

## He Digs Collecting Plows

For Ed Tomasovich, a beautifully restored tractor isn't complete if it doesn't have an equally beautifully restored plow behind it.

With a collection of 30 plows, the Ladysmith, Wis., man has become a bit of an expert on plows - yet realizes there's still much to learn.

Why he's fascinated is simple. "Nothing much happened on any farm unless you could plow the ground," Tomasovich says. As a teen, he enjoyed plowing with his father's John Deere H tractor and a No. 51, one-bottom, 16-in. plow.

When he left the farm, he made his living in accounting and sales. He kept in touch with his rural roots by restoring five John Deere tractors built between 1935 and 1952. He purchased a plow to restore to display with the tractors and ended up more fascinated with plows than with tractors.

"I started to realize the tremendous variations in designs that were created because it was such an important instrument," Tomasovich says. "For example, they had brush breaking plows because the land had to be opened up. Instead of a rolling coulter they had a cutter bar that was designed to rip through the roots and cut them off and then roll the brush on top of the ground. The farmer could go back and pull the brush out and burn it. In lowland swampy areas they had bog plows. The coulter was much larger so it would penetrate through trashy areas to cut it up."

Tomasovich collects plows built between 1900 and 1940. Because many older plows were scrapped during WW II, it's challenging to find old plows that are in reasonable

condition.

"If you run into an old piece but it has too many missing parts and it's terribly worn, it's very difficult to bring it back. I look for complete units," Tomasovich says. Sometimes he purchases two of one model so he has parts to complete one.

The 70-year-old collector's favorite plow is a McCormick-Deering with an oak beam, which was built at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century. With a reversible fore carriage, it was designed to work with horses or tractors. He considers his most rare piece to be a No. 41 John Deere plow, built in the 1920's. He had Nos. 40 and 42 and didn't think he'd be able to complete the series. The plows were designed to go with the popular Fordson tractors. A friend discovered the No. 41 plow at an Almelund, Minn., threshing show and it didn't take long for Tomasovich to seal a deal for \$275 to purchase it.

The Minnesota and Wisconsin region is a good area to find plows, and Tomasovich finds manuals and part books for plows at flea markets and tractor events. They help him to know what color to paint his plows and to answer questions when he displays them at events.

Restoring plows isn't as expensive as restoring tractors, but expect to spend \$100 just for paint and primer. If parts need to be fabricated, restoration becomes much more expensive.

"I've gotten good at removing rusty bolts," he says. "On these old pieces they have bolts you can't buy any more, so you want to salvage them to reuse them." He soaks the bolts with penetrating lubricant,



Ed Tomasovich collects plows built between 1900 and 1940. Here a 1940 John Deere "D" tractor is shown pulling a 66-A plow.



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restoring them up to four times over a couple of weeks. When that doesn't work he heats the nut on the bolt close to red-hot.

Tomasovich enjoys working his restored plows during plow days and loading two or three on a 20-ft. trailer to display at shows. With 25 plows restored, he's down to five to work on — though he's on the lookout for

more to add to his collection.

His biggest problem may be storage. His three garages are getting crowded with plows, tractors and other items he has collected through the years.

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## Iowa Corn King Honored With Two New Sculptures

Two new steel sculptures at Iowa fairs remind growers of one farmer's amazing feat. In 1946 Don Radda set a world record growing a 31-ft., 7/8-in. tall corn stalk.

One of the corn stalk sculptures has a permanent home at the Washington County Fairgrounds. The other is in the Agriculture Building at the state fair in Des Moines.

Long-time FARM SHOW readers may remember a 1987 article (Vol. 11, No. 6) about Radda, whose record remains unbroken.

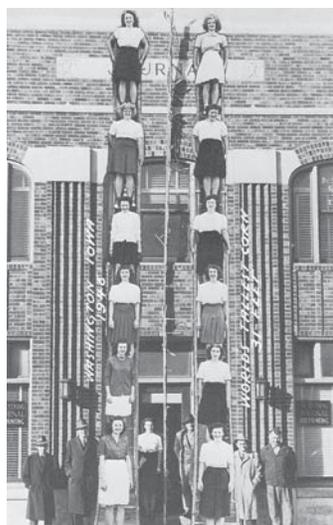
"Dad was the tall corn winner from 1939 to 1967, and he also won heaviest and biggest ear contests and had incredible yields," says daughter Julie Zieser, who still farms the family farm with her husband, Wayne.

Zieser won't give away all the family's corn growing secrets, but she shares that her father preferred Mexican white corn varieties, and pages of notes show that he experimented with a variety of greenhouse fertilizer blends. He also kept his plot of contest corn near the house "where he could baby it." He fenced it in so animals couldn't get near it, made scaffolding to support the stalks, and tied gunnysacks over the tassels so the stalks would continually grow to get to sunlight.

"He was a determined, intelligent and talented man," Zieser says. "He was also Iowa's first Master Corn Grower winning yield contests with 221 bu./acre corn in 1948 and 209 bu./acre corn in 1949 without modern technology or special seed."

Tom Evans of Evans Welding created one of the steel stalk sculptures and her husband, Wayne, made the other.

Zieser and other family members are pleased that her father will be remembered with the sculptures. Radda died in 1967 when he was just 65. He and his corn made headlines in Life magazine and newspapers across the U.S., and the record was listed in



In 1946 Don Radda set a world record growing a 31-ft., 7/8-in. tall corn stalk. This 1946 postcard shows Radda's 31-ft. corn stalk with 12 girls stacked up alongside it.

"Ripley's Believe It Or Not" and the "Guinness Book of World Records."

At a July dedication of the Washington County Fair sculpture, special guests included some of the women (now nursing home residents) who stood on ladders next to Radda's 1946 cornstalk. A popular postcard was made of the photo of the women and the corn stalk.

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Radda made scaffolding to support the stalks and tied gunnysacks over the tassels so the stalks would continually grow to get to sunlight (left). Steel corn sculpture matches height of Radda's original stalks.

