



Huge granite rock (12 by 13 by 17 ft.) was moved $\frac{3}{4}$ mile "as the crow flies."
Register photo by Chuck Offenburger

**"ONLY AN IOWA FARMER
COULD HAVE DONE THIS"**

Farmer Moves 200-Ton Rock

By Chuck Offenburger

PROMISE CITY, IA. — They come by the dozens now to see Clifford McMurry's rock. They marvel at it, in fact.

You see, there are some things man simply must do. Things that seem sort of crazy even. But they dare us in some weird way that ultimately lures us to the task. There are those guys who scale the Sears Tower in Chicago. There was the woman who swam twice around Manhattan Island. And people ride bicycles all the way across Iowa each summer. Some things just must be done.

For 41-year-old Clifford McMurry, the challenge this summer was moving a rock. A big rock, mind you: a granite boulder 12 feet by 13 feet by

17 feet, weighing 200 tons. That's a very big rock.

McMurry, it should be said right here at the top, is no flake. He is a farmer, as solid as the rock itself. "A practical man," said his wife, Arlene, also 41.

"The rock sat in a deep draw out in my back pasture," said Mr. Practical, whose farm is three miles north of this south-central Iowa town of 150.

"I'd been thinking about moving it for a few years now, and when the drought hit like it did this summer, I knew in my lifetime I'd probably never get such ideal conditions to move it, the ground being so hard and all. So the drought was good for something, I guess. I wanted to move

it from where it's always been out there up so it'd be next to my farm buildings. That's three-quarters of a mile, as the crow flies."

Of course, 200-ton boulders don't move as the crow flies.

They move, or at least this one did, only after you line up three of those huge, rubber-tired earth movers and then string two-inch-thick cable from the machines to the rock. Behind the rock, you position two big bulldozers that heave while the earth movers ho. That's a force of 2,000 horsepower. It was only barely enough.

In 100-degree heat on moving day, July 30, the great tires were spinning, the diesel engines were screaming for mercy and 70 spectators were sweating in absolute awe. "It was a very emotional day," said Arlene, "a day full of highs and lows. It was exhausting."

You can bet it was also expensive, but the McMurrys won't provide details.

"The contractor and I agreed we wouldn't put out any figure," Clifford said.

The McMurrys keep a spiral notebook so visitors can sign-in and leave comments. One left the other day: "Only an Iowa farmer could have done this."

Clifford checks the rock often, not in fear of anyone stealing it, of course, but rather to look in wonder at a dream fulfilled.

Why did he do it?
"You know, it's hard for me to say exactly why I did do it," he said.

It just had to be done, that's all.
(Reprinted with permission from the Des Moines Register & Tribune. Copyright 1983. Des Moines Register & Tribune Co.)

"MAKES A LITTLE SUNSHINE"

Decorated Pickup Helps Spread Christmas Cheer

While everyone else decorates their houses and yards for the upcoming Christmas season, Hank Timmerman, Glenwood, Iowa, spreads "Christmas Cheer" by decorating his 1952 Ford pickup for the holidays.

Timmerman, 78, and a retired farmer, has been decorating his truck for the past few years and explains that he arranges the mobile display each year "to make a little sunshine".

He adorns the red truck's tailgate with plenty of tinsel, a red lantern, a

star, a candle and a stocking which friendly neighbors occasionally fill with a few surprises. Timmerman adds tinsel down the side mirror framework and a Santa Claus face on the back of the cab for the finishing holiday touch.

Hank Timmerman adorns his pickup's tailgate with tinsel, a red lantern, a candle and a stocking.



Photo courtesy Omaha World Herald