Flathead Ford V-8 Repowers Oliver 66

By Lorn Manthey, Contributing Editor

"When I got this tractor it was sitting out in the woods all rusted out and neglected. There were parts missing from the motor, the hood was dented up and the seat was mangled. I didn't know if there was much hope it could run again, but I was willing to try," says Lloyd Stetson.

He took inventory on the motor and decided it couldn't be repaired. He visited a nearby auto parts supplier, who suggested that he try retrofitting the Oliver with a 1938 Flathead Ford V-8 that was in his lot.

"The motor was in excellent condition and even had a 3-speed transmission attached to it," Stetson says. "I knew I could make it work by grinding down and cutting away some of the cast iron frame of the Oliver." The Ford engine and transmission eventually slid in place, and with that success, Stetson tackled the gears, electrical system and cooling.

"The 3-speed car transmission worked fine," Stetson says, "so I figured out a coupling system that mated it to the 6- speed tractor transmission. It gave me a tractor with 18 forward gears and a top speed of more than 40 mph."

For the cooling system, Stetson used the existing tractor radiator and fitted new hoses through tees and elbows. He added a fan that initially ran on a 12-volt motorcycle battery. Later he rigged it to run through a resistor from the 6-volt tractor battery. The tractor's black grill, which gives the Oliver a "Star Wars-type" look, is made from rolled screen.

Stetson says he wanted to make the exhaust system look special so he used 1 1/2-in. stainless steel pipes on both sides of the hood. "It sounds like a monster truck when I start it," Stetson says, "but it purrs like a kitten when I idle down the street at local parades."

The rear tires on Stetson's 66 are conventional tractor rubber, but the fronts are car tires configured to the original Oliver rims. "The whole project took me something over 100 hrs., which I didn't think was too bad," Stetson says. "The result is a nice parade tractor and one that I can use in the Open class of antique tractor pulls."

Lloyd Stetson's Oliver 66 "purrs like a kitten" after he repowered it with a 1938 Ford Flathead V-8.

Unlike many tractor restorers, Lloyd Stetson isn't committed to one brand. After rebuilding a 1939 Allis 11 years ago, Stetson moved on to a 1940 Ford 8N, followed by a 1948 Farmall Cub. The Oliver was his latest and most ambitious project. He hopes to move on to another tractor and another brand in the next year.

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Lloyd Stetson, 1605 Sampsonville, Rd., Enosburg Falls, Vt. (ph 802 933-5532).

Ford 9N Powered By Flathead V-8

Ernest Godbee has rebuilt and refurbished more than a dozen old tractors in recent years. "I have red, green and yellow, and gray and red ones, but I think my favorite is a repowered 9N Ford with a flathead V-8," Godbee says. "I've taken it to tractor shows with 200 entries or more and always finished in the top 10."

When Godbee started working on his 9N the original engine was seized and the frame and wheels were badly in need of paint. The tires were in poor shape and the hitch was missing a few parts.

Godbee says he could've bought a kit to install the V-8, but he wanted to keep the look and the lines of the tractor more original, so he built his own replacement parts. "It probably took me longer going this route," Godbee says, "but the end result turned out real nice."

First he located a flathead V-8 from an old Ford gas delivery truck and mated it to a Sherman step-up transmission. Godbee says, "The original 3-speed probably would've worked, but the synchronized 6-speed is smoother shifting and nicer to drive in parades."

Godbee made the bell housing adaptor plate and produced longer drag lengths for the tractor's steering. He also made two new eyelets on the original radiator and then connected it to the V-8. He used the tractor's original clutch and exhaust manifolds from a Chevy engine.

"The bolt pattern worked just fine to face the openings up rather than down," Godbee says, "so now I've got vertical pipes on both sides." He used the tractor's original battery case and dashboard gauges and kept the new hood level by using a small gas tank from a boat. He completed the project by making a hood extension, making new pieces for the hitch, and straightening the footboards and the front bumper. New tires were mounted before the tractor was sandblasted and given two coats of acrylic gray and red paint.

Ernest Godbee repowered his Ford 9N tractor with a Flathead V-8, lengthening the hood to allow for the longer engine.

Godbee says the whole project took him about 8 months but, "it's time well spent because now I've got another really nice parade tractor."

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Ernest Godbee, 210 Ato Road S.E., Milledgeville, Ga. 31061 (ph 478 452-8790; Godbee@windstream.net).

To repower his 1941 Ford 8N with a Lincoln V-12 engine, Larry Thomas bought a conversion kit from Ray Favero in Braidwood, Ill.

Ford 8N Repowered With V-12 Engine

Larry Thomas repowered his 1940's 8N Ford tractor with a 1941 V-12 Lincoln-Zephyr engine after buying it from a fellow who was turning the automobile body into a street rod.

"I put a V-8 into an 8N earlier, so this wasn't all that much different," says Thomas, who operates an engine repair business as his fulltime job.

For this conversion Thomas bought a Lincoln V-12 to 8N conversion kit from Ray Favero in Braidwood, Ill. The kit includes frame rails, the hood extension, the exhaust system and adaptor plates for linking the larger engine to the 8N transmission. Thomas made a new gas tank that sends fuel via gravity feed to the carburetor. He installed new pressure and ampere gauges and re-configured the tachometer to work with a V-12 engine.

For the exhaust, the manifolds dump into two pipes on each side of the engine and then into larger pipes that route under the footboards and out the back.

Chrome pipes, a show-quality paint job, new tires and new fenders round out Thomas's renovation. A V-12 Lincoln Zephyr insignia on the side of the motor identifies the vintage power source to interested Ford aficionados.

"I've put about $5,000 into the motor, parts, tires, and building a new dashboard," says Thomas, "but it's definitely worth it. The tractor turns a lot of heads at shows and in parades, and I had a lot of fun doing the work. I've been offered a lot more than I've got into it, but right now it's not for sale."

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Larry Thomas, 503 East Washington St., Astoria, Ill. 61501 (ph 309 329-2994).

Subaru Engine Triples Skid Steer Power

Ed Pacha's Gehl skid steer has plenty of power since he put a Subaru engine in it. The 1.6L, 4-cylinder engine came out of a 1980 Subaru Brat.

"The old engine was a 2-cyl. opposed, 20-hp Onan and was probably 10 years old when we repowered it," says Pacha. "The skid steer had been worked hard loading cattle manure so the engine was burning some oil."

Pacha wanted more power, and his dad Merle suggested he try the 66-hp Subaru, which was narrow enough to fit in the engine space on the Gehl. The easy part was making motor mounts and bolting the engine in place. A bigger challenge was connecting the Subaru flywheel to the hydraulic pump that drives the skid steer and provides lift.

"A short drive shaft with universal joints at each end connected the Onan engine to the hydraulic pump," says Pacha. "The Onan had a keyed shaft. I needed to fix a keyed shaft to the Subaru flywheel, which had to be retained, as it had the starter ring gear on it."

To connect the Subaru to the pump drive shaft, he had a circle cut from 1/4-in. steel plate to match the inside of the Subaru flywheel. He then drilled 6 holes around the circle to match bolts in the flywheel, though he had to replace the original bolts with slightly longer ones to fit through the plate and the flywheel.

"I drilled a hole in the center of the plate and pressed in a keyed shaft, welding it on the backside of the plate," explains Pacha. "I then put a Universal joint on it that matched the drive shaft."

The exhaust was also a bit of a challenge, he recalls. "The exhaust on the Subaru came out the bottom versus out the top of the Onan," he says.

Pacha attached a threaded pipe fitting to a steel plate for a flange, which he bolted to the exhaust outlet on the Subaru. A 90-degree elbow on it combined with a short pipe to a 45-degree elbow to angle the exhaust back up to a second flange and an exhaust manifold fabricated out of square tubing. From there, it's directed to a muffler.

The Subaru also needed a radiator. Pacha had an old Chrysler radiator, so he made brackets and attached it inside the engine guard with an electric fan to cool it.

"The old Gehl was always underpowered," say Pacha. "That's not the case any more."

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Ed Pacha, A&E Automotive, 3263 Highway 78, Brighton, Iowa 52353 (ph 319 694-4108; govenorbrn@yahoo.com).