



BASE OF HUGE TWINE BALL LOOKS A BIT SHAGGY  
moved to Darwin park Tuesday

## Huge twine ball finds new home in Darwin

The late Francis Johnson's famous twine ball--the largest in the world according to the Guinness Book of Records, has found a new home.

Equipment from Johnson Bros. of Litchfield gently hoisted the eleven foot tall, 8.8 ton ball of twine from its longtime perch on the Johnson place east of Darwin Tuesday morning.

Gene Kadelbach, operating the fork lift, eased the 40 foot in circumference ball onto a waiting flatbed truck and it was hauled off on a short jaunt down highway 12 to the watertower park in Darwin which will be its new home.

There it rests upon a newly-constructed cement slab and soon it will be housed in a metal enclosure with glass facing, enabling visitors to get a good look at it.

The big twine ball, which was twenty-nine years in the making in attaining its present size, attracted considerable media attention to Darwin Tuesday morning.

Several metro area TV stations were there as were reporters and photographers from the St. Paul Pioneer Press, the St. Cloud Times and the Willmar Tribune.

Francis Johnson passed away in 1989 and it was his wish that the twine ball, along with some 80,000 artifacts he collected on his place, be left to a responsible historical group.

Most of Johnson's collection will be assigned eventually to the Meeker County Historical Society under a trust fund directed by one of Francis Johnson's nephews, Harlan Johnson.

However, since the twine ball has always had such a strong identity with Darwin, community leaders in-

cluding Mayor Neil Johnson, Community Club activists Thea Underhill and others didn't want the historic ball to leave the community.

Trust administrator Harlan Johnson also agreed that the proper place for the big twine ball was in the Darwin area. Efforts were spearheaded by the Darwin Community Club to secure a nice location for the ball in the watertower park where the school bell and steeple from the old Darwin school will be preserved.

Harlan Johnson notes that his late uncle's amazing array of collectibles will likely also be put at the disposal of the Meeker County Historical Society.

The items which can be adapted readily for display at the Historical Society Museum will be brought in. Many other artifacts, however, will likely be put up for sale at an auction. Included in the trust will be the Francis Johnson home and storage buildings, with proceeds eventually to be directed to the Historical Society.

It was back in March of 1950, that Francis Johnson began constructing the huge ball as the thought struck him as he was idly wrapping a small piece of bale twine around two fingers.

The big ball grew and grew until 1979 when a steel structure was erected over it and visitors were welcome to view it.

In 1958 the big twine ball earned Francis Johnson a trip to New York City where he and the twine ball appeared on the then very popular TV show, "I've Got A Secret."

Francis A. Johnson was born in April of 1904 on the Johnson farm place west of Kingston. He was a son of the late U.S. Senator Magnus Johnson.

## Darwin Twine Ball Museum

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