



Jay Steffen found this old 1939 Deere A with a 30-ft. tall elm tree growing through it. He cut off only part of the tree, leaving the tractor with its "natural" look.

Abandoned Tractor Now Attracts Crowds At Shows

By Mick Lane, Contributing Editor

Jay Steffen was taking a relaxing walk in a park when he spotted a "treasure" that made his heart race.

He was on a trail in a park along the Little Sioux River near Cornell, Iowa, when he spotted an old green tractor. "It was only about 50 yards away, but we could barely see it because it was under a tree and the area was so overgrown with weeds and brush," he recalls.

He sought out the tractor's elderly owner, who told him he had parked the 1939 John Deere A 30 years earlier when a gear went out. Other than an added-on headlight, the tractor was all original.

After fighting his way through the brush and tall weeds, Steffen got to the old tractor to find it wasn't just under the tree. Rather, a 30-ft. tall elm tree had nearly swallowed up a good portion of the tractor.

He decided the old A's condition made a stark contrast to the bright shiny restored antique tractors you see at shows, and typified the treatment of a lot of retired farm machinery. "After we saw it, I decided there were probably a lot of other farmers who would like to see it that way, too," he says.

"I offered to buy the tractor from him and he refused," he continues. "That was in the fall. I went back in the spring and asked again and by then, he'd had a chance to think it over. He said he might sell it. So I went back again in July and he'd made up his mind to sell it to me. He said he hadn't been back in there since he parked the tractor, so he probably wasn't ever going to use it again."

Having purchased the tractor, Steffen's next challenge was to take possession. "We went in there with weed eaters, chainsaws, and a tractor and loader and cut our way down to the tractor," he says.

His cousin climbed into the loader bucket with a chainsaw and they raised him up so he could begin cutting back the upper branches. They cut the trunk off at the ground.

Steffen says the tree had grown into the left rear wheel and had swallowed the throttle lever and brake pedal and locked up the fly-wheel as well. "There was no way we were going to be able to roll it on its wheels, so we just dragged it out backwards. When we went by the old man's house, he came out to look at it. He couldn't believe the tree could possibly have grown that big," he says.

Intent on displaying it at antique tractor shows, Steffen and his son and cousin built a cart that allows them to pick the tractor up or put it on the ground using jacks, so it doesn't have to be dragged into place at shows.

"It's been about seven years since we first saw it back in the woods. The bark has dried out and we've fastened some of that back on with baling wire. But we keep it inside all the time, so the log will not deteriorate. We're going to keep it just the way it is, which is as close as it can be to the way we found it.

"We've displayed it a few times at shows and fairs. I've noticed that wherever we show it, the grass is always more worn around it than around the restored tractors nearby. And I'd sure like to record some of the things I've heard people say about it," he says. He says one woman actually wondered out loud how fast the guy was going when he hit the tree.

The tractor with the tree isn't Steffen's only antique. "I collect plows and other pieces of machinery that other people haven't been interested in up to this point," he says.

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Jay Steffen, 4675 200th Ave., Sioux Rapids, Iowa 50585 (ph 712 283-2051).



Roger and Linda Shore turn ordinary field stones into beautiful custom grave stones.

They Use Farm Rocks To Make Custom Grave Stones

By Janis Schole

Any farmer who has spent a lifetime picking rocks might like the idea of using one of them to mark his grave.

Roger and Linda Shore of Millet, Alberta, turn field stones into grave stones. The majority of their clients are farmers who've spent a good chunk of their lives clearing rocks off cropland.

Many farmers have a memorable rock they've found during their lifetime. Or they might just like the idea of marking their grave with something out of the ground that supported them all their life.

"One rock I worked on was brought in by a daughter after her father died. She said she and her father had once picnicked on that rock," Roger says.

"When we first got the idea, we were told that field stones could not be used... that they were not suitable and ugly. But we've found it to be completely the opposite," Linda says. "They're harder and more time consuming to work with, but they are beautiful and unique. Many cemeteries have regulations that exclude anything but traditional tombstones, but we've had some change their rules when they saw how nice ours are."

Roger acquired his original stone-cutting saw at an auction sale of a bankrupt monument company. He's always on the lookout for attractive rocks but says most people bring him their own rocks to work on.

"There are so many types of stone, each is truly one-of-a-kind. I've made monuments from a huge piece of petrified wood and others from what I believe was a meteorite be-

cause it looked like a black ball of lava," he says. "Even ordinary field stones have amazing colors and patterns when you cut them open and polish them."

Although he once sliced more than six different grave stones from one big rock, Shore enjoys leaving the back of the monument uncut, unpolished and natural-looking – like a rock in the field.

The Shores can adorn rocks with original artwork, including a special stone paint. "We've been told by people in the business that they've never seen such nice work," he says. "Our service is so popular we're usually about a year behind on orders."

Shore says one of his most impressive field stone projects was an 8-ft. tall rock monument for the entrance to the town of New Sarepta, as a tribute to the farmers of the area.

Shore's tomb stones are vandal-proof because he embeds them into a concrete foundation.

He charges \$2.30 per square inch to cut, polish and engrave a stone. For example, a 24 by 24-in. stone would cost \$1,324 (Canada). On large stones, his prices are considerably cheaper than traditional monument suppliers, according to Shore.

Brochures are available. Stone also makes picnic tables, sign posts, bronze sculptures, and wildlife oil paintings.

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Roger and Linda Shore, R.R. 1, Site 5, Box 11, Millet, Alberta, Canada (ph 780 387-5185; fax 780 387-5581).



Stones can be polished and adorned with original artwork.