

Converted Semi Tractor Fitted With 21-Ft. Travel Trailer

As a professional truck driver, Norbert Kluck had always wanted to drive a Peterbilt semi tractor. The Mosinee, Wis., man finally got his wish when he bought a used Peterbilt and combined it with a used travel trailer to create a one-of-a-kind, self-propelled 33-ft. motorhome.

"It sleeps six and has a bathroom, sink, kitchen, and dining room - everything an average family needs to feel at home on the road. Best of all, I spent only about \$12,000 to build it," says Kluck.

The used 1980 Peterbilt 359 tandem axle semi tractor is equipped with a Cummins 400 hp diesel engine. He removed the fifth wheel hitch and the sleeper from the semi tractor cab, leaving a hole on back of the cab, then mounted the 1972 24-ft. Coachman travel trailer backward on the truck frame so the back end of the trailer sets against the cab. The trailer bolts to the semi tractor frame at 10 different places. He cut a hole in the trailer so he can walk into it from the cab.

The semi tractor was originally equipped with tandem axles on back, with a driveshaft extending from the transmission back to a "power divider" on the tandem axle. To improve fuel efficiency, he removed the forward

rear axle and then moved the rear axle to the forward position. Then he hooked the driveshaft back up. "I don't need tandem axles any more, because the travel trailer is relatively light so the semi tractor isn't carrying as much weight as it was designed to."

The travel trailer is equipped with an electric hot water heater and a propane furnace. The propane tank is located in an outside compartment below the cab. The semi tractor was originally equipped with two fuel tanks, but Kluck converted one to store gray water.

"It runs like a top and I enjoyed putting it together," says Kluck. "I've driven it all over the U.S., and wherever I go people always tell me how much they like it. It has unbelievable power and pulls like you wouldn't believe. I added a hitch on back of the trailer so I can pull a boat or van behind it. One time I was out West pulling a big boat behind the trailer and had to climb a big mountain. I was going up a steep grade and even though I was in high gear, when I hit the accelerator pedal I actually started to gain speed. Not many motorhomes can do that. It gets 8 to 10 mpg. I cut 3 ft. off the trailer hitch so the travel trailer is now only 21 ft. long.



"I got the tractor from my brother-in-law. It had been sitting in the weeds for 20 years and the engine was froze up, so I replaced it with a 4-cyl., 50 hp engine from a Gleaner combine," says Conaway.

Reversed Tractor Works Great For Loader Work

When 81-year-old Lee Conaway of Topeka, Kansas, needed a tractor to move round bales, he decided to reverse a 1951 Allis Chalmers WD tractor and install a Koyker loader on it facing backward. He mounted bale spears at both ends of the rig.

The steering, clutch, and brake controls on the tractor were all reversed. The gas tank was repositioned and a new seat was installed in its place. He flipped the tractor's ring gear assembly over to provide four forward gears in reverse. A hydraulic pump mounted on the engine crankshaft provides full-time hydraulics for the loader, as well as power steering.

He removed the tractor's rear wheels and replaced them with the 16 by 38 wheels off a 1955 Gleaner E combine. He also removed the tractor's narrow front wheels and replaced them with the wide front axle from another Allis Chalmers WD tractor.

The tractor's steering column and orbit steering system were salvaged from a Deere 45 combine. This operates a priority valve to ensure continuous power steering.

He removed the loader bucket and replaced it with a pair of bale spears. He used part of an old Allis Chalmers small round baler to make a bale guard that mounts on the loader arms.

A hinged steel frame supports the bale spears on back and is made from 2-in. steel tubing. The spears slip into sockets welded to the frame and are held on by two pins. A pair of hydraulic cylinders are used to raise and lower the frame that supports the spears.

"It has more traction for loader work and it's easy to maneuver because the weight is over the drive wheels," says Conaway. "The big rear tires don't sink into soft ground like small front tires do when using a front-end loader. I sit up close to the loader so I can see the bucket better.

"I got the tractor from my brother-in-law. It had been sitting in the weeds for 20 years and the engine was froze up, so I replaced it with the 4-cyl., 50 hp engine from the Gleaner combine. This engine is the same one used on Allis Chalmers D17 tractors so it fit right in. I installed a 12-volt electric starter as well as a 12-volt electric fuel pump."

Conaway says he didn't spend a lot of money on the project. "I paid \$150 for the Koyker loader. Friends gave me many of the other parts. My grandson Ryan helped me build it."

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It cost Norbert Kluck about \$12,000 to build this 33-ft. motorhome. "The title says it's a 1995 reconditioned motorhome," he says. "It runs like a top and I enjoyed putting it together," says Kluck.

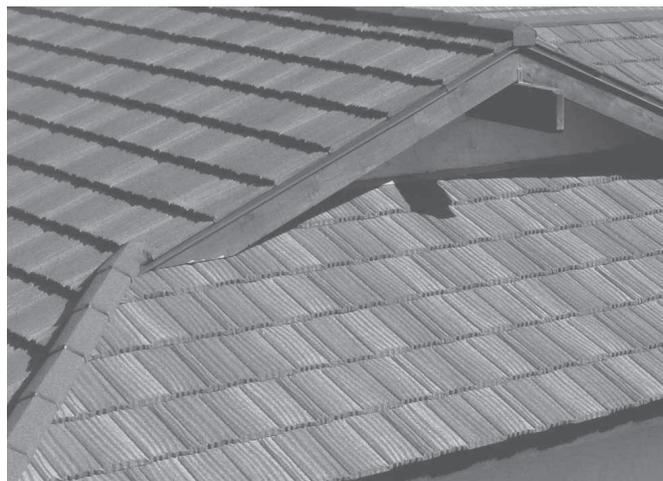
"It doesn't have all the amenities of a new self-propelled diesel motorhome but they sell for about \$250,000. I chose the 1980 Peterbilt 359 model because I like the way the long hood sticks out in front."

He says the motorhome is economical to license and insure, since it qualifies as a motorhome. License plates cost just \$88 per year. "The state told me that as long as the driver has access to the passengers inside the travel trailer, my rig can be licensed as a self-propelled motorhome and not as a semi tractor

or travel trailer. The title says it's a 1995 reconditioned motorhome," says Kluck.

The semi tractor has air bag suspension on the rear axle, but not on the front steering axle. "The front end rides a little rough, like a school bus, but I plan to install air bags on the front steering axle which should improve the ride," notes Kluck.

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"Most people don't realize it's steel when they first see it," says Pete Croft about his company's steel roofing that comes in 48 to 52-in. long sections.

Steel Roofing Looks Like Shakes, Shingles Or Tile

The durability of steel with the appearance of traditional shakes, shingles and roofing tiles is what you get with new steel roofing products. The latest new products have a completely different look from traditional steel roofs.

"Most people don't realize it's steel when they first see it," says Pete Croft, Metro Roof Products. Headquartered in California, the company's products originated in New Zealand and are sold nationwide. Last year, the company sold a lot of their product in Florida after the hurricanes.

"There is no better endorsement of a roof than seeing one survive high winds while all around it, roofs have been blown off," says Croft. "And unlike concrete tiles, ours don't shatter when hit by flying debris, only to become flying debris themselves."

The steel roofing comes in sections from 48 to 52 in. long and the width of an average tile, shake or shingle. All install like traditional composition asphalt shingles. Metro uses stone chip coatings embedded in an ultraviolet resistant, acrylic polymer that binds to the steel for longer life. The steel substrate

is protected from rust and corrosion by metallic and polymer coatings.

Coated steel roofing is nothing new, notes Croft. "It has been around for more than 50 years and is in use throughout the world," he says.

As early as World War II, corrugated iron hangars would be covered with tar-like material to protect them from the weather. Today's coverings are more high tech, more effective and more attractive.

The biggest mark against steel roofing, at least in areas not prone to hurricanes or brush fires (steel roofing is also fire resistant), is the price. Steel roofing typically costs two to three times the price of installed asphalt shingles. Croft hopes that as the housing market slows, more people will start looking at long-term improvements in their homes, such as roofing with a 50-year warranty.

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