

Hobby Leads Farm Women To “Antique” Fashion Shows

By Janis Schole, Contributing Editor

Valerie Van Kooten has been fascinated by antique clothes since she was a child. So it's not surprising that as an adult she has turned that passion into a business.

Van Kooten is a history buff with a vast collection of vintage clothing. Over the past 20 years, the Pella, Iowa, mother of three has collected over 3,000 pieces of historical attire from auctions, second hand shops, and little old ladies' attics. Much of it was given to her.

"I get little packages in the mail all the time from women who've seen my show and are sending me things," she says.

Van Kooten puts the public speaking skills she learned in 4-H to work by offering one-hour "edu-tainment" antique clothing fashion show presentations to clubs, associations and event organizers. In this way, she became a professional speaker 15 years ago, and has been hired all over Iowa, Missouri, Nebraska and Minnesota to present her informative

program about the nostalgia of garment style.

The items in her collection are from the 1850's on up to the 1980's, and Van Kooten offers presentations with various themes (often customized) such as: "125 Years of Fashion in America," "100 Years of Bridal Fashions," and "20's Flapper Clothing."

She does about 25 presentations per year and is busiest from April until June. Though the rate varies, depending on several factors, Van Kooten charges about \$500 if the job is within driving distance.

She provides the clothing and commentary, and the group that is sponsoring her provides the models. Besides the general historical information she relates, Van Kooten is usually able to tell the real-life stories of the clothing's previous owners – talking about what their lives were like, and when and where they wore the clothes now being modeled.

This summer, she has also been hired to



Van Kooten and her models provide “Edu-tainment” with stories about the people who wore the antique clothes they model.

do a two-week stint of shows on the Mississippi Queen Riverboat.

"You can just never predict where your hobbies will take you," she says.

Van Kooten is currently working on a book about how fashion has influenced history, and

vice versa.

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Valerie Van Kooten, 2051 Old Hwy. 163, Pella, Iowa 50219 (ph 641 628-9789; email: vankootenv@central.edu; website: www.central.edu/homepages/vankootenv).



Stroller will turn into mini-tractor when Cory Morgan gets old enough.

Baby “Drives” Tractor Stroller

Farm kids have always gotten an earlier start behind the wheel than city kids have. But Rick Morgan took things to the extreme when his grandson Cory was born.

"We have a 1949 and a 1951 Centaur tractor that we take to shows, and we thought it would be fun to model a stroller after them," says Morgan. "When he gets big enough, we'll put an engine and hydrostatic transmission in there and make him a miniature tractor."

The 26 hp Centaurs were built in Ohio from 1924 to 1952. They were known for having belly-mount sickle mowers. They had a top road speed of about 30 mph and were most often used on roadsides, rights of way, and airfields, according to Morgan.

Rather than try to duplicate the exact style of a Centaur for the stroller, Morgan settled for the unique yellow paint and a Centaur

decal.

"We took an old lawn mower hood, steering wheel, and front axle, along with a pair of back tires off a ditch digger," he explains. "We built the frame out of steel tubing and attached everything to it."

A lawn mower handle became the stroller push bar, and a baby seat was attached to hold young Cory. When Cory was very young, the seat was laid on its back. As he has grown, it has been shifted so he can now sit up and grasp the steering wheel.

"It has a storage container under the hood for diaper bags and things," says Morgan. "It's about like pushing a lawn mower and about as much work."

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Rick Morgan 2720 Highway 49, Columbiana, Ala. 35051 (ph 205 669-9654; email: fourmileorgans@outdrs.net).



After making cardboard mock-ups and 500 hours of labor, Weisbrod ended up with a half-size replica of the classic Deere tractor.

Garden Tractor Transformed Into Mini Deere 4020

Steven Weisbrod has always loved Deere 4020 tractors. He recently went to work on a Deere 318 garden tractor. Five hundred hours later he had a garden tractor-sized replica of a classic Deere 4020.

"More than half the time was spent in design and engineering," says Weisbrod. "Everything was mocked up in cardboard before transferring to steel. The toughest part was getting the right proportions."

Weisbrod measured the hoods on the two tractors and found that there were 2.37 in. on the 4020 for every inch on the 318, or a 42 percent ratio. Every dimension on the 4020 was divided by 2.37 to get the correct size for the mini version.

Once he had the ratio, he stripped the 318 down to the bare frame, engine, transmission and radiator. The dash, shift and hydraulic controls were similar enough to be retained. The 318 already had a 3-point hitch, individual wheel brakes, live pto and power steering. The battery was also retained.

The rear axle was worked over to look like a farm tractor with an adjustable axle. The 12-in. rear wheels were replaced with 16-in. wheels.

Weisbrod built a new front axle by rounding off a square cast iron I-beam to look like a tube axle on a 4020. He also modified the hub on the front wheels so it had spindles and bolts like a farm tractor.

"We relocated the fuel tank under the hood



Wheels, hitch, brakes and pto were used from the original JD 318 garden tractor.

and built exhaust pipes and mounted them where they are on the 4020," says Weisbrod. "All the sheet metal, hood, fenders and radiator screens were built by hand."

A graphics company made vinyl decals to scale. They were mounted on aluminum pieces also cut to scale, polished and mounted on the dash. The only other things purchased new were tires, lights and seat.

"The seat is full-size because I wouldn't fit in one built to scale," admits Weisbrod. "We also built a four-wheel hay wagon to the same scale. It has a flat rack and a gate on the back."

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Stephen C. Weisbrod, R.D. 3, Box 99, Canastota, N.Y. 13032 (ph 315 655-3821).

Have You Renewed Your Subscription?

Don't miss our next issue! Check your mailing label on front of this issue to see when your subscription expires.

To renew, use the order envelope enclosed with this issue, or the order coupon on page 44.

Or call us toll-free at 1-800-834-9665.