My search for a red wagon

It was one day last week, when I decided to leave my current world of reality and enter a search that I knew would make a good friend very happy if I hit paydirt.

When I left, due to the nature of the request, I felt that the chances of coming up with a red wagon like I used to ride around in my childhood, were less than spectacular.

I will never forget what seems like a lifetime ago, that I arrived home and discovered a beautiful red “coaster wagon,” as we referred to them, sitting on our property, ready for the ride. Over the years, it became a vehicle to ride leisurely around our neighborhood.

Recently, a good friend asked if I knew where to get such a wagon. She was looking for one because she had an idea of piling pumpkins in such a wagon and use it for decoration for the fall season in the front of her home.

My first stop was at the business of a close friend where I spotted a red wagon behind her floral shop. Since she had one, I thought that she might know where I could get one.

However, upon inquiring, I found that her treasure had come from an antique shop during covered bridge days in a small town nearly 100 miles away in western Indiana.

Ironically, her business is located across the old railroad bed from the small town where I was raised. The small town where I rode the wagon and used it to deliver vegetables to neighbors. Deep inside, I thought, “Wow, if I could come up with a wagon by my own old home place, that would be awesome.” However, the concept seemed too good to dream of, so I started searching through area antique shops. My journey led to an antique mall where I was told the chances would be good.

The entire search was to no avail, so I started back from my illusive search for the little red treasure.

Presently, the thought of discovering a wagon in the little country hamlet where I was raised wouldn't escape me. I knew that if I didn't at least make a drive-through search, I wouldn't be satisfied.

I made the first turn to the north which led to the corner where I was raised. Now I was driving in an area that triggered 60-year-old wagon memories that I hadn't thought of in years.

By Jim Langham

Presently, I crept past the old home place, allowing myself time to "return" for a few short moments before slowly continuing down the street.

I approached the house where my uncle and aunt had lived, just a few hundred feet from where I was raised. I passed the house, glanced toward the garage, and my eyes couldn't believe what they saw.

There, sitting against the house was a red wagon just like I had driven. It was located on the property where I had ridden my wagon and 200 feet from the home where my beloved friend, Mert Sprunger, lived. It was there in the neighborhood where my actual wagon experiences had occurred.

With chills and hopes, I pulled into the driveway and went to the door. An elderly lady came to the door and I said, "Is that wagon for sale?"

She replied, "It probably could be, but it doesn't work very well, the wheels aren't that good,

but then I was just thinking that I hated to have to mess with putting it away for the winter."

Bam, I saw hope in that response. Within five minutes, I was loading the rusty old wagon, as wished for by our friend, into the car, ready to deliver with a smile for the lawn decoration.

But, the journey wasn't over. The next day I was looking through some old letters and I discovered a tribute that I had written to my beloved Grandma Cook on Aug. 10 (her birthdate), 1974.

In it, I had listed a large number of memories. I started gleaning through the list that I barely remember composing nearly 40 years ago. Suddenly, my eyes fell quickly on a line that read, "...riding in the wagon as she pulled me around the place."

There, in print, in an old document I had discovered the day after the wagon treasure discovery, was a line actually referring to wagon experiences in my childhood.

Life had come full circle; the coaster wagon of years ago had once again taken me for one more memory ride combining the treasures of the childhood with the treasures of the present.