

**"WORKS ALMOST LIKE  
THE REAL THING"**

## Transplanted Toe Replaces Thumb

by Karen Turpen

Despite thumbs-down signals from just about every member of his family, Robert Crawford made a major decision in his life in 1982 that resulted in the restoration of an incapacitated right hand.

Crawford, a 43-year-old right-handed Sulphur Springs, Texas tractor mechanic, lost his right thumb in an accident in the spring of 1982 — an accident that put him out of work and, he thought at the time, ended his life-long career.

But when his doctor told him of a medical procedure that replaces a missing thumb with a toe, Crawford saw it as the only alternative.

"There were a lot of mental problems for me — the idea of losing my thumb," Crawford says. "I was 40 at the time, and it's pretty hard to change careers at that stage in life unless you've got a lot of money. And I had a family to support.

"Nobody I knew, my relatives or

friends, wanted me to have it done," he says. "But after I had it done they were all glad I did."

Crawford now has 85 percent use of his right hand, enough to perform any task his mechanic duties require.

Four operations and 24 hours of surgery were necessary to move his toe from his right foot to his hand. Dr. David Zeahr performed the transplant at Baylor Medical Center in Dallas.

In a preparatory operation, Crawford's hand was sewn to his right side so skin could graft to his hand. He spent three weeks with his hand attached to his body. It was "a little inconvenient," he notes.

In a second preparatory operation his hand was detached from his side. Both incisions were allowed to heal before the third and most complicated operation could be undertaken.

It took 13 hours of delicate microsurgery to successfully transplant his



Photo courtesy Sulphur Springs News Telegram

**Crawford now has 85% use of his right hand.**

toe to his hand. When Crawford lost his thumb, nerves and arteries were pulled apart well above his wrist. Micro-clips were used to refasten each nerve and artery.

A final operation was cosmetic. It removed excess fatty tissue and pulled the grafted skin tighter around the thumb joint.

Six months later he was back on the job at Farm Country, a local implement company in his hometown.

The question most often asked toe-to-thumb transplant patients is "Isn't it difficult to walk now?" Crawford says he has no problems walking, whether he's barefooted or wearing shoes. It was a little hard to adjust at first, he admits, "but I stand 12 to 14 hours a day, so it didn't take that long to get used to it."

Reprinted with permission from the Sulphur Springs, Texas, News Telegram.

## PROCESS PRESERVES FRUIT PERMANENTLY

### Ohio Woman Turns Apples Into Doll Heads

"I can't keep up with the demand," says doll artist Peggy Asman, Genoa, Ohio, who has been making and selling apple head dolls for the past six years.

When Asman first hit on the idea of using apples for doll heads she had to devise her own techniques because she couldn't find anyone else doing it. Now she says she's perfected her methods, using Golden Delicious apples because of their large size and non-brittle skin which stays intact when carving without snapping off. Unlike other varieties, Golden Delicious also have the advantage of turning flesh-colored when dry.

Only simple tools are used. First Asman peels the apple and then removes the core with an apple corer before carving features into the face of the apple. She makes the dolls' hands in a similar way out of pieces of apple. Female dolls have no ears but male dolls are curved with oversized ears, bigger noses and high cheek bones, Asman explains.

Once carved, heads are bathed in an ascorbic acid solution to retard discoloring (one teaspoon to one cup water) and then removed and coated with table salt. Salt promotes fiber breakdown and begins the dehydration process. After about an hour, Asman rinses the salt off and inserts a

wooden clothes pin through the center of the apple and then places the heads in a dehydrator.

"When I first started I didn't have a dehydrator. I just put the heads on heat registers," says Asman, noting that you can also put the doll heads in the oven on low heat.

Once dried, Asman puts rouge on the cheeks before preserving them with a clear epoxy of the type used by woodworkers. You can also use any kind of water resistant varnish.

To make the body of the doll, Asman extends the clothes pin out the bottom of the head, gluing it into place, and attaches heavy florists wire to the pin to form the body and fashion flexible legs and arms. The apple hands attach to the wire and then the figure is clothed in white cotton fabric. Dolls can be individualized at this point by gluing on different color hair (synthetic fiber purchased at craft shops), inserting different colored beads for the eyes, and perhaps making eyeglasses out of wire.

Asman says she can sell nearly all the dolls she can make for around \$25 each.

For more information, contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Peggy Asman, 803 West St., Genoa, Ohio 43430 (ph 419 855-4146).



Asman has several standard Apple Head doll creations.

## New "Swing Away" Mailbox Holder

"Swings up out of the way when hit and then returns to center on its own," says Vince Koebensky, manufacturer of a new "Swing Away" mailbox holding bracket.

Bracket easily mounts on either wood or steel posts. Comes in two sizes to fit standard 6 1/4 by 19 in. box or a large 8 by 21-in. box. Main box frame pivots on a stationary holding bracket that attaches directly to post.

Standard size sells for \$9.99 and large size for \$10.99.

For more information, contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Vince Koebensky, Hot Iron, Rt. 1, Box 126-1, Buffalo, Minn. 55313 (ph 612 682-4276).



Free-swinging bracket supports any size mailbox.