

Stretched IH 400 Is A Real Show Stopper

As he grew up on a Missouri crop farm in the 1960's, Ron Strange dreamed of one day reconfiguring an old tractor with a V-8 automobile engine. Almost 30 years later, Ron bought a rusted out heap of metal that at one time was a chassis to a Farmall 400. Over the next nine months Ron and his brother Art dismantled, cleaned, fabricated and put together a specialty tractor they named "Big Red". The name was chosen because, at 6,000 lbs., Red was really a stretched out and vastly reconfigured tractor from the original.

"We first thought the 351 Cleveland V-8 from a 1972 Mustang would replace the tractor motor and that we'd use the original tractor transmission," Ron says. "That all changed when we decided to use the automatic transmission from another car project instead. We stretched the frame 4 ft. and mounted it behind the motor and in front of the gas tank." The rebuilt 400 was beginning to look more like a dragster than a tractor, and they weren't finished with modifications.

Ron's wife suggested that the 4-ft. platform above the automatic transmission would make a nice place for mounting a Farmall pedal tractor. Another creative touch was two large pedals underneath the small tractor, and two custom "legs" to move the pedals. Ron and Art built the legs from square steel tubing, and Linda contributed custom made denim pants and an old pair of cowboy boots. The oversize 400 really turned heads in parades, especially when Ron activated



Stretched-out Farmall 400 is powered by a V-8 engine and an automatic car transmission, with a Farmall pedal tractor above it. A pair of custom "legs" operated by a 12-volt motor move 2 large pedals underneath the tractor.

the 12-volt motor that moved the pedals and gave viewers the idea that Big Red was just an overgrown pedal tractor.

Because of health issues Ron is unable to drive his fancy creation now, so his wife

Linda is the main pilot. "I gave her a few lessons in handling that special transmission and how to load and unload it from the trailer, and she does a great job," says Ron. "I'm just happy to see Big Red back on the show

and parade circuit, turning heads and making people proud of a 60-year-old Farmall."

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Ron and Linda Strange, 32409 E. Colburn Road, Oak Grove, Mo. 64075 (ph 816 500-1445).

"Fishing Boat" Pontoon Built From Pickup Ladder Rack

"Now that I'm retired, if I get silly and want to try building something I go ahead and do it," says Robert John, Freeburg, Ill., who built a "fishing boat" pontoon from a pickup ladder rack.

The pontoon measures 12 ft. long by 7 ft. wide and floats on six 55-gal. plastic barrels. The ladder rack forms the frame of the pontoon, which supports a wolmanized plywood floor covered by carpet. There's an 8-ft. long, hinged storage box on both sides, and a pair of swivel-type boat seats in the middle. An umbrella can be installed above each seat.

The pontoon has two 12-volt trolling motors; one on front to steer, and one on back that's fixed in a straight position to provide extra speed. Both motors are operated by big marine batteries housed under the seats. The batteries also operate a pair of floor-mounted headlights. A control console at one end of the pontoon contains a toggle switch to go forward or reverse, and has used electrical wall outlets on one side to operate the motors.

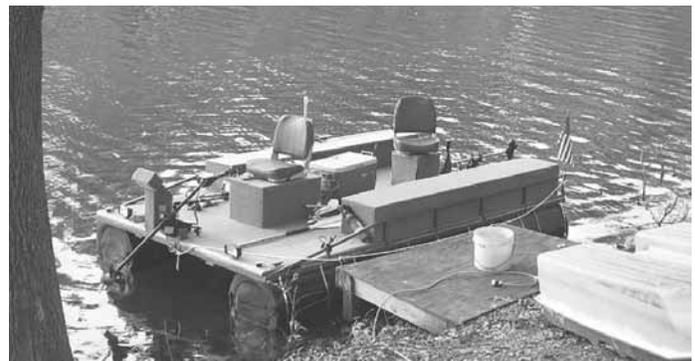
"I built it a year ago and use it as a fishing boat. It works great and is very stable," says John. "The ladder rack is made from 1 1/2-in. box tubing so it makes a good, solid frame for the pontoon. I didn't add side railings because

they would have been in the way for fishing, and I didn't want to build a party barge. I keep my fishing rods and gear inside the storage boxes. The small size of the pontoon makes it easy to maneuver.

"It looks quite different. The first day I was on the water, facing one way with the umbrella up, when I heard a voice calling me. I looked over my shoulder and saw a little old lady on the other side of the lake yelling for me to come on over, so I did. Right away she pulled out a camera and started taking pictures. The pontoon also has an ooga horn, which people get a kick out of."

John already had the ladder rack, which he got from his nephew but had never used. The rack was 12 ft. long but too narrow for the pontoon so he brought it into his shop, cut it into 2 pieces, and welded in new material to make it 7 ft. wide. As he was building the pontoon he set the frame up on top of milk crates to keep it off the floor. "I had to flip the frame over 3 or 4 times while working on it," he says.

The barrels create a lot of drag because they don't have pointed ends like on an aluminum pontoon. "I wanted to use aluminum barrels but couldn't find any, and I couldn't figure out how to add a nose cone to a plastic barrel,"



A pickup ladder rack forms the frame of this "fishing boat" pontoon built by Robert John. It floats on six 55-gal. plastic barrels and has two 12-volt trolling motors.

says John. "I wanted to use 4 barrels on each side, with solid barrels going from one end to the other, but because of bracing added to the frame there wasn't room."

The barrels are strapped to the frame with galvanized pipe strap hangers. "I wanted to use stainless steel hangers but couldn't find any," says John.

The 2 batteries are controlled by a fusebox block he bought at an auto parts store. "Everything is fused the way it's supposed to be. I installed an amp meter on the control console and can check each battery's voltage by pushing a button," notes John.



John widened the ladder rack to build the main frame.

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Robert John, 6500 White Oaks Club Rd., Freeburg, Ill. 62243 (ph 618 539-3269; rjohn@att.net).

"Sapmobile" Draws Big Crowds

"My son and I rebuilt a 1931 4-door Model A slant window Ford into a track vehicle to haul sap from our maple woods," says Richard Breton of Vassalboro, Maine. "We started with a beat up Model A chassis, kept the original engine and drive train, then added a second set of wheels with mud rims to the back of the frame." Those wheels were from the front end of a scrapped out Model A that the Bretons acquired from a Maine collector.

The bright red paint and custom lettering

were done by a local automotive shop. "As far as I know this is a one-of-a-kind vehicle," says Richard. "We've taken it to a few local boiling events and it's been a real center of attention. I plan on building a trailer for it this year to haul two 115 gallon tanks and 60 sap pails."

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Richard Breton, 438 Priest Hill Rd., Vassalboro, Maine 04989 (ph 207 923-3341).



Richard Breton and his son rebuilt a 1931 4-door Model A Ford into this track vehicle. They use it to haul sap from their maple trees.