addition to the educational elements, these events also provided guests with numerous opportunities to speak directly with key MacDon personnel such as Product Managers, Territory Managers and Engineers, as well as representatives from IT, Finance, Marketing, Parts, Warranty and Product Support. For many it was a chance to finally put a face to a voice they had before only heard over the phone.

"Having good conversations is at the core of everything we do here at MacDon," said Fraser. "While we remain first and foremost a product focused company that leads through innovation, it has been the quality of the relationships we form with our dealers and customers that has been the real key to our success."

Both events also featured Q&A sessions with representatives from MacDon's Senior Management, giving many their first chance to meet and talk to this group since the management handover from the MacDonald brothers.

"These sessions gave our dealers a chance to see that the culture of listening and caring that Joe MacDonald and his sons fostered here at MacDon is still in place at all levels within the Company."

Fraser says that while these gatherings gave MacDon personnel a chance to reconnect with many old friends, the Nashville event was especially

noteworthy because there were so many new dealerships represented with many coming from recently established MacDon territories in the eastern United States. There was even a group of Dealers representing South America attending a MacDon event for the first time. For these new members of the MacDon family it was a chance to see MacDon's approach to business up close.

"Some companies talk about the four P's of marketing; Product, Price, Place and Promotion. But here at MacDon we use the three P's of Product, Passion and People, and it is at gatherings like these that we get to show what we mean by that. Whether it be through focus groups, farm shows, customer appreciation dinners or dealer events, we're always looking for opportunities to listen to our customers and learn from them. And what we learn eventually shows up in our products and service."

Perhaps even more important than the numerous fruitful discussions these events fostered, was the opportunity for everyone to socialize and have fun, always a cornerstone of any MacDon get-together. The Australia event delivered the "MacDon experience" through elements such as a welcome barbecue, golf, winery tour and a gala dinner.

The Nashville event invited attendees to truly "paint the town red" MacDon style. The formal portion of the meetings ended with a bagpipe procession through Nashville's downtown. Guests were later invited to explore the famous "Honky Tonk Highway" where nine local saloons greeted MacDon's guests with neon signs displaying "MacDon Est. 1949" in their windows.

"Ultimately, we wanted to share our 65th celebration with the people we owe a large part of our success to, our Dealers. It was our chance to show how grateful we are that they are part of our family, and say thank you in person."





Nashville - Scott MacDonald moderates as MacDon President and VP's field questions from the Dealers.



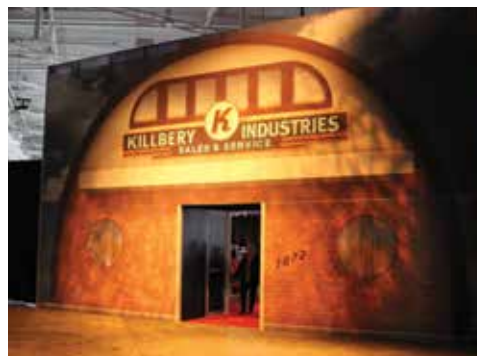
Nashville - R1 Series field to transport demonstration.



Nashville - Showroom entrance featuring MacDon timeline.



Nashville - Dinner & Entertainment.



Nashville - Killbrey entrance to Showroom.



Nashville - Showroom Floor.



**SAYING THANK YOU MACDON STYLE.**



*Nashville - Setting-up new product displays on the Showroom Floor.*



*Nashville - Bagpipe procession through downtown Nashville.*



*Nashville - MC, Comedian Big Daddy Tazz.*



*Nashville - Wildhorse Saloon dinner event.*



*Nashville - MacDon 9000 Series Windrower was part of the historical equipment display.*





Australia - 65th Anniversary decorated cake.



Australia - Dealer Meeting.



Australia - Product information presentation.



Australia - Gala dinner event.



Australia - Equipment display.



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**Performance you rely on...**



**GENUINE MACDON *PARTS***  
**GENUINE MACDON *PERFORMANCE***

