



George and Fern Knapp decorated their house with all kinds of used farm equipment parts. The living room chandelier is a large hay fork hanging from a barn trolley.

Farm Equipment Parts Decorate Rural Home

A love of rural life is something that George and Fern Knapp share, so it seemed logical for the Goodfield, Ill., couple to decorate their house with all kinds of used farm equipment parts.

Metal implement seats bolt to the tops of milk cans to form rustic stools around the kitchen island. Their charm is enhanced by horseshoe footrests and ladder backs made from horse hames and leather straps.

"The handles on our antiqued blue kitchen cabinets are accented with old brass numbered cow tags and the base of the kitchen chandelier is a round wooden pulley," Fern says. "Our living room chandelier is a large hay fork hanging from an old barn trolley, mounted on the living room ceiling. For the chandelier's light source, we installed an electrified barn lantern inside the 2-ft. fork prongs. And the coffee table below is made from a large wagon wheel."

The Knapps have several lamps made from old pumps, and unusual night lights made by lighting the antique glass bulbs about the size of a small grapefruit from old lightning rods. They made their bedroom

light fixture from an old crock hung upside-down from a thick rope and a wooden pulley mounted to the ceiling.

Black-painted horseshoes are used throughout the house as accents and display hooks and George once hooked up the cast iron bell from his parents' farm, so that it would ring whenever the phone rang. That proved to be a mistake, however, as the heavy-duty dinger was scarily loud.

Waist-high barn scales polish up nicely, according to the couple, and they use them to display plants or large crocks.

One-of-a-kind hand-crafted home decor like Knapps' brings new life to otherwise forgotten farm objects that the couple collects from various sources. Some are family heirlooms, while others are given to them by friends or picked up at farm auctions.

"We really enjoy finding new uses for these things. It's fun – we're really lucky that we get to do this," George states.

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Doves Love Their Outdoor Cage

Frederick Leese enjoys spending time outside during the summer, and so do his pet Mexican ring neck doves, thanks to the roomy outdoor cage Leese built.

His 5-ft. diameter satellite dish gave him the idea. He had an old rusty water tank the same diameter. He cut off the tank's rusty bottom and connected the two items with a welded 1-in. tube frame bolted to the dish roof. He used one wall of an old birdcage to make a hinged door to bring in food and check on the automatic waterer. The only thing he purchased was 1/2-in. galvanized screen.

There's no floor. The cage can be moved anywhere and staked down with tent stakes. Leese built the cage in 2008 and placed it under a cedar tree for shade.

"They stayed out there until November," Leese says. Living in Fontana, Kansas, the weather was nice enough to put the hardy birds back outside this March.

"They have more freedom," Leese says of the birds in their 8-ft. tall cage. He and guests enjoy listening to them and watching them fly around and light on branches of the tree he placed inside.



Frederick Leese built this roomy, 8-ft. tall outdoor cage for his pet Mexican ring neck doves.

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He Lives His Life On The Road

Ever just think about leaving everything behind and hitting the road? Bob Skelding did just that, leaving New Hampshire last August in a home-built travel rig pulled by four Percheron draft horses.

Things went well for six months and 1,800 miles until a full semi tanker hit him from behind. The wagon shattered into pieces, two horses were killed, and Bob ended up on a ventilator with multiple broken bones and internal injuries.

It was a tough blow, serious, but not tough enough to stop Skelding, who hit the road again with a new rig and horses in June.

"Every day is a unique encounter," Skelding explains. "Every day, I never know what's going to happen but I know it's going to be a great day. The good moments far outweigh any discomfort."

With no particular agenda or destination, Skelding never knows where he'll end up. He has traveled up to 25 miles in a day, but 15 miles is more common. People often invite him to stay at their homes overnight and offer hay for his horses and a homemade supper. Most property owners welcome him to camp for the night.

"I'd say 99.9 percent of the people are good. Most people are just fantastic," he says. "They feel part of the adventure. They all want a simple life in some way. They'd like to do something like this, to be free and able to travel."

Skelding emphasizes he isn't traveling for a cause and never asks for help - but

he accepts when it's offered and admits he seldom has to buy hay, though he keeps a supply of feed on hand.

"I was sick of paying taxes and working at a nuclear power plant, so I quit my job and sold my house in Deerfield, N.H., to live life in the slow lane," he explains. "It's fun. No bills, no taxes, and I get to meet lots of nice people."

Skelding built his insulated wagon on a 6-ton running gear with bolster springs, hydraulic drum front brakes, and mechanical rear brakes. He installed a solar water heater for quick showers, propane for cooking, a full-size bed, and storage areas for water, feed and hay for his horses.

Because of the weight and slow speed, Skelding selects roads to meet his horses and wagon's needs.

"It's not necessarily safer on dirt roads, because there's often no shoulder," he says. Skelding generally chooses state highways because they have less than a 7 or 8 percent grade. A couple of times he has had to find assistance because his horses couldn't pull the heavy wagon up steeper grades.

For safety, Skelding has a slow moving sign and flashing yellow lights. Unfortunately, they weren't enough to catch the attention of the semi driver who slammed into him last January. Skelding's new wagon is smaller, initially designed to be pulled by two mules by another adventurer, "Bernie" (www.riverearth.com). Bernie and Skelding became friends as they traveled and commu-



With no particular agenda or destination in mind, Bob Skelding left New Hampshire in a home-built travel rig pulled by four Percheron draft horses.

nicated through emails. Bernie offered his unused wagon after Skelding's accident.

Skelding worked with his new horses for about three weeks to get them used to highway travel before taking off for this year's Horse Progress Days in Odon, Ind., (July 3-4). He isn't sure where he'll go after that.

Wherever it is, Skelding and his new, bright yellow wagon are sure to attract attention.

Skelding appreciates evenings when he can relax in his wagon, spend time with

his horses and savor the journey, which he records in a blog on his website. He invites those who can't take a road trip to ride vicariously along with him via the internet, www.wagonteamster.com.

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