



A tree standing alone in a field is a novel enough sight. But in Iowa there's a tree that stands in the middle of a gravel crossroads. You can't miss it.

## There's A Tree In The Road

Giving directions to Exira, Iowa, is easy. Just tell people to go to the tree "in" the road and turn north. That tree stands in a gravel crossroads, six miles south of Exira.

Maxine Christensen, a local writer, has more than a passing interest in the tree. It was her great, great uncle who planted it in 1880. She has written about it in local history books and newspaper articles.

"Humphrey Parker and his brother, John, my great, grandfather, were measuring land in the area," she recounts. "Humphrey was crippled in one foot, so he cut a cottonwood sprout at a nearby creek to use for a cane.

"When they got to the corner of one of the sections, they didn't have anything to mark it with," she explains. "He sharpened the sprout and shoved it into the ground."

The cottonwood sprout leafed out and has been growing there ever since. Initially, it was

just inside the neighboring fence line. Some years later, the roads were moved, leaving the tree in the middle of a crossroads. Rather than cut the already large tree down, locals chose to drive around it. As far as anyone knows, no serious accident has ever taken place at that spot.

When the State of Iowa wanted to remove it a while back, a local man went to bat for the old tree, which measures well over 15 ft. in circumference. Tradition won out over regulations, and a plaque was placed on the tree stating that it could not be removed until proven dangerous.

Today folks still drive around it and stop to have their picture taken in front of it, reports Christensen.

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Roger Bosse has a huge pen and pencil collection - totaling more than 6,000 - in his garage.

## Retired Farmer Owns Amazing "Pen And Pencil" Collection

It's a pretty sure bet you've never seen as many pens and pencils in one place as you'll find in Roger Bosse's garage. He's got more than 6,000 of them.

"I've been collecting pens and pencils for 35 years," says the retired farmer from Elk Point, S. Dak. "I started putting pens in a coffee can. Once that got full I started putting them in a 5-gal. bucket, and when that was full I started hanging them up in rows on one side of my garage. Word of my collection got around, and it wasn't long before people started giving pens and pencils to me. For example, two people at our local elevator gave me 300 pens and pencils apiece."

Besides the pens on his garage wall, he also has a half dozen boxes and pails full.

Why pens and pencils? "Well, you know how it is when you go to town to pay a bill and you use their pen. You say 'nice pen' and they say 'keep it' so you take it home. Farmers pay a lot of bills, so there are a lot of op-

portunities to collect pens. I also get a lot of my pens and pencils from seed companies, savings and loans, banks and car dealers, etc. It's a fun hobby."

The pens and pencils in his collection come in a wide variety of shapes and designs. "Very few of them are alike," says Bosse. "Most have advertising slogans. Some are shaped like ball bats, voluptuous ladies, medical syringes, and ice cream cones."

His most unusual pen is a guy boxing, with a trigger behind him. When you push the trigger his fists jab out like he's throwing a punch.

The pens are clipped onto wires strung horizontally across the wall. There are about 25 pens per foot.

Members of the International Pen Collectors Society and others are welcome to see the pen and pencil collection. Call ahead.

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**FARM SHOW**



David Fehr swathed out the words "Dad's Last Crop" as a tribute to his dad.

## Crop Message A Tribute To Dad

As David Fehr of the Winkler, Manitoba area, swathed the last crop seeded by his late father, many thoughts and memories were running through his mind. In fact, there was only a five-acre piece left to go on the 40-acre field, when Fehr got an idea. He would use the old 400 Versatile swather to carve out a message as a unique tribute to his dad.

Without the help of GPS or anything else, Fehr swathed out the words, "Dad's Last Crop." He worked "freehand," with only visual reckoning to guide his inspired movements.

"It was important for me to do something special," Fehr says, admitting that the memorial project gave him a good feeling. "It took me about an hour to create, but I wouldn't have cared if it had taken me a day."

David Fehr, Sr., had farmed that piece of land since the early 1960's and planted a winter wheat crop in the fall of 2002. However, he was diagnosed with cancer in February of 2003, and passed away in May that same year at the age of 71.

When the winter wheat was ready to harvest that summer, his son David accepted the task of reaping what his father had sown.

"Since I didn't get the idea for the tribute

until I was almost finished, I knew I had only one chance to get it right - if I messed up, I'd be done," he explains. "It's not perfect, but it still conveys the message."

Fehr says it helped that he could see the rows running lengthwise in the wheat. To maintain the same height for each letter, he first made a path that followed the rows, and then did another one and stepped it off.

"I transferred the swath by hand in a few places, because when you make a circle with the swather, it leaves a space," he says.

Before harvesting the wheat and destroying the tribute, David and his sister Kathy captured an aerial photo of the comforting project as they flew together in David's paraglider (also called a powerchute). This is a small, two-person recreational aircraft that David says looks like a small go-cart with a propeller and parachute.

The fitting memorial capped off the elder Fehr's farming career that involved growing sugar beets and grain on 400 acres between Haskett and Rosengart, on the U.S. border.

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Some of the best new ideas we hear about are "made it myself" inventions born in farmers' workshops. If you've got a new idea or favorite gadget you're proud of, we'd like to hear about it. Send along a photo or two, and a description of what it is and how it works. Is it being manufactured commercially? If so where can interested farmers buy it? Are you looking for manufacturers, dealers or distributors? Send to FARM SHOW, P.O. Box 1029, Lakeville, Minn. 55044 or call toll-free 800 834-9665. Or you can submit an idea at our website at [www.farmshow.com](http://www.farmshow.com).

Mark Newhall, Editor

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