

Carrie Sanborn – Rope Creations

This is Kansas Profile. I'm Ron Wilson, director of the Huck Boyd National Institute for Rural Development at Kansas State University.

Chickasha, Oklahoma. A young rodeo rider is being laid to rest after a tragic accident. Upon his casket is laid a four-foot-long cross, fashioned from his rope and belt buckles by a remarkable craftswoman in rural Kansas. It's today's Kansas Profile.

Carrie Sanborn is the owner and operator of Sanborn's Rope Creations, the company which produced this unique four-foot cross. Carrie and her husband Gary Sanborn live in Cowley County.

Carrie and Gary grew up in the eastern part of the county. "We rode the bus together," Carrie said with a smile. "I couldn't stand him."

Things took a turn for the better when they were reunited after high school in Arkansas City and the two ultimately were wed. Carrie now works as an agriculture and farmstead appraiser for the county. Gary is a supervisor with an oilfield chemical company. He also worked on several ranches and is a team roper. He and a partner go to rodeos and compete in the team calf-roping events.

"We had a lot of ropes around the house," Carrie said. One day she was leafing through the Western Horseman magazine and she saw an ad for a clock with a rope for a border. The design caught her eye, but the price was expensive.

"I think I could make something like that," Carrie said. So she took one of her husband's old ropes and fashioned it into a border for a clock, and then tried other items. She found she could heat and melt the nylon rope together into various designs.

Her grandmother saw one of her creations and wanted one like it, and then others wanted them too.

So, Carrie established a business known as Sanborn's Rope Creations. From used lariat ropes, she creates elegant and rustic decorative items such as baskets of various sizes, coaster sets, salt and pepper holders, card holders, napkin holders, crosses, lamps, custom frame pictures, mirror borders, and more. The items can be made with or without tassels and with or without the honda. (No, not a car. On a rope, the honda refers to the honda knot which creates a loop where the rope passes through.) The point is, these can be individually designed and customized.

"I freehand everything, because each rope and each design is different," Carrie said. "If I don't think it looks right, I won't sell it." One person told her that she had the best quality of work on such products that he had ever seen.

Carrie and Gary Sanborn sell her products at craft fairs, rodeos, and western events. They use the proceeds for their annual trip to the National Finals Rodeo. Her items have been sold around the western U.S. and shipped as far away as China and Australia. Wow.

That's a remarkable achievement for a business based in the Sanborn's home near the rural community of Burden, population 558 people. Now, that's rural.

Carrie enjoys making special designs for customized needs or special events. For example: One bride wanted a western-theme wedding so Carrie made a bridal bouquet from rope and used the hondas in the grooms' boutonnieres. Another time a family brought Carrie their grandfather's rope and asked to have something made out of it. That

creates some pressure. “It makes you want to be extra careful with the rope, but it ends up as something very special for that family,” Carrie said.

For more information, contact Carrie at 620-438-3529 or carriesanborn@hotmail.com.

Chickasha, Oklahoma. Here was a sad case where Carrie’s skills came into play in a way that helped a family through grief. A young rodeo rider was about to get married. Three days before the wedding, he came home for lunch, started the oven, and fell asleep. The house caught fire and the young rider tragically perished in the blaze. In their grief, the family brought his ropes and buckle to Carrie. From those elements, she created a four-foot-long cross to go on his casket. We commend Carrie Sanborn for making a difference by using her creativity in this unique way. It’s the type of creation which can rope us all in.

For the Huck Boyd National Institute for Rural Development, this is Ron Wilson with Kansas Profile.