

Home Built "Big Bud" Tractor Is Replica Of World's Largest

Back in the mid to late 70's the classic Big Bud 747 was billed as "the world's largest tractor" by The Guinness Book of World Records. Charlie Melberg, who with his sons, Brad and Mark, run a large farm operation near Hector, Minn., took on a nearly 2-year long task between farm work to build a working, scaled down replica of a Big Bud for Charlie's 10-year-old grandson.

You might say that Melberg now owns the world's smallest Big Bud.

"I have five grandsons and I restored four 1960 Minneapolis Moline Jet Star tractors for them. My middle grandson, Madden, saw my small desk model of a Big Bud and photos on the internet. He came to me one day and said 'I don't want a Minneapolis Moline. I want a Big Bud.'"

When Madden first brought up the idea, Charlie told him they had a big job ahead of them. In building the machine he got to talk to one of the former owners and an engineer who was 90 years old, who told him how they designed the tractor. One of Melberg's first steps was to contact David Nelson at Loftness Mfg. in Hector to see if he could laser cut some parts for him. Charlie's son-in-law, Tim Swenson of Glenwood, Minn., is a draftsman and engineer. He drew up dimensions taken from Melberg and put them into a CAD program, and sent them to Kirk Reckow at Loftness.

Everything on the Big Bud was built to scale and replicated to match the original Big Bud that went into production in the 1970s. The inside of the cab is roomy enough to hold an adult driver.

Melberg says this is a "play tractor" for his grandson to drive around and will be kept in the family for years to come. He has, however, used the tractor to drag his farmyard. Various versions of the Big Bud were built by Northern Mfg. Co. in Havre, Mont. until the last one rolled off the line in 1992. Melberg chose to build a scaled down replica of the 525/50 that was built between 1979 and 1982. The 525 number refers to its original hp.

A 1979 Big Bud 525/50 can be purchased now for \$180,000. "These tractors were used for farming big areas," says Melberg. "A few went all over the U.S., and at one time a farmer by the name of Harlan Johnson from nearby Renville, Minn., owned 3.

"We built this replica tractor to scale taking measurements off a real 525/50 Big Bud, which resulted in a single seat tractor about 25 percent the size of the original. It's powered by a Yanmar 3-cyl., 25 hp. diesel engine, which is used in Deere lawn and garden equipment, Bobcat skid loaders and a lot of other machines. I purchased farm tires for it from Loftness. It has power steering and 2 old Case garden tractor rear



This scaled-down replica of a Big Bud was built by Charlie Melberg for his 10-year-old grandson.

ends. The hydraulic-driven, 4-WD unit has a hydrostatic transmission with infinite speeds forward and backward of about 10 mph. We think my Big Bud weighs about one ton," says Melberg.

Every part was made, taken apart and put together again. Other parts like the rear end and engine were hunted down on Amazon and eBay. Most of the painting was done by Adam Swanson at Macik's Paintin' Place in Hector, and decals were furnished by Creative Details in Danube, Minn. Charlie, his grandsons and hired help assembled the tractor at the farm shop.

"We built the first model out of cardboard to make it look right and come up with the correct dimensions," says Melberg. "We spent many nights and weekends designing

things the way they should be to make it look like the original Big Bud. We took the cab off 3 times and rebuilt it again. The drive system was taken apart many times to get it right, and we had to fix oil leaks and adjust things to make it fit."

The Big Bud 747 with its 16-cyl. Detroit Diesel engine is 27 ft. long, 20 ft. wide and 14 ft. tall. The wheels were specially made in Canada and are 8 ft. in dia. and 3 ft. wide. When the 1,000-gal. fuel tank is full, the tractor tips the scales at about 130,000 lbs.

Thanks to Mike Schweiss at Schweiss Doors for permission to reprint this article from his website, www.bifold.com. Schweiss makes state-of-the-art bi-fold hydraulic doors for farm buildings.

"Made It Myself" Cub Cadet 4-WD



Starting with the frame of an 1864 Cub Cadet, Harold Dejong built this 4-WD tractor that looks like a miniature version of an IH 5088.

Harold Dejong, a retired construction worker, admits modifying a Cub Cadet with 4-WD was stepping out of his comfort zone. And, he's still adding finishing touches to make the body look like a miniature version of a 5088 IH tractor.

"A friend from Waterloo, Iowa, Norman Bruggeman, made one and that's what got me inspired. He told me I could do it," says Dejong.

He started with the frame of an 1864 Cub Cadet and the rear end of a 782 Cub.

"The 782 is older, but made of cast iron so it can take the abuse and be a tougher rear end," Dejong says. He took two old Kohler Command engines to a mechanic to create one good engine to power the Cub, and worked with a machine shop for the driveshaft, knuckles, control cable, and other parts.

Between talking to Bruggeman, who sent lots of photos, being patient, and much "thinking" time, he spent the past couple of winters working on it.

Dejong plans to take it to Cub events. The tractor has more power to put on display, especially for plowing events. He hopes to line up a group of home-built 4-WD's to display at an upcoming show.

Though the process has been long and challenging, Dejong is pleased with the most recent addition to his 20-piece Cub Cadet collection.

"I had time. I got the bug to build something like that, and 4-WD makes it pretty special," he says.

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This rare prototype Ford LGT 120 garden tractor was introduced in the early 1970's. "There are several differences between it and the production model," says owner Josh Deaven.

Rare Ford Prototype Garden Tractor

When Josh Deaven saw a Ford LGT 120 for sale, he knew it wasn't standard issue. The hood was shorter. It and the cowling around the dash were fiberglass instead of metal. The front wheels had long spindles with a bearing cap that stuck out too far, and the motor was sideways with the starter generator hanging out. Other differences between the prototype and Ford LGT 120 production models include a fiberglass battery cover versus plastic, fiberglass grill and a slightly different hood design.

"It was advertised as a prototype that came out in 1971 or early 1972," says Deaven, owner of Deaven Tractor and Classic Tractors. He supplies reproduction parts for Jacobsen-built garden tractors from 1964 to 1976. They include Ford, Minneapolis Moline and Oliver garden tractors.

Deaven has been in the business long enough to question prototype claims. He asked for and received photos of the one for sale.

"There were enough differences that could be seen in the photos for me to take a chance on it," says Deaven. "I paid \$1,200 for it and brought it home."

The story that went with it was that a

Ford liaison man knew about the prototype, acquired it, and restored it. When he died, the tractor was put up for sale when the estate was cleared up.

As Deaven searched for proof, he was told there should be an R&D tag riveted in place. While he found 2 patched holes, there was no tag.

Jacobsen made the Ford LGTs, and Deaven knew that Jacobsen often used prototypes in their literature.

"You can tell that decals have been stuck on or different parts were used from the final production model," says Deaven. "I knew my tractor was special, but when I found the brochure introducing the Ford LGT 120, there it was. It was also used in a calendar. It was their pictorial tractor."

The Ford LGT 120 brought Deaven full circle. It was a restored Ford LGT 100 his dad bought in 1975 that started his interest in tractors and parts.

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