

Figurin' and Monkeyin' built Lloyd Brown's fortune

Lloyd Brown takes pride in knowing how to figure things.

"All I know is figures. I know figures upside down. I know 'em like I know how to spit. My dad was a horse trader, and he told me I better be knowin' how to figure"

Lloyd, who says he's been in the same spot on the 80-acre spread near Central City for 54 years, does know how to add things up.

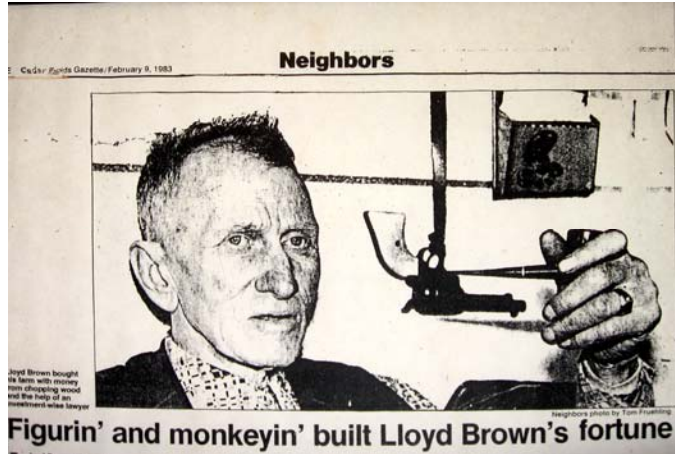
By all accounts, he's accumulated a fortune over the years of "buyin' and sellin' and monkeyin' around all my life." He's also piled up on his homestead a veritable museum of antiques and memorabilia and a yard full of junk.

Three farm buildings are filled with everything from vintage Ford cars and steam engines to a suit of armor and glassware. He's got a whole line of antique farm implements and old carriages. A lot of, says Lloyd, is getting valuable.

He says he could have a three-day sale and not get rid of what he has.

Strewn over at least an acre is what Lloyd estimates to be 100 tons of scrap iron. He used to have about four times as much and plans to sell what he's got left once the price goes up.

Lloyd also has half of one large out-building crammed with brand new tools and machinery —socket sets, compressors, drills, shovels, saws, wrenches, knives.



He's a distributor for several equipment companies and says, "I can get any kind of tool I want." And he ships orders by parcel post all over the country because he claims nobody can beat his prices.

"I've got no overhead. I pay cash for everything. I don't owe anybody a damn dime. And I sell cheap. I do it for recreation — it's a hobby. I don't care if I make a dollar. I don't give a damn for a dollar. I've got more than I can ever spend."

That wasn't always the case.

Growing up with his folks not far from where he lives, Lloyd recalls, "I came up the hard way ... we had it rough."

As a young man he started working the farm he now owns for an old Civil War veteran. Lloyd says the fellow bought the property with the \$500 he got for taking someone else's place in the Army.

"I was making 25 cents an hour sawin' wood" Lloyd notes. "Cept he never paid me. He was my banker. Four years later he died and I had enough saved to bid on the place.

I was just a smart-aleck kid ... I wouldn't go to school. It would've been wasted if I'd gone on to school."

Article from the Cedar Rapids Gazette dated February 9, 1983

“Anyway, I bid the acres at \$4,000 and put some down on it. But then (a representative for the estate) said that was too cheap. So a lawyer invested my money in grain. He was buyin’ grain at 12-to-16cents a bushel and sellin’ at 48 cents. Then he hopped into oats at 26 cents and sold out at 60 cents.



Before long, I had the whole place paid for. I’ve been offered \$280,000 for it. I’ve been buyin’ and sellin’ and tradin’ since then.”

He got into the junk business when he saw an old tramp scrounging through a ditch near his farm.

“I saw he was pickin’ up brass and stuff, so I started pickin’ up junk. The next thing you know, I was buyin’ it. I went in with Morris Goldberg in Cedar Rapids, and we played in the junk business together for 38 years.”

Lloyd points out that he’s only had two paying jobs in his life: one as a guard for President Franklin Roosevelt during World War II and the other as a firearms instructor at Fort Benning, GA. Otherwise, he’s made a career of “dickerin’.”

“I’ve been to more auction sales than any other man in this country,” he says. “I used to trade a lot or sell it. But, anymore, I figure to hell with it ... if I sell any of this stuff, then I ain’t got it. If I sold it, all I’d have is money and what good would that do me?”

In fact, Lloyd has willed his farm and his old possessions to the Central City Historical Society so the town can establish a museum on the property.

He has no family to leave anything to, and he says he’s sort of lost the will to wheel and deal since his wife, Myra, died a year ago.

She died of a heart attack, but Lloyd places part of the blame on injuries she suffered in a robbery attempt at their farm in 1980. Two fellows were in the process of loading up a truck with new tools in the middle of the night when Lloyd caught them.

While in his undershorts, he wounded one of the robbers with his shotgun; but the other one hit Mrs. Brown over the head with a rock and gave her a concussion.

“I think that was half the cause of her dying,” he says now. “I just worshipped my wife, and I miss her sumpin’ terrible. We used to travel all over, but I don’t feel like going anywhere by myself.”

In all his life, one thing Lloyd didn’t figure on was loneliness.

“Seems like life ain’t worth goin’ on without Myra. I’ve got a lot of friends, but all I got here with me is my little dog, Candy.”

TOM FRUEHLING