



Roy Visser converted this junked-out 1984 commercial van into a classic 1940's-style "Woodie".

Van Converted To Old-Style Woodie

A junked-out 1984 commercial van provided the chassis Roy Visser needed to create a 1940's-style "Woodie". The van's unibody construction made it easy to strip down and rebuild with a roll bar framework and real wood exterior. The classic car is known for its look, but was discontinued in its earlier wooden version due to safety concerns.

"The idea was to maintain the strength of a modern car body with the looks of a Woodie," says Visser. "It's like a steel roll cage with wood tacked on."

He started by removing the engine and transmission and sawing off everything above the corrugated steel floor. He then used 1 1/2-in. angle iron and some 1 1/2-in., 1/8-in. wall tubing for the new frame.

The center rollbar is 2 by 3-in. rectangular tubing. A Y-shaped truss bar extends from the front crossmember over the engine to the firewall roll bar and back to the middle roll-

bar. This truss bar provides triangulation for front frame horn strength. The rollbar frames are all bolted to the chassis frame. The front rollbar also serves as a frame for the firewall and front windshield.

"The truss ties the rollbars into the body to handle the stress of the road," says Visser. "In 7 years of driving, I've never had a cracked weld or lost a nut off a bolt."

The original van had the motor to one side to leave room for the driver's legs. As he rebuilt the van into a Woodie, Visser shortened the chassis by about a foot and moved the motor back about 8 in. and centered it. This required the driveshaft to be shortened by about 20 in. The steering shaft was cut in half and then stretched and angled with an after market tractor U-joint to bring it back to the driver's new location.

"The steering is smooth, and I can go 60 mph without adjusting the steering wheel,"



Van's unibody construction made it easy to strip down and then rebuild with a rollbar framework and real wood exterior.

says Visser.

The front bumper, which was exposed after repositioning the motor, is stock from the 1984 van. So is the steering (except for the shaft), brakes and suspension.

Though Visser did all his own welding, the hood, fenders and rocker panels were fabricated by a Wabash, Ind. metal shop, Schleeing Bros. Metal Work. "They have a ribbing machine to put ribs in the fenders," he says.

Visser welded custom-bent channel for the grill, splitting it so the upper half with the lights goes up with the hood. The lower half is attached to the chassis.

Other parts, such as home sawn burr oak to frame the plywood panels' exterior and the new dash, were bartered for from a friend. Another friend sold him five wheels originally from a Jeep for \$100. Rebuilding the engine at a cost of \$3,500 was the most



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expensive part of the \$6,000 total.

Visser is especially proud of the black paint job on the exposed metal, though it only cost about \$75.

"I used about a cup and a half of silver/aluminum mixed into a gallon of black RustOleum," he says. "The aluminum breaks the sheen of the black surface. With glossy black, normally minor imperfections such as drips and small dents stick out like a sore thumb. The aluminum paint trick allows a black coat with near invisible imperfections."

Crop Art Planted In Highway Cloverleaf

Corn mazes and family pictures in the pumpkin patch are a fun way to promote agriculture all across U.S. farm country. In Coshocton County, Ohio, a group of energetic ag promoters went beyond those familiar ideas in 2011 with a project they called "Ag as Art".

"We wanted to do something unique and special to celebrate agriculture in our town's bicentennial year," says Deb Bigelow of the Coshocton Soil and Water Conservation District, one of the project's organizers. Using two acres of land inside two cloverleafs at the junction of State Road 16 and Highway 541 in Coshocton, the group planted alternating strips of soybeans, corn and grass in a concentric circle. From the air, the designs produce a capital C inside the large cloverleaf and a small c inside the smaller tract across the road.

Ann Cornell, who heads up the Pomerene Center for the Arts in Coshocton, pulled a committee together to get the project rolling.

"The state turned us down, mainly for safety reasons," Bigelow says. "They were concerned about liability, because nothing like this had ever been done before."

Cornell, however, didn't give up on the idea. She contacted the state representative and state senator for Coshocton, who helped get the plan approved.

"We had the local co-op, a fertilizer dealer, a seed company, a grain company, and the local farm credit office contribute to the project," Bigelow says. Two local farm families, Gerald and Judy Finley and the Porteus brothers, provided the machinery and

farm labor.

"Community support for the project was fantastic," Bigelow says. "Pictures and stories have appeared in the local paper and state farm publications. We harvested the crops in October and proceeds will be held to hopefully help fund another project in 2012."

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To celebrate agriculture in their town's bicentennial year, a group of ag promoters from Coshocton, Ohio planted letter "C" crop art in 2 highway cloverleafs.

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