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I like twine.

by Margaret Minnick

The twine ball in Darwin, Minnesota, is the world's largest (made by one man), as all the signs at the twine ball compound say. It used to be the biggest in the world, until a bunch of upstarts down in Kansas started making one together - out of PLASTIC twine, no less! Clearly the Darwin twine ball is the real winner, constructed with real twine, and by one man. This is also the same biggest ball of twine in Minnesota about which [Weird Al Yankovic](#) wrote the song, [The Biggest Ball of Twine in Minnesota](#).

The Darwin twine ball was made by the late Francis A. Johnson, son of a Minnesota senator. As the story goes, one day he wrapped some twine around two fingers. Then he decided to just keep on going. Twenty-nine years later, the ball was 40 feet in circumference (and 11 feet high).

We visited the twine ball in the early evening of a pleasant October day. The sun was nearing the horizon, but the air was still warm. The twine ball is housed in a glass-enclosed pagoda in a pleasant little park, one block from US Highway 12. I was frankly astounded by the enormity of the ball. The ball had a bit of a sag to it, and was mounted upon a wooden frame.

Once you've seen the twine ball, there's not a lot more to do but just sit



Approaching the twine ball.



The twine, up close.



Francis and his twine ball.



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back on the park bench nearby and contemplate the ball. A young girl, who said she was "kind of in charge" of the twine ball, approached on her bike. She told our travelling companion that there were newspaper clippings about when the twine ball was moved downtown, back in 1991, hanging in the window of a boarded-up building about half a block away. We went to look at the newspaper clippings, which told the story of a dying town making an effort to encourage tourism. There were pictures of a crane moving the twine ball, and people watching, and laughing good-naturedly.

Behind the twine ball is a house where you can purchase twine ball souvenirs. A kind elderly man showed us into his home and waited patiently as we picked out twine ball magnets, mugs, and mini, "starter" twine balls. On the way back to the park, we noticed that the street signs have pictures of the twine ball on them.

All in all, I have to say that the people of Darwin, Minnesota have done an excellent job in their preservation of the twine ball and the revitalization of their town. I recommend a stop at the twine ball for anyone in the area, and anyone with a place in their heart for twine.

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The Twine Ball Compound.



Enjoying our time with the twine.

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