

## Could Not Believe It!

# THANK YOU, GEORGE SCHAAF!

By MaJeana Hallstrom

Last spring, we saw an announcement that George Schaaf, the 89-year-old owner of the George and June Schaaf Tractor and Truck Museum in Frankfort, IL, would be liquidating his incredible collection of antique and unique tractors in September 2022. Front and center in that announcement was a Steiger Model 105.



*The Lloyd Pierce/George Schaaf Model 105.*

If you haven't heard of a Model 105, it was the second Steiger model —after Steiger #1—that was designed and built out of used parts. The first Model 105 was constructed around 1960 and was built for the Steigers to use on their farm for lighter-duty tillage such as harrowing and discing. Memories have faded, and the right questions did not get asked of those who would know before they passed on, so Model 105 history is not clear. We believe a total of three or four Model 105s were built before the Steiger brothers went into the tractor business in mid-1963. The Model 105 tractors were about half the size of Steiger #1. Local farmers were impressed by the Model 105 the Steigers had built for themselves and asked the Steigers to build 105s for them. According to Doug Steiger, "We built three in that one

year." In addition to the farm's Model 105, it is believed two, possibly three, more were built in late 1962/early 1963. And, it is possible, this tractor is actually the first Model 105 built for the farm. Three Model 105s are still in existence today.

Anyway, back to George. He had purchased the Model 105 that the original owners, the Lloyd Pierce family, said was the first Steiger tractor sold to a customer. (*As such, when the Pierces restored this tractor in 1998, they painted "Steiger #1" on the front sides of their tractor. These markings have occasionally confused people about which tractor it actually is.*) It was sold to Pierce in March 1963. In 2008, George purchased this tractor to display in his remarkable museum, which was a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization. From what I understood about the auction, George would be donating the proceeds to a Christian ministry.

Seeing that lime-green Steiger tractor featured in Mecum's ad got my brain *spinning!* I wondered if George would donate that tractor to the Steiger Heritage Club? In April, I wrote a letter to Mr. Schaaf. I told him about the Steiger Heritage Club, that it was a 501(c)(3), and that it would be awesome if the Model 105 could be re-located to northwestern Minnesota, where it was "born." Knowing this was a huge request, I boldly asked if he would consider donating it to us. I gave him about a week to digest my letter, then gave him a call. George is a genuinely nice man; he patiently heard me out, but, in the end, he told me that because it had already been listed with Mecum, he was "...sorry he couldn't help me out."

Disappointed, I called Sherry Schaefer, owner of 3-Point Ink Publishing and editor of **Heritage Iron™** magazine. Sherry knows George and considers him a good friend. I asked her if she had any ideas. Being the kind person she is, she said she would help us raise money to buy it and, since she lives in Illinois, she would attend the auction on our behalf. That was April. The auction wasn't until late September. I felt it was best to not pester George about it that summer, but by August, I thought it might be time to follow up. *(I don't give up easily!)* The Steiger Heritage Club



*Standing behind Steiger Tractor founder, Doug Steiger, are Steiger Heritage Club Board members (l to r) MaJeana Hallstrom, Jeri Yaggie, David Dietz, and Peter Christianson. We had no idea what would be happening that afternoon, so Board members Bryan Steiger and Kevin Yaggie were not in attendance that day.*

Board met that month, and we decided we needed to call Sherry again about this tractor. Following this call, Sherry set up a time to visit George. After that visit, she called and told us George was having Mecum bring that Model 105 and two antique steam tractors to the Western Minnesota Steam Threshers Reunion in Rollag, MN. **Huh???**!!! Sherry said she thought this was a marketing effort for Mecum, but they would put the Model 105 in the **Mark Yaggie STEIGER HERITAGE HALL** for display that weekend. I wasn't willing to pester George, but I had no problem pestering Sherry. She experienced two weeks of my asking why in the world Mecum would be bringing that tractor to Minnesota. She kept saying she didn't know why.

Saturday of Labor Day Weekend in the **Mark Yaggie STEIGER HERITAGE HALL (MYSHH)**: Sherry was there, and we were doing our typical catching up – and I was **still** asking her what the deal was with that tractor. Fortunately, other Board members were there, too: Peter Christianson, David Dietz, and Jeri Yaggie. At 1:00, Sherry summoned Peter and me, she had someone on her phone in Facetime.



*MaJeana Hallstrom and Sherry Schaefer beaming behind Doug Steiger following the announcement that George Schaaf had donated this Model 105 to the Steiger Heritage Club.*

It was George Schaaf. Peter and I thanked George for displaying the Model 105 in the MYSHH that weekend. George then asked if we were planning to bid on it. Once again, disappointed, Peter, the Steiger Heritage Club treasurer, told him we wish we could, but our organization is new, and we have no money to do so. George's reply was "I'm going to make it easy on you. It is yours." I think I was crying, and Peter and I were talking over one another thanking him. What a generous and amazing gift!!! It was so exciting! As for Sherry, she was just as excited as we were – even though she **did** know what George was up to. Sherry profusely apologized for "...lying to me for two weeks." You know what, I don't care that she "lied!" **Sherry and George are both true friends!**