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Self-Propelled Wood Splitter Serves A Great Cause

You've never seen anything like this self-propelled log splitter built by Ed Thornburgh of Marcellus, Michigan, that's built on the frame and running gear of a 1978 Chevrolet Blazer.

The machine is equipped with a hydraulic-operated splitter on front and a 10-ft. long conveyor on one side (off an old New Idea corn picker) that drops wood into a wagon box. The operator sits in the comfort of a homemade wooden cab. There's even an electric horn on front that's off the same Blazer.

Thornburgh belongs to a volunteer wood cutting group that uses the machine to help families in rural southwest Michigan with home heating needs. All the group's members belong to Wakelee United Methodist Church and call themselves the "Wakelee Woodcutters". The machine is called the "Edovator" after its inventor.

The Blazer originally belonged to Steve Lehman, another church member, and was in bad shape. "The body was rusted out and

one of the windows was broken. My wife told me she didn't want the car to be seen in our neighborhood any more. When I mentioned that to Ed, he got the idea to convert the Blazer into a self-propelled log splitter," says Lehman.

Thornburgh stripped the car to the frame, keeping the engine, 3-speed transmission, steering wheel, dash and controls, and running gear. The splitter is a commercial model originally mounted on wheels. Thornburgh removed the wheels and axle and bolted the rest of the unit, as well as the elevator, to a home-built steel frame that's welded to the front part of the Blazer's frame.

Both the splitter and elevator are operated by a gas engine-driven hydraulic pump. The pump lacks the power to operate both the splitter and the elevator at the same time so Thornburgh "double valved" the pump, allowing him to operate the splitter and elevator independently. One of the valves is wired



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to a foot-operated pedal, which is used to operate the elevator. "To split wood, the operator extends the cylinder to split the log, and then as the cylinder is returning he depresses the pedal to activate the elevator and make room for the next log," says Thornburgh. "The elevator slats are 16 inches apart, which is about the same length as the wood we split."

The box was made by cutting down a gravity flow wagon, keeping just the straight-sided top part, and mounting a homemade wood floor in it. The box mounts on a subframe that's also made from wood. "When I got the Blazer there was only one mounting bracket still holding the body on, so the subframe was needed to keep everything together," says Thornburgh.

He kept the top part of the Blazer's hood but cut away one side to make room for the elevator. The front grill is the side panel shield off the corn picker. There are two compart-

ments on the driver's side for carrying saws and oil.

The wooden cab has glass windows with windshield wipers on front and doesn't have a heater but uses heat off the engine during the winter. A blower fan is used to keep cool during the summer.

"We drive the machine into the woods where we cut and split the wood, and then we bring it back to my place and unload the wood from the wagon by hand and stockpile it," says Thornburgh. "Last year we served 51 pickup loads of wood to 17 different families. It's often difficult for men to find a men's ministry in a church, especially in a rural area. That's why our wood cutting project has been a true blessing."

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Wood panel that pushes wood chunks off back of trailer is powered by a winch and cables that wrap around pipe at back of wagon.

Rear-Unload Trailer Makes Firewood Handling Easy

An old 6 by 12-ft. wood trailer that doesn't look like much is now a nifty rear-unloading wood-hauler, thanks to the work of Arnold Wurm, Kingsley, Mich.

A wood panel pushes wood chunks off the back of the trailer, which has 3-ft. sides. The panel bolts to a pair of L-shaped metal brackets that connect to 3/8-in. dia. steel cables. The cables wrap around a 2-in. dia. pipe at the back of the wagon. The operator can start or stop the pull-back panel at any time by flipping a switch on an electric motor, which belt-drive the winches.

"I take the trailer to the woodlot and cut up wood into 18 to 24-in. lengths. Once I'm back home I stand at the back of the trailer and load the wood onto a nearby pile. The panel comes back at only about 2 ft. per

minute, but that's fast enough to keep two people busy piling wood," says Wurm.

"When the panel reaches the back end of the trailer, I climb into the trailer and pull the panel to the front of the trailer, which is then ready to be loaded with wood again. The trailer holds about 2 3/4 face cords of wood. Before I modified the trailer I had to keep climbing up into the trailer.

"It works better than a dump box, because I can slowly bring wood back instead of having to dump it all out at one time. If the wood's coming back too fast, I can shut the winch off," notes Wurm.

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Ken Kublo buys, fixes and resells old Army trucks. Prices start at \$4,000 for a soft cover cab.

Overhauled Army Trucks Great For The Farm

The Army calls them "deuce and a half" trucks. Farm customers call them work horses. With less than 50,000 miles, there's plenty of life left in them after the Army retires them, says Ken Kublo who buys, fixes and sells old Army trucks.

Built in the 1970's and well maintained by the military, the older technology in the 6-cylinder diesel engine makes it easier for mechanics to work on them.

The son of a mechanic, Kublo started buying and fixing Army trucks 15 years ago. The Brackney, Penn., native travels as far as Virginia to inspect trucks going up for sale at government auctions.

"I buy from Southern states so there's less rust," he says. "Each truck is gone through extensively to be in good shape for the customer. I don't want to ruin my reputation." Besides trucks, Kublo sells other used government and commercial equipment, including forks, generators and water pumps.

His main customers for the 10-wheel Army

trucks are people in farming, logging and quarry work. Some turn the beds into dump trucks. Others adapt them for crop sprayers or to haul grain. A few replace the back double axle with a single axle for daily use.

Trucks start at \$4,000 for a soft cover cab. Hardtop cabs, winches and other options add to the price. The all-wheel-drive truck's rear axle is rated at 28,000 lbs. and the front axle is rated at 12,000 lbs. The trucks can go up to 60 mph and get about 10 mpg.

"Demand over the years stays pretty steady," Kublo says, adding that he has sold to customers all over the U.S.

"I try to buy cheap and sell cheap," he says. Kublo has about 40 trucks and extra engines for spare parts - enough to make a few trucks from scratch.

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