

Grandson Rebuilt His Grandpa's Deere

For 19-year-old John Gaard, the 1945 Deere "A" he recently restored is the object of more pride than just the completion of his own successful project. That's because the tractor belonged to his late grandpa, Lloyd Gaard, who purchased the unit new as a young man and used it steadily until 1978.

In 1994, at the age of 9, John bought the tractor at his grandfather's farm auction for \$240 and had hopes of restoring the unit himself before Lloyd passed away. However, the soonest he felt confident enough to begin the task was the summer of 2001, and unfortunately, his grandfather passed on in 1997.

John worked on the tractor for two years. It had been in rough shape after serving as Lloyd's main farm tractor for 34 years, so by the time John was finished, he had spent \$5,183 on the project.

He found gaskets and bearings at Beckman Implement in Garretson, S.Dak., and many other parts at Rock Valley Tractor Parts in Rock Valley, Iowa, Salem Tractor Parts in

Salem, S.D., and Meyer Tractor Parts in Aberdeen, S. Dak. Decals came from K&K Antique Tractors in Shelbyville, Ind., and Steiner Tractor Parts in Holly, Mich., supplied the battery box covers.

"By reading everything you can, you can limit the mistakes you might make – and those mistakes can be expensive," John says.

"Grandpa plowed, cultivated, and planted with it, and although he did acquire more tractors over the years, this one was always his main unit," John says. "For me, I think of Grandpa every time I look at it or sit on it or run it. Because of the fact that he bought it new, and the family remembers him using it so much, that makes it really special."

Thanks to all of his hard work on the family treasure, John was one of the top 10 finalists in the National FFA Tractor Restoration Contest in 2002. He traveled to Louisville, Kentucky where his detailed record book was evaluated and he was interviewed by top names in the tractor restoration industry.



Gaard's restored 1945 Deere "A" originally belonged to the 19-year-old's late grandpa, who purchased the tractor new as a young man.

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Old Washing Machines Show A Bit Of History

Collectors of old washing machines say it's not just the thrill of finding as many different models as possible. They also like getting a glimpse of history.

Eighteen years ago, Lee Maxwell, Eaton, Colorado, started collecting old washing machines. He now has 975 of them. It is the most comprehensive collection of antique washing machines anywhere, according to the Guinness World Records.

His "hobby museum" graphically portrays the vast variety of laundry devices that were used from 1840 until about 1950, when he feels equipment finally became more standardized.

According to Maxwell, in 1920 there were more than 1,300 companies producing washers.

Maxwell's museum is a 300 by 40-ft. building packed full of restored units. A separate barn houses the other 250 he is still restoring.

He says it has been his experience that most antique dealers "avoid washing machines like the plague," because they are usually rusted and contain decades of dirt and hardened grease.

Only about a dozen of Maxwell's machines were in premium shape when he found them, but all but a few of his restored machines are in working condition. He says he enjoys all aspects of the hobby, including the hunt, the fixing, and the showing.

"The machines of today don't have nearly the charm or character of the older machines, but they are a lot safer," he says.

"Many of the most elegant washing machines were powered either by gasoline engines or electric motors. Almost any 'old timer' can remember getting a hand, a hunk of hair or some other part of the anatomy

caught in the wringer. Many have scars to prove it. Not only were the wringers dangerous, most of the early machines had open or unshielded gearing. Early electric machines had no grounding, and many had open terminals so you could get shocked even when the machine was not running.

Maxwell doesn't do appraisals, and the value of washing machines has been, and remains, elusive, he says. "There is no 'Blue Book' or comprehensive price guide for washers, as there is for many other collectibles. There are extremely few serious collectors and as of yet, there is no club or group of such people, with the exception of the Maytag Club that deals only with Maytag machines."

Maxwell doesn't sell any of his machines or the parts. The average price is \$65. The most he has ever paid for a machine is \$350.

He says he would like to trade duplicate machines for other machines or items associated with washing, but the lack of a collector's club makes that difficult.

In an effort to share his love of old washing machines (and vast knowledge) with others, this avid collector set up a website. "Lee Maxwell's Antique Washing Machines" site has a searchable database of pictures and video clips of every single machine in his collection, as well as articles, links, a museum tour and a patent database for visitors to check out. He also offers for sale, a 127-page, hardcover book called "History of Washing Machines," that he authored. It sells for \$33 plus shipping.

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Manufactured in about 1918, this antique washing machine had a wooden tub and a belt-driven dolly agitator.



This machine was manufactured in St. Louis, Mo., about 1920. It had a round copper tub, a cone agitator, and came with either an electric or gas heater.

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