

JCBs give great service to the van Straten family on De Park Farm

The late Japie van Straten was known amongst his children and fellow farmers to be a perfectionist as he believed that success in any farming operation followed when you did what was necessary, timeously. That's why, on a day that he felt he needed the sole use of the JCB 3DX Backhoe Loader on his farm and it wasn't available, he got so angry that he promptly bought another one.

"My late father, Japie, was 'that guy'," Michiel van Straten, the late Japie's son chuckles as he fondly remembers the incident. "Not that we cut corners, quite the opposite as taught to us by our father, but he was a perfectionist with strong morals and his word was law on this farm."

Michiel, his wife, Freda, and their son, Gerhard, work the farm De Park in the Schweizer-Reneke district and Michiel is the third generation of his family on the land. The couple's daughter, Elsje, works in biokinetics at Ananda Hattingh Biokineticists in Benoni. De

Park is known to produce big crops of maize, peanuts, soya beans and sunflower with Bonsmara-cross and Simmentaler-cross cattle herds adding value. Freda, a former teacher, keeps her hand on a herd of mutton Merino sheep. Victor Schmulian, Michiel's brother-in-law, is responsible for the cattle of JMS Boerdery BK, the entity in which the farm is doing business.

"Before we had yellow metal machines, we used smaller wheeled loader attachments on our agricultural tractors to clean feedlots of manure, load and unload lime and spread it as those

were the days before the use of bulk bags became popular," Michiel says. "Then in 2008, we bought a new Bell 315SJ Backhoe Loader that we used for the same tasks, but being a bigger and stronger machine, those tasks could be completed faster."

On any farm there is often work for larger earthmoving equipment and De Park is no exception. "When creating more acreage for planting, we have to bush clear the veld and often needed larger equipment to do this cost-effectively by taking out trees, shrubs and especially rocks,"



Michiel tells. "In 2010, we bought a JCB JS200, 20-ton Excavator and it proved to be a revelation on the farm as we used it to create all important fire breaks on our farm's boundaries."

"Although we no longer create berms at the edges of ploughed lands and on fences, because we now plough less and rather use chisel ploughs and rippers, the JCB JS200 Excavator was used initially to create these berms, which was light work for it. Just recently, we had to take out a large Eucalyptus tree and when an agricultural tractor delivering some 417kW of power couldn't drag away the stump, we used the JCB Excavator to roll the tree to where it was out of the way."

The JCB JS200 Excavator has now clocked some 8 500 hours.

In 2015, Johnny Scholtz, the owner of JBJ Machinery in Schweizer-Reneke, with whom Michiel and his family had dealt for years, let Michiel know of a JCB 3DX which a retiring farmer had sold. "This turbocharged JCB 3DX Backhoe Loader had done a mere 200 hours and was barely run in and

we snapped it up, as by then we were aware of JCB's market-leading status amongst backhoe loaders," Michiel recalls. "This machine became the multi-tasking tool of choice on the farm and there's almost nothing it could not effectively be used for from cleaning the feedlots, digging and backfilling trenching for irrigation piping, digging holes for refuse management and handling lime and gypsum into spreaders prior to the planting season."

By now, fertiliser was being supplied in 1-ton bulk bags and the fold-over forks on the JCB 3DX proved invaluable for this task of unloading these bags off supply trucks and trailers. The machine has also been extensively used in clearing invasive plants like the 'Vaalbos' or turpentine bush in livestock grazing areas.

"Then in 2020, we had the now 'famous' incident when my late father, Japie, decided that he needed the JCB Backhoe Loader for things he wanted done on the farm that day. As it was already busy with a full workload of other tasks, his impatience to do things timeously got the better of him

and he contacted Johnny Scholtz and promptly bought another JCB 3DX Backhoe Loader," Michiel says. "The advantage of having more than one JCB Backhoe Loader is that one is assured that there is never a machine not available and especially with us having land with crops further west of De Park, we can now simply drive the JCB Backhoe Loader there for whatever task is at hand."

On the day of our visit to De Park with Johnny Scholtz, one of his experienced mechanics JD Venter and Johnny's son, Hendrik, an apprentice with JBJ Machinery, were on the farm to attend to maintenance on the JCB JS200 Excavator.

"This is the level of service we've come to appreciate from Johnny and his team at JBJ Machinery, all due to a business and friendship relationship built over many years," Michiel says. "Their response times are prompt; parts availability is never a problem, and it always feels like we're dealing with friends and not merely suppliers of our excellent equipment."



BJB Machinery Mechanic, JD Venter, with JBJ Apprentice Mechanic, Hendrik Scholtz, Owner of JBJ Machinery, Johnny Scholtz, and Michiel van Straten.

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