

## Percy “Crank” Out Big Boy Toys

Percy Anderson, 90, builds toys similar to the way he did when he was 9 - he can play with them while standing up. The Park Rapids, Minn., man attaches toys to rods and cranks with a universal joint he creates from several small parts. The joints he makes on his lathe are more refined than his childhood creations, but they have the same results. They allow the wheels to turn in every direction.

Anderson and his brothers attached rods and cranks to their toys when they grew up in southern Minnesota - maneuvering their toys over gravel and dirt in the summer and snow banks in the winter.

“The only problem was that cranks were hard on gloves, which our mother made,” Anderson recalls. With eight sons and five daughters she was plenty busy.

As an adult, the retired snowplow operator built his own toys using scraps, such as

chain off farm machinery for the dozer tracks and tin scraps he shaped on his hydraulic press.

His crank toy fleet includes a tractor, bulldozer and a couple of carts. One grandson calls the carts “tri-barrows.”

“I call them big boy toys,” Anderson laughs.

His yard and shop are full of his creations: a bird feeder he cranks up to keep squirrels out, an electric can smasher, and a half-scale Farmall M working tractor and plow, which he takes to area parades.

His next project is to convert an electric motorcycle into a go-cart.

“I just like to do this kind of stuff,” Anderson says.

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“I call them big boy toys,” says Percy Anderson, who attaches toys to rods with universal joints he creates from small parts. The joints allow the user to crank the wheels in every direction.



Tool collectors often show up at Larry McPhail’s place to see his ax collection.



He has a number of rare and high-end axes in his collection and continues to watch for more.

## Washington Collector Owns 1,000 Axes

Larry McPhail started out collecting old logging tools but somewhere along the line he developed a reputation as an “ax expert.” He says his 1,000-piece ax collection is not as big as other huge collections in the Northwest. But because of a book he recently published and an appearance on the History channel, people call him all the time with ax-related questions.

“My interest mostly came from my grandfather’s tools. He gave me a few, and I liked them so well that I started watching for other tools at sales in the mid-80’s,” the Blaine, Washington, collector explains. “Nobody was collecting them then so you could buy a nice ax for \$5.”

“There were hundreds of ax manufacturers from the Civil War to 1950,” he says. Now there are only one or two U.S. ax makers left.

As a member of a tool club, McPhail became good friends with Allan Klenman of Victoria, B.C., Canada, who had been collecting since the 1950’s and had 2,000 axes. Klenman wrote a history of ax-making companies.

In 2003, McPhail purchased Klenman’s 5-ton, 2,000-ax collection. He didn’t have room to display them all so he sold the duplicates and less valuable axes on eBay.

“I sold axes for two years straight,” McPhail says, averaging between \$80 and \$100 from buyers all over the world. One, a G. White double bit falling ax, sold for \$1,100. It had never been used, had a 14 1/2-in. long bite, and was made circa 1920.

McPhail puts a light coating of motor oil on the steel ax heads. About 10 to 20 percent of his axes have their original handles, usually made of hickory or ash.

Tool collectors often visit to see his axes. He realized there was a lot of interest in the history of ax manufacturing. Klenman gave him the rights to his book and an additional 15 years of research to publish. “Ax Makers of North America: Antique Old Logging” was published in 2006. It’s available on eBay and from McPhail (\$29.95 including postage).

The stories about ax makers give more meaning to his collection, McPhail says. He recalls a woman who purchased a

Rixford ax for her 100-year-old grandmother. Her father had started the Rixford Ax Company in Maine.

McPhail believes one ax in his collection is more than 200 years old. It was made in New York State. He purchased it from an elderly widow.

“After I bought it, I could see how it was made in four pieces by a blacksmith,” he says. Later a relative of the neighbor, who had researched the family’s history, verified that the family had lived around New York state 200 years ago and later traveled west by covered wagon.

Another unique ax is a 6-lb., double-sniping ax. It was used to bevel the front edge of logs to skid easier when they were pulled out with horses and oxen.

McPhail also found an undercutter ax in Klenman’s collection. It’s one of 50 prototypes made by the Walters Ax Company for Vancouver area loggers. It was specifically designed to knock out the notch left by the first Stihl chainsaws imported to the area in 1938.

“It was a short production ax, made from 1938 to 1955,” McPhail says. “I feel really lucky to have one of the original 50.”

As a collector he continues to watch for rare and high-end axes - White, Winchester, Black Raven, and Marble, for example.

To others interested in pricing their axes, he suggests using eBay as a good measuring stick, though prices are down right now. There are also a couple of price guides available.

It’s hard to explain the attraction, McPhail notes, but there is something enduring and solid about axes. He recently measured an ax he has been using to split firewood since 1974. After years of work and sharpening, it has only lost 1/16 in. of steel.

McPhail is willing to answer questions, talk about his book, provide tours and visit with other collectors.

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## Powered Snowboard Great Fun To Ride!

You don’t have to be a snowboarder to enjoy the fun of cruising across snow-covered terrain with this new “powered snowboard”. It steers like a snowboard but is powered by a motorized track.

“It’s a lot of fun to ride and a real attention getter. It’s good exercise, too,” says Mattracks, Inc. The company is well known for its rubber track conversions of pickups and other vehicles.

The Mattracks Powerboard is 65 in. long, weighs 150 lbs., and rides on a flexible rubber track that has 1 3/4-in. deep snow lugs. The track is designed to curve when the rider shifts his body,

which causes the Powerboard to turn.

The machine is powered by a mid-mounted, 200 cc, 4-cycle gas engine mounted on an aluminum inner frame covered by a molded-in high-density plastic chassis. The stand-on design doesn’t require any type of special boots or bindings - the rider simply places his feet on a pair of serrated aluminum anti-slip platforms. He holds onto a two-way, adjustable T-bar handle with throttle control. The handle is adjustable to match the rider’s height.

The machine comes with a tethered safety shutoff switch. It’s available in

yellow or black.

Sells for \$1,995 MSRP.

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Mattracks, Inc., 202 Cleveland Ave. E., P.O. Box 214, Karlstad, Minn. 56732 (ph 218 436-5000; fax 218 436-6500; dwright@mattracks.com; www.mattrackspowerboards.com).

Powered snowboard steers like a regular snowboard but is powered by a motorized track. The track is designed to curve when the rider shifts his body, which causes the Powerboard to turn.

