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## His Garage Holds More Pliers Than You could Lose in a Lifetime

If you've ever lost a pair of pliers, there's a good chance you can find a pair exactly like them in LeRoy Bauer's garage.

Who knows? It might even be the ones you lost.

Bauer, a retired Shakopee, Minnesota, farmer, proudly displays more than 2,500 pairs of pliers on three walls of his garage, and no two are alike.

"I didn't start the collection," Bauer admits. "I bought a collection of about 1,800 pairs of pliers from Alvin Schmitz, who had been collecting them for years."

Schmitz, also of Shakopee, retired from farming and then moved off the farm to an apartment, where there were strict rules about making holes in the walls. With no place to display his collection, Schmitz put them up for sale.

After buying the collection, Bauer began

adding to it. He attends auctions and frequents flea markets and garage sales in search of a pair of pliers that are different from any of the others in the collection. "My wife and I have 11 children, and they're all helping add to the collection, too," he says.

Schmitz got serious about collecting pliers about 40 years ago. Like Bauer, he found most of the collection at garage sales and flea markets, with some coming from auctions.

"Some were given to me or collected by friends who knew I was collecting them," he adds. And while the collection is now in Bauer's garage, Schmitz can't shake the collector bug. "I have six or seven pairs I found recently to add to it," he says.

He also has a key to Bauer's garage, so, if he wants to show off the collection to a friend or just wants to look at it himself, he can do so whenever he wants to.

They've collected just about every kind of pliers made in the past 50 years and many of those made in the 20th century. Most were made in North America, with others coming from Germany, Japan, and Great Britain. One was made in Poland.

Some of the pliers were purchased new, but most have been used.

Most of the pliers in the collection are of the common variety farmers are known to carry in their pockets or holsters on their belts. Some are special use tools, like the one that was meant for cattlemen to use in emasculating bull calves.

Some have wrench heads in the handles and one has an adjustable wrench in it. Then, there are four different sets with "Ford" in the handles.

"They all came in Ford Model T tool kits, but the handles on them are all different,"

Bauer says.

"To my knowledge, none of the other car makers ever put out pliers with the company name on them," Schmitz adds.

He says some of the pliers were, at least as pliers go, fairly expensive.

Schmitz says there's one notable pair he'd like to add to the collection, but they're hard to find. "Harley Davidson made a pair they included in the tool kit that came with some of their motorcycles several years ago. They had the company name in the handles. I ran across a guy who had a pair of them, but he wouldn't part with them for any price," Schmitz says.

For more information, contact: FARM SHOW Followup, LeRoy Bauer, 1845 W 139th St., Shakopee, Minn. 55379 (ph 952 496-1703).

## Skunks Make Great Pets

If you want a truly American pet, get a skunk, says Jane Bone, Augusta, Georgia. Skunks are native to North America, unlike cats and dogs.

To further the cause of skunks, Bone formed a group called Skunks As Pets, Inc., about 30 years ago. The goal of the organization, known as SAP by its members, is to promote their favorite pets and to promote annual shows. The 15th National Skunk show will be in Cincinnati, Ohio, March 23, 2002. SAP has numerous local chapters in North America, with a total membership of more than 2,000.

Bone (a.k.a., "The Skunk Lady") says there's a difference between what she calls "domesticated" skunks and those in the wild. Domesticated skunks have been raised in captivity and were likely born to parents that were also domesticated. Fact is, Bone points out, some lines of skunks have been domesticated for many generations - maybe as long as 200 years - mostly by the fur industry. Knowing that a black and white striped fur would be difficult to market, fur farmers selected and bred for lighter colors, like brown and gray, and with less distinctive stripes, or even no stripes at all.

Skunks, like cats, dogs, ferrets, and other such pets, do need all the necessary shots, proper nutrition and health care. Bone notes that while they make good pets, skunks aren't cats or dogs. Care and feeding are different for skunks than for other domestic animals.

Bone says domesticated skunks, if properly

trained and descended, are cute, loving, curious pets, that no longer deserve their Latin name, *mephitis mephitis*, which translates to "stinks stinks" in English. She often tells curious visitors and others who'd like to touch, pet or hold her skunk that it's a Norwegian Snow Kitty to avoid the stigma of owning a skunk and the trauma to people when they realize they've actually admired and touched a skunk.

Before you head out to find a pet skunk for yourself, check state laws that regulate such things. Skunks, even domesticated skunks, are not legal pets in about half the 50 states. In most of the states where they are legal, permits are required. Georgia, where Bone lives, allows ownership of skunks if they are not black and white. In New Mexico, you must have a permit for a domesticated skunk, but there is no such requirement for wild skunks kept as pets. Iowa is the only state where there are no restrictions on skunk ownership or on what constitutes a pet skunk.

All the information you need can be found at the SAP Website: [www.skunksaspets.com](http://www.skunksaspets.com). Bone or SAP treasurer Shelor Brumeloe would be glad to take your phone calls or answer letters.

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