



Photo courtesy Grass & Grain

Steve Hund replates worn parts with nickel and casts missing parts at a foundry.

BIG DEMAND FOR RECONDITIONED UNITS

Farmer Puts Antique Stoves Back To Work

By Frank J. Buchman

A Kansas farmer has developed a fulltime business reconditioning antique wood burning stoves that were used in nearly all homes at the turn of the century.

"It just started out as a hobby and grew into a business," explains Steve Hund Jr., who with his wife Kathy operates Mill Creek Antiques, Paxico, Kan.

Old wood stoves are the main business for the firm although the couple handles all kinds of antiques and collectibles. They have over 50 antique wood-burning heating and cook stoves in stock. They vary from completely reconditioned stoves that look like they just came from the factory to ones in many pieces that must be repaired.

People throughout the U.S. seek out the Hunds to sell, buy or recondition their antique wood-burning stoves. "Most of our trade has come from word of mouth," Hund says. "We have a sign along the Interstate and a lot of tourists stop in during the summer, but the best advertising is one person telling another about us."

The fuel shortage in the late 1970's got people interested in burning wood again, according to Hund, who sold a full line of new stoves for several years in addition to the antiques.

"I was unhappy with the quality of materials in the new wood-burning stoves. There were problems with them and it was hard to get parts, even for some of the best-known name brands. There were about 400 manufacturers of wood stoves in the boom period 1979 through 1981 but that's back to about 125 now," says Hund who now deals strictly with antiques. "These stoves are proven. They have been around for 70 years or more and are still in use."

Hund, who also farms, says he's bought and sold or reconditioned about 1,000 wood stoves over the past 15 years. Last year alone he reconditioned and sold 85 stoves. Farm auction sales are a common place to locate the antiques, but they come from other places as well. He says there seems to be a plentiful supply.

Prices have changed a lot since Hund became interested in old wood-burning stoves. "Initially people gave their old stoves away. The first one I bought at a farm sale was in perfect condition and I only paid \$14 for it. I have an identical reconditioned stove on the floor now and it would sell for \$950."

Hund says the value varies considerably depending on the condition and the brand and model of the stove. It's not uncommon for popular stoves from the turn of the century to sell for \$100 to \$300 at sales now.

The process of reconditioning an antique stove usually takes about 2 months, depending on how much work is required. The Hunds have one part-time employee to help work on the stove repair, and usually have 8 or 10 reconditioning jobs underway at one time. Grates and liners in the stoves often must be repaired, and the nickel plating is frequently quite deteriorated. "I have to send those parts off to be replated and that takes time and can be costly," he notes, adding that while there is a large assortment of old stove parts to use in restoration work, he also frequently must have parts made new. "I have parts I use for patterns and send them to foundries where they make a sand mold and duplicate the part."

Some of the restored wood stoves sell for as much as \$2,500. Round Oak and Great Western are the most popular models. Enterprise Leader, Chatman, and German Heater are other common brands. If you had the money, Quick Meal stoves built around 1915 were a good buy. Hund says the stove was unusual because it burns either wood or coal.

A 40 by 56-ft. building houses the stoves and replacement parts. The building is nearly full so some of the stoves remain outside.

For more information, contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Steve Hund, Jr., Mill Creek Antiques, Paxico, Kan. 66526 (ph 913 636-5520).

FARM SHOW

Ag World

Editor's Note: Most of what goes into Ag World stems from story ideas sent to us by readers. This special section of FARM SHOW touches on the lighter side of farming and ranching — everything from human interest stories, to unusual hobbies, to unique things farm families are doing for fun or profit.

If you've read or heard a good Ag World type story you'd like to share with others, send it to: FARM SHOW, Box 1029, Lakeville, Minn. 55044.



Evans can climb up the silo and into the car. "It's my Sunday afternoon cabin up north," he says.

EYE-CATCHING WAY TO "TOP OFF" A SILO

What's That Car Doing Up There?

Noel Evans found an unusual, eye-catching way to "top off" his silo.

Two years ago, Evans was looking for a way to get people to "discover" the car, camper and boat storage service he operates on his hobby farm located 5 miles south of Marshfield, Wis. To get their attention, he perched a car on top of an empty, unused 40 ft. silo. Drivers on state highway 13, which runs by the farm, are sure to see it.

"During the summer, a lot of non-local tourists stop by to take pictures, and to ask 'What's that car doing up there?'," says Evans.

To lift the car, a 1967 Chevrolet Impala with the engine removed, onto the top of the empty silo, Evans hired a local construction crane operator. The operation took 2 hours

and cost \$157.

Before the crane came out, Evans built a frame for the car, setting 2 telephone poles parallel to each other, 5 ft. apart, so they'd fit lengthwise inside the car wheels. "The weight of the car on the poles anchors the display on top of the silo," says Evans.

He cut a hole in the floor of the car, allowing him to climb up the silo chute, through the hole and into the front seat of the car. "Sitting up there in the driver's seat provides a panoramic view of the surrounding countryside. It's my Sunday afternoon cabin up north," says Evans.

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