

# AG youths win tractor restoration contest

■ Allis Chalmers crawls again

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Two Arroyo Grande High School class of 2007 graduates garnered recognition for bringing a 1939 tractor back to life.

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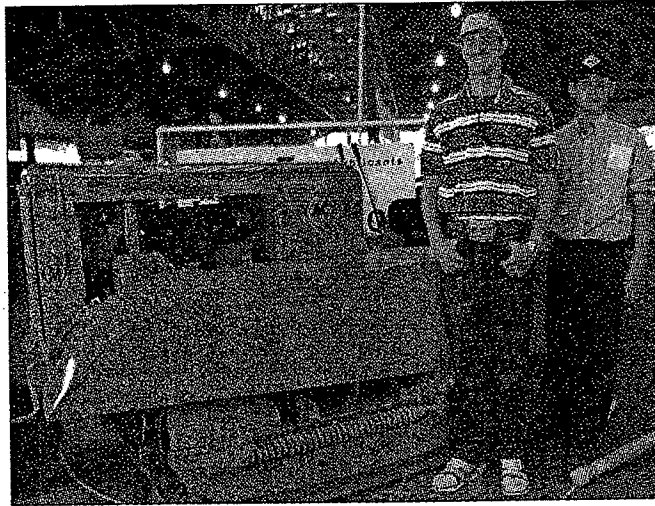
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Eighteen-year-olds Kyle Perez and Adam Sheets recently captured first place at the California Mid-State Fair for restoring a 6,000-plus-pound, rusted Allis Chalmers tractor.

The restored tractor will go on display beside a 1937 Farmall F-12 at South County Historical Society's Barn museum in coming weeks.

The tractor was donated to



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Arroyo Grande High School graduates Adam Sheets, left, and Kyle Perez placed first at the California Mid-State Fair for their work restoring a 6,000-pound, rusted Allis Chalmers tractor donated by John McGrath.

the project by John McGrath and later donated to the South County Historical Society. The society, in turn, sponsors the young men in the restoration project, according to a spokeswoman.

While the history of the tractor itself is unknown, it was specifically configured as an orchard tractor, said Jim Bergman, Arroyo Grande

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## Tractor: Most difficult entry to date for Perez

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assistant city planner.

A test performed in 1937 showed the 310-horsepower, 318-cubic-inch four-cylinder tractor was capable of pulling 94 percent of its roughly 6,400-pound weight, he said.

It's Perez's fourth entry in the fair's tractor restoration contest — and his most difficult.

"This was the hardest one because I've never restored a crawler," Perez said, referring to the tracked propulsion system. "There were some parts that were hard to find."

That required the team to make parts themselves, including a fender made of 18-gauge sheet metal.

His previous three entries with fellow student Paul Driggers — a 1947 Farmall Cub and 1947 Case VA — won the duo

second runner-up in 2006 and third runner-up 2005, respectively.

In 2003 — the first year of the competition in the fair — the pair took the grand prize in tractor restoration with the 1937 Farmall F-12, a bright-red tractor that now sits in The Barn museum.

This year, Perez and Sheets labored 409 hours stripping, cleaning and rebuilding components and painting and rebuilding the entire Allis Chalmers, the spokeswoman said.

The tractor restoration project is sponsored each year by Ken Dewar, president of J.B. Dewar Inc., who encourages high school students to improve and build their mechanical, writing and presentation skills as well as to work as a team, the spokeswoman said.

Bergman and Joe Bradbury, a retired Arroyo Grande High

School automotive mechanics teacher, helped the students by providing them with a working space, tools and encouragement for their restoration efforts.

The most technical part? The steering clutches. Most boring? Cleaning and sandblasting parts. Most exciting? Completely rebuilding the engine itself, Bergman said.

Not to mention "getting it done before the deadline," Perez added.

Perez said next year he will restore a 1955 Oliver tractor for use on his family's property; however, he won't be entering the contest.

Since 2003, the tractor restoration process hasn't been limited to the youths involved.

"Over these four years, it's been a learning process for me," Bergman said. "This is one of those friendships that I cherish."