

Articulated “Mower Tractor” Still Going Strong

A few years ago FARM SHOW featured a 4-WD articulated “mower tractor” built by Harold Tribitt mostly from junked parts (Vol. 27, No. 3). It’s equipped with dual wheels on front and back and a front-mounted 6-ft. deck that rides on a pair of 400.8 2-ply caster wheels. Tribitt recently sent us photos of the tractor with some changes that he made to it.

The tractor’s frame was fashioned from parts off an IH 37 disk, while the transmission, axles, and 6.50 by 16 wheels are out of a pair of 1960’s Chevrolet 3/4-ton pickups. A 4-cyl. water-cooled gas engine from an Owatonna self-propelled windrower supplies the power. The tractor articulates via a single 2 1/2-in. hydraulic cylinder that acts on a 1-in. dia. shaft. A double hydraulic pump that came off a combine provides power steering.

The mower deck is home-built and is belt-driven off the engine.

“I removed the 4-speed transmission and replaced it with a hydrostat unit from an IH 4000 windrower,” says Tribitt. “I split the double pump and used just the front one with the input shaft, but had to swap parts since the oil suction tube was on the rear pump.”

“I also cut down an oil cooler from a front-end loader and built a 10-gal. oil tank that mounts under the seat. I haven’t had any problems with the tractor since I built it back in the early 1990’s, except for a couple of belts and replacing all 4 wheel grease seals. I recently gave the tractor a fresh coat of paint.”

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it back to the dealer for a used Whirlpool model.

“My **Crosley** front load washer and dryer are also worst buys. The washer is poorly designed. For example, I have to leave the door open or the washer will activate by itself in stormy weather. Also, mold and mildew are constant problems.”

Joseph Smyly, Duchesne, Utah: Joseph likes to use a skin softener called **Cracked Heel** by Blue Goo that’s sold at WalMart. “My hands crack badly in winter or whenever I wash them a lot,” says Smyly. “I’m especially prone to multiple cracks on my fingertips. I’ve tried everything to heal or prevent the cracks, but Cracked Heel is by far the best product I’ve used. It’s made from emu oil, of all things. If my hands start feeling like they’re going to develop cracks, I just rub on a little lotion and the cracks never show up. If I forget to apply the salve and they get cracked, it quickly heals them.”

Tommy Scott, Goldthwaite, Texas: “My cousin gave me his used **Whirlwind** knife 8 years ago and I really like it. Since then, I’ve purchased 3 more Whirlwind knives. I even had to buy my wife one so I could keep mine! Last June an assist spring broke on the knife my cousin gave me, but the company is sending me a new spring free of charge. Great customer service.

“We bought a new **Henry Golden Boy .22** rifle and noticed the dovetail for the rear sight was milled wrong. I called the company and they sent a prepaid box for me to mail the rifle to them. Then they fixed the rifle and sent it back – all at no charge to me. It’s a great rifle – our kid’s favorite – and is accurate. I installed a large-loop lever on the rifle to fit my big hands. Another company with great customer service.”

Dan L. Edens, Ogema, Wis.: “I like my 2010 **Tom Tom XL GPS** car navigation device sold by Dell (www.tomtom.com). Not only does it provide exact directions, but also when I called the company for help I was able to speak to an American who spoke good English, not someone in India that I couldn’t understand.

“My **Harmon PF 100** pellet burning furnace is a worst buy. Sometimes it ‘forgets’ to ignite so my house gets cold. When that happens I have to go into the basement, turn the power off and on, and then it remembers its job. It’s poorly designed for clean-out which is a lengthy, messy job. I wrote to the company and told them I could redesign the furnace so it worked better, but they never replied.

“My idea is to install a second ash pan below the heat exchangers, then cut the back end off the pans so they become an ash

scoop. Then install a Y-shaped pipe and use a Venturi system for the combustion blower. This would eliminate having to remove the combustion blower and clean the blades with a toothbrush. It would cut cleaning time from 2 hours down to 15 minutes or so.

“My **Whirlpool Ultimate Care II** washing machine is a worst buy. We have to fill the machine manually from a hose in order to get the right water temperature. The machine hasn’t worked right since I bought it.”

Darry Markle, Peace River, Alta.: A 2009 **Montana 4344** utility tractor rates as Darry’s “best buy”. “I’ve always been skeptical of low-cost imports, but so far this imported tractor has been terrific. It’s made in South Korea and powered by a Mitsubishi

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4-cyl., 41 hp diesel engine. It has a lot of nice features including a beefy front-end loader, front wheel assist, a 16-speed transmission, tilt steering, shuttle shift transmission, live pto, and differential lock. It also has ag tires, a tight turning radius, smooth hydraulics, and the operator’s platform is obstruction-free with well-located controls.”

Bob Kohrs, Frontenac, Minn.: Bob’s impressed with **Just For Copper**, a solderless copper bonding agent for copper tubing (ph 866 304-5335; www.justforcopper.com). The product permits the bonding of copper-to-copper and copper-to-brass, without having to use solder or heat.

The company says it’s a fast and easy way to plumb with copper as there’s no risk of fire and no special skill is needed. They claim the product results in a “100 percent perfect bond” every time.

“I bought Just For Copper at my local farm store. It sure beats using a torch and solder,” says Kohrs. “It sets up in 10 seconds and cures in just 1 minute. No leaks yet.”

Ron Hall, Colville, Wash.: Ron’s unhappy with his **Deere L110** riding mower and dump-style yard cart. “After cutting grass for years with a Yardman riding mower, I decided to upgrade to Deere. What a joke. I bought the mower with a mulching kit, but it just makes a big mess. I bought a bagger to use with it, but it plugs up something awful. I had to use my \$50 Big R sweeper to clean up the mess. I put the bagged material in the dump cart,

and the cart works great until I try to dump it. It won’t tip back far enough to dump. I don’t think it could dump a load of water!

“The engine on this machine runs fine, but it gets so hot under the hood that the headlight brackets and wiring melted.”

Jeff Rhinehart, Eldred, Pa.: “My **Poulan** ‘Wild Thing’ chainsaw is my worst buy. I wanted to give my father a great 75th birthday present by buying him a new chainsaw. Home Depot had the Poulan model on sale so I bought it. In hindsight, a double-bladed ax and a crosscut saw would have been less work for him and caused him less frustration. Poulan tried to shift the blame to everyone, including my father for ‘misusing’ the saw, and they also blamed the suppliers of the plastic gears, the repairman and the repair shop.

“The whole process just reinforces the wisdom of buying from a company that services its products and not from the big box stores. Now my father is back to using his old chainsaw. Maybe I can try for a nice Christmas gift this year by getting a Stihl.”

Elmer R. Carter, Harleton, Texas: “In 2006 I bought a new **McCormick 4-WD** tractor equipped with a 70 hp Perkins diesel engine. I also bought an **Agmeier 150 hp** Bush Hog (ph 800 446-7319; www.ag-meier.net) to use with it. Both machines work great.

“At the same time I bought a **Westendorf TA 26** front-end loader, which has been nothing but trouble from day one. The bucket’s hydraulic cylinders were weak. The dealer replaced them immediately but the cylinders still leak even after they were repacked 3 times. Last year I sent the company a certified letter asking them to replace the bucket cylinders, but the letter was returned 2 months later, unclaimed. Then I sent the letter by regular mail, but I’m still waiting for a reply.

“I recently added 4 bottles of **SealLube** to the cylinders, which slowed down the leakage a little. One of the cylinders has always shown heavy rust streaks on it. I would’ve expected this company to stand behind its products and at least reply to a customer. On the plus side, the loader itself is built heavy.”

Lynn Kidwell, Bloomington, Ill.: “I bought a used 1980 **Deere 4440** tractor with about 7,000 hrs. on it, and the first year I had to replace both wheel rims. Also, the hydraulic pump leaked, and the top of the radiator expanded. At 8,200 hrs., a bearing on the transmission’s low range went out, and the transmission wouldn’t shift into any gear. To fix these problems I had to spend \$4,400 worth on parts and \$3,800 on labor. Also, the lines on the air conditioner rusted out, and I had to rebuild all three of the tractor’s

hydraulic couplers.”

Dale Schmidt, Standish, Mich.: Dale’s disappointed with his 2003 **Deere L130** riding mower. “I bought this mower thinking it would work better than others in its price range, but I was wrong. From day one, it wouldn’t cut without plugging up. I replaced self-tapping screws in the deck so now I can mow my yard and only have to clean off the deck 2 or 3 times. This machine isn’t even worth looking at.

“I’m disappointed with Deere as a company. For example, I was in the market for a new brush cutter this year. Deere’s **MX6** model is made in Spain. Instead, I bought a **Great Plains** model that’s made in Kansas and is built much better. Too bad this great American company is selling out.”

Jimmy Stewart, Albany, Ohio: Jimmy nominates his 1995 **Geo Prizm** as his “best buy”. “I bought this car new in July 1995. This summer it hit 500,000 miles. I’m a state senator in southeast Ohio, and this car has survived 7 election campaigns plus 3 1/2 years selling Caterpillar equipment, with trips to Omaha, New Orleans, Key West, Florida, and Washington, D.C. It gets about 34 mpg and I still drive it every day.

“I replaced the car’s original engine at 468,200 miles. I found a low mileage engine that cost less than the valve job the original engine would have needed. Even so, that engine was still running and had compression nearly as good as the factory specs. I plan to keep the car a while longer – I just put new 80,000-mile warranty tires on it.”

Nick Neuberger, Gait, Calif.: “I’ve had great success with two pieces of **Jet** equipment manufactured in Taiwan (ph 615 793-8900; www.jettools.com). One is a 10-in. table saw, and the other a metal lathe. Both machines are accurate, easy to use, built sturdy, and easy to clean. The parts are made of cast steel and aluminum, not plastic.”

Charlie Brattan, Albuquerque, New Mexico: “Over the years I’ve owned 3 **Ford** tractors that were best buys, all equipped with 4-cyl. diesel engines. They included a 1959 model 601, a 1962 model 801, and a 1986 model 5900.

“My worst buy ever was a 1990 **Massey Ferguson 231** tractor. It had electrical problems. Also, the valve stems on the tires rotted off after 2 years, and the 3-pt. hydraulics were slow and jerky. After 200 hrs. of misery I finally sold it.”

Tony Bouc, Valparaiso, Neb.: “My 2003 **Honda** Foreman ATV, which I bought used, is my best buy. It never breaks down, even though we use it every day. Over the last 20 years or so, I’ve had two other Hondas, and both were good machines.”