

Heavy-Duty “Garbage Truck” Forklift Leads To Business

When Nathan Strubhar got the idea of building a bale handling loader tractor out of a garbage truck (Vol. 31, No. 6), the idea of starting a business never entered his mind. But 12 years later, he’s building heavy duty “hay stackers”, as he calls them, out of semi trucks as well as garbage trucks. He also rebuilds other brands of forklifts and operates a thriving parts business.

What hasn’t changed since he built his original forklift is the basic design. The forklift has 2 steering wheels, and the driver uses 2 separate sets of controls - the forward facing ones for highway use, and another set of controls for operating a 3-stage forklift mast equipped with a squeeze clamp. When using the forklift, the driver just slides across the cab into the seat on the opposite side, which faces the opposite direction and has its own set of operating controls.

“Customers use my forklifts in their baling and hay hauling business, which often serves the export market,” says Strubhar. “You can save time and haul more bales with a machine that can both load and unload bales fast. You can pick up and stack six 3 by 4-ft. big square bales 3 high on a semi truck, or 9 high in a barn.”

The forklift is powered by a hydraulic

pump that’s driven directly off the truck’s crankshaft. Hydraulic control levers for the forklift mount next to the seat. The clamp can be moved side-to-side by a hydraulic cylinder, and can also be tilted up and down. There’s a moon roof in the cab to see up above when stacking bales.

Strubhar does all the work in his shop, using CAD drawings and a CNC table to cut out many of the needed parts. “We can custom build anything the customer wants,” he says. “All our forklifts have a nice fit and finish and come with comfortable seats, a stereo, and LED lighting. We build our own cabs.”

To build, he strips the semi truck down to the frame, then mounts another frame on top of it and joins them together. Then he adds the cab and all the other components.

“Most of the time we look for a truck with about 300 hp.,” says Strubhar. “The biggest truck we ever converted was a Kenworth equipped with a 425 hp. Cat diesel engine. We often beef up the truck’s front end so it will hold up to all the weight on the forklift.”

Much of his rebuilding business is done on older Manteca Roadrunner forklifts made from the late 1970’s and up. “Manteca went out of business in 2008, but many owners



Nathan Strubhar has built a thriving business building heavy duty “hay stackers” out of semi trucks and garbage trucks.

want to keep their machines running even though they can’t find parts any more,” says Strubhar. “Over the years I’ve gained quite a knowledge base, so we can source any part the customer needs. We also make our own parts and can ship them overnight.”

New-build price for the hay stacker ranges

from \$220,000 to \$250,000, depending on options.

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Old Combines Great For Small Acres

Havah Gordon has no time for expensive, imported, small-scale combines to use on small acreages. When she wanted to harvest a few acres of wheat, she bought a 1959 Deere 30 pull-type for \$200.

“The combine had spent a lot of time sitting, and I had to get inside to clean out all the nests and such,” recalls Gordon. “I spent about a year fixing it up.”

She replaced most of the bushings and bearings, a bunch of paddles, and even added a Hart Scour-Kleen grain cleaner.

“For the first harvest I didn’t have the cutter bar working, so we harvested the wheat with a sickle and carried it to the combine to thresh it,” she relates.

By the next harvest, Gordon, who works off the farm as an airplane mechanic, had the cutter bar working too. She used it for one more harvest and then put the combine in storage.

“I fixed them up in the first place to grow my own organic wheat,” says Gordon. “I had been having health problems and hoped that would help solve it. By the third

harvest, I discovered I had Celiac disease so I couldn’t eat gluten-containing wheat. That was what was causing my health problems.”

Gordon says the combine, and a Deere drill she also restored, are sitting in her machine shed. “If someone gave me \$5,000 I’d load it all on a trailer,” she says.

While the combine required a lot of parts and time, she says she actually spent more money repairing the drill, including replacing tires.

“I paid \$200 for a casting that holds the cultivator wheel and the tube for the seed drop,” she recalls. “Then I found a drill for parts, and now I have 60 to 70 extras.”

Finding combine parts was more time consuming than costly. Other than a \$15 link for a single no. 45 removable link chain that is no longer available, most were inexpensive. Finding a second John Deere 30 for parts helped. “I literally had to cut down trees to haul it away,” says Gordon.

When she couldn’t find a Deere grain cleaner, she found one built for an Allis Chalmers All-Crop at a Missouri salvage



Havah Gordon bought this 1959 Deere 30 pull-type combine to harvest a few acres of wheat.

yard. The main difference was the Deere unit sat to the rear of the hopper while the Allis Chalmers unit was mounted at the front.

“I had to reverse a couple of chutes that were just sheet metal,” she recalls. “I also needed screens and found a guy on the internet who would make them.”

Gordon found the combine forum on Yesteryear.com to be very helpful, both for parts and advice. She notes that John Deere has an online parts counter for old tractors, combines and other equipment.

“My combine cost me around \$4,000 with

parts, a couple of special tools, an original manual, and transportation from Michigan to Oklahoma, where the farm was,” says Gordon. “That’s a whole lot better than a new small-scale import for \$55,000.”

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“Lift Hitch” For ATV’s Makes Parking Trailers Easy

Dave Sand, Avon, Minn. came up with a unique front ball hitch for his ATV that lets him move trailers with ease. Instead of backing up, he drives forward. An electric winch provides lift to the hitch.

“It takes the hassle out of backing up a trailer, and eliminates the need to ever look back,” says Sand. “It rides on a dolly wheel, which allows it to lift even heavy trailers without causing damage to the ATV.”

The hitch is equipped with 2 chain-operated guides that slide up or down on front and back of a vertical steel frame. The front guide supports the ball hitch. The back guide has a chain hook welded onto it, and the cable from the winch is hooked onto it. A series of pulleys, sprockets and chains mount inside the frame. The dolly wheel is spring-loaded to keep it off the ground whenever the hitch

is not in use. The wheel is attached to a steel bracket that’s free to pivot up or down on the back side of the frame.

As the winch pulls on the cable, the chains and sprockets push the dolly wheel down and at the same time brings the ball hitch up. Reversing the winch drops the hitch down to release the ball hitch from the trailer.

“The dolly wheel takes most of the weight off the front of the ATV,” says Sand. “The wheel goes down until it hits a stop, which takes most of the hitch’s weight off the ATV. Only about 150 lbs. of the trailer’s weight goes on the ATV. The rest of the weight is on the hitch.”

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Dave Sand can easily move trailers using this unique front hitch that he built for his ATV. An electric winch provides lift.