



It took Schmerse 15 years to collect enough steel wheels to complete his tree.

**BUILT FROM 380 WAGON, THRESHING WHEELS**

## Steel Wheel Tree Stands 46 Ft. Tall

Durand, Ill., farmer Jim Schmerse decided 15 years ago to construct a giant tree out of steel wheels after seeing a steel wheel "tree" at a motel in Wisconsin.

He started collecting wheels anywhere he could find them and this summer decided he finally had enough. It took three weeks to weld the 380 wheels together into a towering 46 ft. tree-shaped sculpture.

To make sure the tree would stand up to the elements, Schmerse first poured a 4 1/2-ft. thick concrete footing to anchor the tree trunk in. The trunk is made from 8-in. dia. well casing sunk in the center of the footing. Four steel plates extend out on top of the concrete from the trunk in a cross shape to serve as bases for the 30 ft. wide sides of the tree. Schmerse used 15 different sizes of wheels

- mostly wagon and threshing machine wheels - starting with the bigger, heavier threshing machine wheels on the bottom two rows and working up to smaller ones on top.

Schmerse bought a 40-ft. aerial lift crane at an auction to lift the wheels into place for welding.

The hardest part of the project was finding enough steel wheels. He paid as much as \$12.50 for some of them.

The tree is lit by two floodlights at night and the glow makes the rusted old wheels appear bronze, he says. He plans to string lights on the tree for Christmas.

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Sandhoff spent 600 hours last winter designing and building his "Lazy Cycle", which is fitted with a motorcycle engine as well as radio, TV and tape deck.

**RECLINER POWERED  
BY HONDA HELIX ENGINE**

## Powered "Easy Chair" Does 45 Mph On The Road

We could hardly believe our eyes the first time we saw Roger Sandhoff tooling down the street in his incredible powered "Lazy Boy"-type recliner.

Sandhoff, owner of Air-Lake Machine & Welding in Lakeville, Minn., spent about 600 hours last winter designing and constructing his "Lazy Cycle" out of custom-fabricated parts. It has motorcycle handlebars and controls.

"My friend Bob and I were sitting around one day in recliners and he says, 'If we could only put handle bars on these things,'" says Sandhoff, a motorcycle enthusiast. "So that's what I did. The goal was to build something unique that's also completely street legal."

The recliner is powered by a 24 hp water-cooled engine and automatic transmission out of a wrecked late model Honda Helix motor scooter. The engine mounts in the back of the rolling chair, which measures 49 in. wide by 61 in. long and 60 in. high.

The chair is built around a steel framework which contains all drivetrain components. The seat of the recliner lifts up so gas, oil and coolant can be easily checked, and the entire chair detaches from the frame with just four bolts for easy access to the chassis.

The 620-lb. machine is based on a reverse tricycle design, with two 8-in. front wheels controlled by the handlebars, and a 10-in. rear drive tire off the Helix. It has only a 40-in. wheelbase, which presented a few problems.

"The steering geometry was the hardest part of the project because there aren't many reverse trikes out there," Sandhoff says. "Among other things, I added a trailing link to the rear end for stability."

The recliner itself was built from scratch from ideas Sandhoff got looking at real recliners. It's covered in red snowmobile grade

vinyl that's designed to last at least 300 hours before it'll fade.

It's equipped with a radio and tape deck with speakers mounted on the upper arms, a TV, lamp and telephone on the driver's left side and a magazine rack on the bottom of the driver's right side. A stuffed dog below the arm rest can be snapped off to be dry cleaned. A multi-colored umbrella mounted on back of the chair protects the driver and vinyl from sun and rain.

Building and decking out the recliner was a piece of cake compared with getting the chair licensed.

"I chose the tricycle configuration so I could license it as a motorcycle," Sandhoff says. "But licensing it nearly took an Act of God."

The process started in February and wasn't complete until late May when the state finally granted him a license. Stumbling blocks were: yellow-tinted headlights, the TV could only be mounted behind the driver's backrest according to a state law, the electric lamp cannot be lit while the vehicle is in operation.

How does it perform?  
"It gets 45 mpg and will do 45 mph quite nicely on a smooth road; 35 mph on other surfaces," Sandhoff says. "I've had it up to 55 mph, but that's a little scary."

Crowds at summer events and parades love the recliner, Sandhoff says. So do a couple of local cops who've stopped him just for a look, he adds.

Out-of-pocket expense was about \$3,000, including \$1,400 for the upholstery work.

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