

## Rebuilding Old Scrapers Is A Family Business

"In the early 1990s I started rebuilding old scrapers for excavating ponds and other projects," says Arkansas handyman Robert Bass. "Seems like every time I got one rebuilt, someone came along and wanted to buy it, so I decided to make it a full time business." After 23 years of perfecting his techniques, Bass says now he's fairly sure his company is the only full time scraper rebuilder in the country. As the elder statesman of the business, he's on the road more than 140 days a year looking for equipment his company can renovate, repair and resell. His 23-year-old son Travis now heads up the restoration side of the business. Bass' wife and daughter handle office duties. They also have 4 other employees who've worked with them for several years and are experts at rebuilding heavy equipment.

"Eight years ago we went at the rebuilding business full time, and that was also the last time we moved dirt commercially," says Bass. "We work almost exclusively on Reynolds scrapers ranging from 6 to 20 yd. models. We buy and sell throughout the country and also handle used Deere, IMC, Harvey and Prime equipment."

Bass says they try to keep an inventory of 40 to 60 scrapers on hand, and typically refurbish 6 to 8 machines a month. Smaller units require about 100 hrs. of work, and

larger machines that are more torn up might require 250 to 300 hrs. Some customers want only minor repairs and the company will do that, too.

"We bring equipment in and completely disassemble it, rebuild the cylinders, and install new fittings, pipes and hoses," Bass says. "We repair dirt pans by using a gouger to cut out old welds, cracked metal and weak metal that's bent or broken." Bass says they do that because they learned a long time ago that weld-overs and small patches don't work in the long run. "Our goal is to rebuild the metal as strong and as good as new. When they leave our shop they look like they just came from the factory."

Most of their rebuilt equipment is sold to farmers and ranchers who excavate their own ponds, waterways and soil berms. Bass says one of his customers in 2013 had a special request. "The fellow wanted 6 identical 17-yard machines, which was quite an order. He requested new side plates, heavier cylinders and new tires. We averaged more than 300 hrs. on those machines, probably more than it took to build them originally."

Rebuilt machines typically are good for 2,500 hrs. of work before needing another overhaul. Bass says a typical rebuilt 17-yd. scraper sells for \$40,000 to \$45,000, compared to \$75,000 to \$85,000 for a new one.



A typical Reynolds scraper before refurbishing, with rusty, bent and broken parts (left) and a typical rebuilt and repainted scraper.



Rebuilding old scrapers is a family business for Arkansas handyman Robert Bass. Photo shows a lineup of reconitioned scrapers.

"Our employees take a lot of pride in their work, and it shows," says Bass. "Our repair work and paint jobs look better than on new machines." Most of the equipment they use in the shop to move and handle heavy scrapers is hand-built. They also use plasma torches, cutters, wire welders, stick welders and gas torches. Last year they wore out about 40 hand-held grinders.

Bass says that even though he's been in

the business 23 years, his son Travis is now the driving force, and is enthusiastic about keeping things rolling into the future. "We have a real niche, and our customers are just salt of the earth," says Bass. "I couldn't ask for a more rewarding business."

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## He Buys Oddities Of Nature For Sideshow Exhibit

If you have a calf born with 2 heads or a pig with 6 legs, don't just toss it on the compost heap. Contact Clay McCartney because he may be interested in buying it. Two-headed animals and other freaks of nature have fascinated the Lewiston, Idaho man since his parents first took him to see a sideshow-type exhibition as a child. Since then, he has put together an impressive collection of multi-headed and multi-limbed animals of his own, as well as shrunken heads and mummies.

"I have friends in the sideshow business, and recently decided to start building my own sideshow," McCartney explains. "Our show is being designed to travel from town to town. That way people who can't see a place like Ripley's will be able to see preserved two-headed animals and live freaks of nature."

He already takes part of his collection to schools where students and adults say they learn from and enjoy his mini-shows.

Not all of McCartney's creatures are dead.

"I would have to say the most unusual and rarest (in my collection) is our living five-legged Sulcata tortoise that's 2 years old. Most animal freaks don't live long."

Other items in his collection include: conjoined, two-faced and one-eyed pigs, two-headed snakes and lizards, two-faced kittens and an eight-legged kitten.

He preserves some animals in formaldehyde and takes larger species, such as his dwarf calf, to a taxidermist.

"We pay money for animals, and the price varies due to type, size and rarity. If it's something we don't have and want, we pay top dollar," McCartney says. "I usually want to see pictures, know how long it's been dead, asking price, etc. If a deal is worked out, I send a crate with everything one needs



Clay McCartney's 2-headed cat and 5-legged turtle are part of his collection of multi-headed and multi-limbed animals.



to ship the animal. If it's something I'm not interested in, I have people who buy stuff I don't need."

McCartney welcomes calls and emails about all leads regarding nature's oddities.

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Barrie Sones didn't want to spend hours shucking peas, so he made this giant pea sheller. "It can shell 3 gal. of peas in 2 or 3 min.," he says.

## "Made-It-Myself" Pea Sheller

If you grow a lot of green peas, you might want to take time to make a giant pea sheller like the one Barrie Sones made.

The former teacher of agriculture raised a pea patch that was 200 yards long on his Cecil Lake, B.C. farm. They took a long time to pick, so he didn't want to spend hours shucking them, too. He picked up an extension bulletin with plans for a small sheller, and made a wooden unit that did about a gallon at a time. Then he decided to supersize it with the help of his students.

"My big one does 3 gal. of peas in 2 or 3 minutes," Sones says.

A 1/4-hp. motor with 1/2-in. V-belts turns a 34-in. paddle assembly made with six 4 by 6-in. beveled 1/2-in. fir plywood paddles. The assembly is inside a 3-ft. long drum with a frame covered in 1/2-in. hardware cloth (wire mesh). The drum spins over a 2 by 4-ft. plywood drawer with a 2-in. hole in one corner.

He dumps peas in through a door on a section of the drum, levels them out, and turns on the motor. The drum rotates slowly with belts and pulleys, and when the peas spin to the top, they fall on the fast moving paddles and hit against the screen,



A 1/4 hp. motor belt-drives paddle assembly inside sheller drum.

which opens the pods. The shelled peas fall through the screen into the drawer.

"Some broken pod pieces fall into the drawer, too," Sones says.

He pulls out the drawer, which has a cover over the hole, and rolls it back and forth so the broken pods stick to the bottom. Then, he opens up the hole, slopes the drawer and vibrates it so shucked peas roll over the pods and fall through the hole into a container. He rotates the drum to open the door at the bottom and dumps the pods, cleans up the drawer, and is ready for another batch.

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