



PICKING CORN with an antique cornpicker was Jim Marshall, a member of the Mini-Sappa Antique, Engine and Thresher Association. The corn was donated by Jim Abbey and will be shelled and ground during demonstrations at the annual show next fall. — Herald staff photo by Kimberly Davis

Men give new life to old tractor

By MARYLOU OLSON

When three Oberlin antique lovers decided to do something to help raise money for the Mini-Sappa Antique Thresher and Engine Show this year, the result was a beautifully restored 1949 John Deere A tractor.

Ray Kircher, Calvin Ufford and Jim Marshall, who have been restoring vehicles and tractors for years, said they decided to buy the tractor from Bernard Corcoran, who had been farming with it; restore it; then donate it to the show for a fund raiser.

The new owners are Raydean and Velda Wright of Bird City, who are active members of the Tri-State Engine and Antique Show there. They said they plan to keep it and enter it in that show, which is held in July.

When the three men decided to restore the tractor, they had no idea how many hours they would spend on it. The work began last November at J & R Trailer Repair, owned by Jim and Reva Marshall, then the tractor was moved to Mr. Kircher's building in west Oberlin when the Marshalls left on a winter vacation.

Mr. Kircher said restoring cars has been his hobby for over 30 years. His first restoration was a 1928 Model A Ford pickup.



HELPING HIS WIFE Velda onto the 1949 John Deere A tractor which they won during the Mini-Sappa Antique, Thresher and Engine Show in Oberlin was Raydean Wright of Bird City. It was restored by three Oberlin men, Ray Kircher, Calvin Ufford and Jim Marshall, then donated to the association as a fundraiser. — Photo by Karen Krien

"I cut my eye teeth on a Model A," he said. "My dad bought his first Ford in 1913 from a dealer in Indianola. My first car, however, was a 1948 Ford Sedan, a six cylinder, which I bought

when I married my wife, the former Eleanor Lytle, and needed a vehicle."

He was a charter member of the Mini-Sappa Antique Thresher and Engine Association, so when it

came time to retire from the farm near Indianola, Neb., in 2000, he and his wife decided to move to Oberlin, where they had made many friends who also enjoyed restoring vehicles and tractors.

Mr. Marshall said that the first car he owned was a 1929 Chevrolet, which he bought for \$25, after his grandfather, Andy Penn, loaned him \$15. He started restoring vehicles and tractors in 1973.

"My wife says it keeps me out of trouble," he said.

His first good car, he said, was a 1950 Ford, which he bought in Wilsonville, Neb., and completely restored in 1970. He opened Jim's Odds and Ends on East U.S. 36 after he retired from Koch Oil in 1991 after 25 years. Tractors he has restored include a Case VAC and a John Deere B.

A 1931 Chevrolet was the first car Mr. Ufford owned, and he said he drove it back and forth to school in Oberlin.

"When I was in high school, many old cars, trucks, tractors and steam engines went to the scrap drive for the World War II effort. I remember well the big scrap pile that was located near the railroad tracks in Oberlin, waiting to be shipped out by train. Our football queen was chosen from the class that brought in the most scrap iron.

"My dad donated a 1925 Model T pickup, and I drove it to the scrap pile, then caught a ride home," he recalled.

His interest in restoring antiques increased after he retired from the Soil Conservation Service at Overbrook and he and his wife, the former JoAnn Lincoln, moved back to Oberlin. He said he still owns the first tractor he restored, a 1949 John Deere MT.

The men said that the annual show costs a lot to operate and most of the income comes from gate receipts and food served by their wives, so they felt it was worth a try to buy and restore the tractor to help raise some money. The club sold chances at \$1 each or \$6 for \$5 on the tractor and then had a drawing to give it away.

Mr. Marshall said that Jim Abbey has donated corn for several years to the association and each year Mr. Marshall picks it with an old-fashioned corn picker, formerly owned by Joe Ruzicka. The corn is ground and shelled during demonstrations at the show.

The restored tractor was painted by Mr. Kircher's grandson, Nik Martin, of Herndon, a mechanical engineering student at Kansas State University.

The men agreed that the tractor is in top shape and is field ready, and they're happy that the new owners do not plan to sell it.



CONGRATULATING RAYDEAN WRIGHT (second from left) of Bird City on winning the tractor was Bob Martin of Herndon, a member of the Decatur County Antique, Thresher and Engine Association. Others (from left) are Ray Kircher, Calvin Ufford and Jim Marshall, who restored the tractor. — Calvin Ufford photo