

Massey-Harris “Horses” Don’t Need Riders

George Smyth turns heads when he takes his covered wagon to parades. The horsepower he uses to pull it grabs people’s attention – a Massey-Harris Pony tractor with a Massey-Harris Pacer tractor in tow. Neither one has a driver.

Smyth controls the Pony from the wagon. He uses a version of technology invented in the 1950’s by Purcell McMaster, who worked in sales and service at Massey-Harris. He created a foot control to drive a string of up to 7 tractors without drivers. Smyth, an avid Massey-Harris collector, met McMaster in the late 1990’s and the two became good friends. Before McMaster died just short of his 105th birthday, he shared his invention with Smyth, and Smyth modified it into a handheld device with toggle switches.

“It has electrical toggle controls for the clutch and steering,” Smyth says. “And it has a kill switch.”

A 12-volt battery in the wagon powers the control, and the wiring is only connected to the Pony tractor up front. The second tractor is running and in gear. Its front hitch is the real key. When the first tractor stops, the hitch slides ahead and pulls the clutch and brake on the second tractor.

Smyth says he has considered adding two more “horses” to his team, a Massey-Harris Mustang and a Massey-Harris Colt.

Besides attending parades, Smyth says he used the Pony/Pacer team to pull a ride-on plow. That also earns him a few startled looks.

Smyth and his wife, Barb, are used to



When George Smyth takes his covered wagon to parades, he uses a team of “horses” that don’t need riders – a Massey-Harris Pony tractor with a Massey-Harris Pacer tractor in tow. A battery-powered, handheld device is used to control the tractors.

drawing attention. They have a 14,000 sq. ft. building to showcase Smyth’s 37 Massey-Harris tractors, 100 implements and other collectables including scale models of several trucks, a fifth-wheel trailer, bulldozer, and

stock trailer that Smyth carved out of wood. The show room was built to look like an old-fashioned dealership.

The Smyths invite people to call ahead to tour the museum.

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, George and Barb Smyth, 95 Southampton St., R.R. 1, Dungannon, Ont., Canada N0M 1R0 (ph 519 529-7781).

Old Gas Signs Bring Good Prices At Auction

No one likes the high price of gas but collectors don’t seem to mind spending money for old gas signs. At a recent auction a Penn-Empire Gasoline porcelain sign sold for \$6,875. A Sentinel Motor Oil sign sold for \$6,325.

While those are good prices, some really rare signs in good condition can go as high as \$70,000 to \$80,000, says Dan Matthews, owner of Matthews auctions, which specializes in anything associated with gas stations and car dealerships.

The former farmer turned auctioneer found his niche in 2007 when he opened his own auction business in Nokomis, Ill. Besides appealing to his rural background, he appreciated that average items sell for \$500 to \$700. Sales were stagnant during the economic downturn but are steadily on the upturn, thanks in part to television shows focused on buying and selling antiques and collectables.

Like other collectables, sign prices are determined by condition, rarity, graphics and

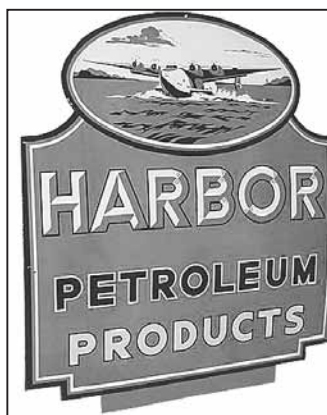
size. “Collectors like 30-in. signs or less. It lets them have more small signs on their walls,” Matthews explains.

Signs from small gas stations that didn’t last long often bring in the most money. A Harbor Petroleum Products sign recently sold for \$55,000. A Musgo sign sold for \$20,000 because the Musgo company of Muskegon, Mich., was only in business a short time.

Matthews Auctions holds about five petroleum and auto-related petroliana/automobilia auctions a year in Illinois, Ohio, Iowa and California. Matthews also holds several specialty auctions a year and offers internet bidding for all offsite buyers.

Matthews receives an average of five calls a day from people asking about the value of signs. When supplied with a photo and description of condition, Matthews is able to supply potential sellers with good “auction estimates”.

Many old gas station signs were used to patch holes in barns, as Matthews admits his



Old gas station signs are selling for good money. A Harbor Petroleum Products sign recently sold for \$55,000 while a Musgo sign sold for \$20,000.

father used to do. That means the signs are often in rough condition because of nail holes or exposure to the elements. Surprisingly, they can still be worth several hundred dollars or more depending on their rarity. Matthews welcomes all inquiries.

Besides petroleum signs, Matthews Auctions also sells many tractor and farm

related signs. These signs sell very well, and rare signs in good condition have brought up to \$40,000.

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Matthews Auctions, LLC., 19186 Nokomis Rd., Nokomis, Ill. 62075 (ph 877 968-8880; www.matthewsauctions.com).

Tractor-Made Ice Cream

A Deere 110 garden tractor powers this home-built ice cream maker.

Michael Densmore, Winchester, Ind., mounted a 5-gal. freezer on front of his 1966 Deere 110 garden tractor that’s direct-driven off the tractor engine. His homemade ice cream maker was recently featured in Lawn and Garden Tractor Magazine (www.lagtmag.com).

Densmore grew up on a farm in Indiana in the 1960’s and remembers his family making homemade ice cream on Sunday afternoons, using a hand-operated ice cream freezer. When he got older he became a heavy equipment mechanic and then worked for a construction company.

For 10 years or so on his drives to and from work, he kept thinking about how he could

adapt a tractor to turn a freezer and make ice cream. A few years ago he went to a show in Porterville, Pennsylvania, and watched as they made ice cream as a fundraiser. Two tiers of freezers were belted to a line shaft powered by a steam engine. From there he figured out how to accomplish his goal of tractor-made ice cream.

He also made an ice cream maker that’s powered by a Wheelhorse garden tractor, with a belt-driven gearbox mounted on front of the tractor. He says the tractor-powered ice cream makers are a big hit at antique tractor shows, anniversary parties, ice cream socials, and other events.

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Michael Densmore, 727 E. 500 S., Winchester, Ind. 47394 (ph 765 874-1938).



To make ice cream, Michael Densmore mounts a 5-gal. freezer on front of his 1966 Deere 110 garden tractor. Freezer is direct-driven off the tractor engine.

Photo courtesy Lawn and Garden Collector Magazine.