



Kevin Holcomb with the mini "Advance Rumely" steam engine built by his grandfather. He restored it and mounted it on a cart for display.

BURNS COAL, STRAW, OR ANYTHING THAT'S COMBUSTIBLE

Mini Steam Engine Works Just Like The Real Thing

It's not exactly what one might think of when you say "family heirloom". But that's OK with Kevin Holcomb, whose grandfather, Kermit, built a miniature steam engine that really works.

"He built it in his shop using anything he could find lying around and modeled it after his own 22-65 Advance Rumely steam engine," says Kevin.

The rig started as an "engine-only" model that was mounted on a platform attached to the side of the full-size steam engine. The grandchildren could sit on the platform and run the small engine while grandpa ran the large one.

Eventually Kermit removed the small engine and attached wheels to make it self-propelled.

The mini steam engine remained a favorite toy for the Holcomb family for three generations. Kermit died in 1977. His grandson Kevin acquired the miniature steam engine in 1989 and began restoring it, which turned out to be quite a project. "I found that some of Kermit's self-made parts were quite innovative," says Kevin. "For example, the drive gear for the wheels is actually the flywheel ring gear from a Volkswagen Beetle. The pulley is a wheel off a field cultivator."

Last year Kevin sandblasted the mini engine and gave it a fresh coat of paint. He also built a wooden platform to support the tractor and attached it to the top of his Deere



Tractor started out as an "engine-only" model that was mounted on a platform attached to the side of a full-size Advance Rumely. The grandchildren could sit on the platform and run the small engine while grandpa ran the large one.

yard cart, which he pulls behind his Deere 325 garden tractor and takes to local steam and tractor shows.

"To run it you just put material like newspaper, straw, or pine wood split up real fine into the boiler," says Kevin. "The water jacket around the boiler heats the water which forms steam. A valve releases the steam into the cylinder which makes the tractor go forward or backward. A hammer handle on back of the tractor goes up and down and is used to pump water into the boiler. On my display, the back wheels turn but are kept off the platform by a pair of wooden blocks.

"My 10-year-old son, Jack, already has the 'bug' and enjoys showing the engine off almost as much as I do," he notes.

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Joanne Stoops has big plans for remodeling the interior of this barn near Faribault, Minn. She wants to convert it into a community center.

MOTHER FULFILLS HER DAUGHTER'S DREAM

Classic Barn To Become Community Center

By Lauren Jochem

Imagine the possibilities of turning an old, beautiful, two story brick barn into a place where community kids, youth groups and other organizations can meet, hold dances or just have fun.

That's what Joanne Stoops, of Faribault, Minn., is trying to do.

The classic barn on the Stoops' property is filled with potential. It's a clay tile structure with a beautiful gothic ceiling. The loft has a solid maple floor measuring approximately 2,700 square feet. Dances were held in the barn during the 1930's, including appearances by Lawrence Welk.

Stoops wants to bring that magic and charm back to the barn. However, it's her daughter Jackie's dream that she is trying to fulfill. For it was Jackie who fell in love with the barn and saw the amazing potential it had.

Jackie Reichert, Stoops' daughter, was killed in a car-train accident in 1994. A sophomore at Bethlehem Academy in Faribault, she was involved in youth government, S.A.D.D. (Students Against Drunk Driving) and in the school's youth ministry program.

"Jackie felt that kids should have a place to go where they felt safe, and could socialize

without the pressures of drugs or alcohol," Stoops pointed out. "The last five years since the accident have been really hard on everyone and, although it is going to be painful for me at some points along the way, I think that now is the time to start pursuing Jackie's dream."

The barn, nestled in the country 9 miles southeast of Faribault, rests on 7-1/2 acres of land among beautiful oak trees in a wooded setting. Stoops has big plans for remodeling the interior of the barn. There will be a kitchen and snack bar, bathroom and elevator, as well as handicapped entrances and exits. "The barn, to be called Oak Knoll Conference Center, will be available for all ages, but catering to youth. It will be opened to chaperoned groups only."

Stoops says about \$100,000 needs to be raised to cover costs of remodeling the barn and bringing it up to code. The center is a non-profit organization and monetary gifts to it are tax deductible, says Stoops.

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From The Archives: Moving From Ear Corn Harvest To Shelled Corn

Veteran farm writer C.F. Marley has made another trip to the archives. This time he pulled out a decades-old photo from a time when most farmers still harvested corn with a picker and then shelled what they needed back at the farm.

"The first big change in corn harvest came when farmers switched from harvesting corn by ear to using mechanical corn pickers. It started in the 1930's but didn't really catch on big until after World War II.

"But then guys became dissatisfied with harvesting corn on the ear. So they began to search for ways to shell corn right in the field.

"This picture is from my collection at the Archives of the University of Illinois. It shows the late Bernard Todt, Morrisonville, Ill., with a 2-row corn picker pulled by a Deere tractor. Behind it is a pto-powered corn sheller made for stationary work but equipped with wheels for pulling in the field. The corn sheller had an enlarged hopper to catch corn ears as they are elevated from the corn picker. "The corn sheller, in turn, pulls a



conventional flat bed box wagon. The wagon is equipped with a hydraulic dump for putting corn into a bin.

"It wasn't long after that companies came out with picker-shellers. Then some farmers got the idea that they could harvest corn with a combine. At first many people thought this was an outrageous idea that couldn't be done. But as we all know, it worked out very well.

"It's interesting to note that throughout all of this development, it was usually the farmer and not the manufacturing companies who led the way in making these breakthroughs. It has been my observation, over 50 years of covering farm equipment developments in the heart of North America, that all major developments have come about this way."