

Pto-Powered Cart Pushes Tractor At High Speeds

Rodney Wilson's pto-powered cart lets him take 4 adults for a ride behind his 1936 John Deere A. It also helps him keep up with faster tractors on a tractor ride.

"I call it my Road Runner Roadster," says Wilson. "It has a 1970's GMC rear axle with a gear ratio of 3.73."

When he wants to travel faster than the tractor can, he puts the pto in gear and takes the tractor transmission out of gear. The Roadster axle becomes the power provider.

"If nobody is on the Roadster, its wheels can spin but it still works unless you come to a hill on gravel," says Wilson. "Two adults on the seat will let me get up a hill but, without them, I have to stop and put the tractor into gear. I can kick the pto out of gear on the go."

When he built the Roadster, Wilson welded a pto shaft to the driveshaft stub on the GMC rear end. This required him to flip the differential over to get the wheels traveling in the right direction.

He also fabricated a tongue and a frame for the Roadster's seat and added fenders he found at a farm store.

"I built a platform out of plywood, covered it with outdoor carpet, and mounted a rear bench seat from an Econoline van," says Wilson. "It has 4 seat belts on it with room for 4 smaller adults or 3 adults and 2 children."

A pipe and plywood barrier ahead of the seat protects passengers from the pto shaft. He also mounted a box behind the seat with room for picnic coolers. An American flag dresses it up, and a blinking amber light helps get the attention of following motorists.

Wilson says the Roadster has been a lot of fun. "I've taken it on about 60 tractor drives and use it around town to give kids and senior citizens rides," he says.

Wilson recently added a leg jack on a caster for rolling the Roadster around the shed. "It was getting too heavy to lift," he says.



Pto-powered cart is built on a Roadster axle. When Wilson wants to travel faster than his tractor can, he puts the pto in gear and takes the tractor transmission out of gear.

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His Passion Is Collecting Dairy Memorabilia

In 2013 Ed Larson's back surgery took him away from running the family dairy operation and launched his new passion: collecting rare antique dairy memorabilia. Larson started off collecting glass milk bottles from Wisconsin and then moved on to butter churns, dairy signs, milking machines, sales literature, and more.

Larson says one of his oldest bottles is from 1886, probably one of the first ever made for Wisconsin milk. Many of those in his collection have the brand of milk and the bottling company embossed in the glass. Larson says that technique was common until the mid 1930's, and then colored bottles were used for another 20 years.

A few years ago Larson ran across a kerosene-powered Lake Breeze fan and decided that it needed to be in his collection. He'd never seen one before and hasn't seen another one since that purchase.

A Roth milking machine, patented in 1913, is fashioned out of a metal tube about 6 in. long, with a squeezable spring handle to extract milk. Larson says it didn't become popular because it really didn't simplify the hand-squeezing process and cows found it uncomfortable. A Scotsman named Alexander Shiels solved that dilemma by inventing a pulsator that used rubber suction cups. Larson has several brands of antique

milking machines that feature pulsating action, a concept still in use today.

Another aspect of his collection is literature and equipment used by traveling salesmen peddling equipment for dairymen. A DeLaval Model F Combine milker shows how a two-cow parlor worked in the 1940's. A wooden silo built to scale resides in a fancy carrying case. A stick-built dairy building and a sales kit for Harvestor Silos from the early 1960's are other rare sales aids he owns.

Larson also has an original True-Type model Holstein cow and bull set believed to be from the 1920's. Only a handful of the 1/4-scale models were made. They were used to help judges rate and rank cattle at fairs and shows.

Larson finds items on eBay, Craigslist, in the paper, or at auctions. Now that word has spread of his collecting he says people are even calling him to take things off their hands. He's still looking for a few milk bottles from Wisconsin, including a Charlie Moss from Evansville, but hasn't gotten them yet.

Someday he might open a visitor center at the dairy farm to display his items, but that's still in the thinking stages.

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Ed Larson collects rare antique dairy memorabilia and has several brands of antique milking machines that feature pulsating action (above). His collection also includes glass milk bottles, butter churns, dairy signs, and more.



Old Sewing Machines Turned Into Tiny Tractors

It takes Gene Blatchford about 15 to 20 hrs. to transform an old sewing machine into a small-scale version of a farm tractor. The retired Nebraskan says his creations are like mini pedal tractors, painted in colors to match latter-day Farmall, International, Deere, Ford, Massey and Oliver brands.

"A fellow from Orange City, Iowa brought me an old Singer and wanted it left original," Blatchford says. "I painted the parts I made black and the wheel rims gold and it really turned out nice. Now my wife wants one like it, even though I've already made her a pink one."

In the past 4 years Blatchford says he's probably made 50 of the tiny creations and sold them at farm toy and craft shows. Others he's shipped as far away as Michigan and California.

"I've got probably 40 sewing machines

waiting to be transformed into tractors. I just take my time doing them," says Blatchford. "Some days I feel like it, others I don't, but people have them ordered, so I have to keep at it."

Blatchford's tractors retain the sewing machine chrome and drive wheel, which becomes the tractor steering wheel. He builds a frame to hold the body, uses lawn mower wheels for the back and baby stroller wheels for the front. Tractors can have a narrow or wide front. He re-shapes old spoons for a tractor's seat and makes the fenders from flat metal. He mounts the sewing machine motor on the frame to resemble a tractor motor. Authentic tractor paint colors and custom decals round out the creations. Completed they weigh about 35 lbs.

Blatchford says his love of tractors began as he grew up on a farm and later operated a

farm of his own. After a farm injury caused him to retire from farming in the early 80's he became a school custodian. He also taught industrial arts at Newcastle High School until the district consolidated in 2014. That winter he began building a tiny tractor from an old sewing machine and has been full-speed ahead at the craft ever since.

Blatchford also has 4 full-size tractors that he's restored. Not partial to any brand, his shop holds a shiny Allis-Chalmers C, a Farmall H, a Ford 2N and a Deere 60. All of them are "parade-ready" and driven every summer.

When he's not working on tractors during cold winter months, Blatchford carves wood and makes jewelry out of old silverware.

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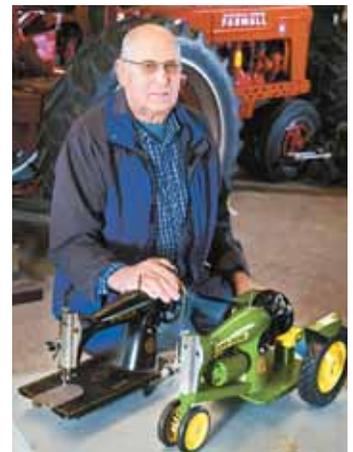


Photo by Justin Wan
Gene Blatchford makes tiny replica tractors from antique sewing machines.