

Restoration entailed removing and repairing the stilts, then assembling them on an 8N that Hardesty had restored earlier.



Stilts Tractors Attract Attention

By Lorn Manthey, Contributing Editor

Ask a farm inventor what he'd build for practical purposes, parades or just showing off, and he just might say "a tractor on stilts." Although human stilts have been recorded as far back as the 9th to 7th centuries BC, tractor stilts first appeared just after WWII.

In 1948, the Tractor Stilt Company of Omaha made conversion kits that would raise different models of Fords, Fergusons, MHF, Allis, Deere and Farmall tractors at least 3 ft. higher than when they left the factory. Those kits cost less than \$500 and brought small modern tractors to new heights of efficiency.

Vegetable farmers used stilt tractors with small cultivators or mounted sprayers to straddle rows of tomatoes, berry bushes and other produce. Orchards used tractors on stilts to easily reach high-hanging fruit, replacing workers on ladders. Seed companies used them for detasseling hybrid corn. Other crop producers mounted wide booms in front of or behind stilt tractors to spray tall crops. Those rigs were the predecessors of high-boy sprayers and today's modern applicator rigs

with hydraulic legs that extend and retract.

FARM SHOW ran stories about tractors on stilts in 1982 (Vol. 6, No. 4), 1998 (Vol. 22, No. 1), 2008 (Vol. 32, No. 5) and 2021 (Vol. 45, No. 2). The 2021 story showed a farmer in 1950 perched on the seat of a Farmall H at least 10-ft. off the ground. The tricycle front wheels and both rear wheels were guarded by shields made of 55-gal. oil drums cut in half. Michael Rosenberger of Bath, Ind., says his dad helped his uncle Earl to assemble the rig that he used to plant cover crop wheat between rows of fully grown field corn. He was way ahead of modern-day cover croppers.

A collector of vintage Deere tractors sold his 1938 unstyled Deere B on stilts for \$8,925 at a recent Auman auction. Earlier, the farmer-built rig had been showcased at the Deere Two-Cylinder Club, earning it the certified Expo Club Quality Award due to its exceptional design and workmanship.

The 9 1/2-ft. tall tractor was nearly 3 ft. taller than a conventional Deere B. Its back wheels were Model D factory spokes, driven

by a roller chain connected to a shaft extending out from the original tractor hubs. The front pedestal and steering were original, extending down more than 4 ft. and supported with angle braces to the front and mid-section of the tractor frame.

Vintage tractor collectors looking for rare models often search for stilts tractor models. Ford aficionado Charlie Hardesty of Valparaiso, Ind., dickered five days in 2011 with the Minnesota owner of a rusted and decrepit Ford 8N on stilts. They finally made a deal.

To get the 9-ft. tall relic 600 miles back to Indiana, he had to fit his trailer with crossways 2 by 6-in. planks from a local lumber yard. Hardesty says the trip was worth every worrisome minute.

His restoration entailed removing and repairing the stilts, then assembling them on an 8N that he'd restored earlier. Primed and painted to showroom condition, Hardesty drove it for the first time during the COVID years. His wife videotaped him as he shouted out, "This is my new social distance tractor."

Hardesty says the tractor is great fun to drive in parades and shows. It now travels safely on his modified trailer with permanent extensions. The stilt tractor can straddle his 8N vineyard model behind an LP Ford in front. Hardesty's complete description of his stilt tractor restoration can be found at this link: <https://fordtractorcollectors.com/restorations/1951-ford-8n-stilts-conversion/>.

In 1957, a tractor stilts kit from the Omaha producer cost \$495. A different kit that raised a tractor body 6 ft. cost \$695. Another model provided the same clearance and with adjustable hubs for 80, 84, 88, 92 and 96-in. wheel centers. The kit for N series Fords sold for \$678. Optional features included two 50-gal. side tanks for carrying spray liquids or larger 150, 200 and 250 gal. tanks that could be mounted under the tractor. The stilt tractor rear wheels could be protected with shields to prevent crop damage.

David Lory's stilt tractor is a restored M-

H-F 202 Work Bull that was originally built without factory hydraulics. The tractor had been set up for drip-type weed control, then abandoned in a tree row for 10 years. Lory had to cut off the sprayer attachment to rescue the tractor as he rebuilt the engine, replaced the clutch, input shafts, face plate and seals. Now the 202 shines with original factory gold paint and gray stilts, a real attention-getter.

Show goers who see stilts tractors often stare in awe or disbelief, just as they would at parade clowns on stilts. They wonder why anyone would mount a tractor that far above the ground. One observer wrote online about driving his dad's 8N on stilts just once when he was a kid. He says it scared him as the spray solution sloshed in the tank, causing one wheel to almost leave the ground. Another guy wrote that "the only advantage I see is that the oil plug is now at eye level," while another added, "Guess I'll need a ladder to fill it with gas and an oxygen mask to drive it."

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Charlie Hardesty, Valparaiso, Ind.



In the 1950s, this strange-looking triangular track tractor was used in California to spray sweet corn and detassel seed corn.



Money-Making Ideas

Volumes I, II, III, IV, & V

We're proud to offer "Money-Making Ideas To Boost Farm Income," 5 first-of-their-kind collections of hundreds of profit-boosting ways farmers and ranchers are increasing farm income. Volume I, Volume II, Volume III, Volume IV & Volume V are all chock-full of hundreds of on-farm business ideas you won't see anywhere else. They sell for just \$45.95 for the set.

Gardens To Greenhouses!

This book is full of "made-it-myself" growing ideas for fun and profit. Time saving and innovative ideas fill the pages with the best ideas for planting, harvesting and marketing garden crops. 128-pages with all kinds of unique garden varieties and projects. Sells for just \$12.95.



Garden Tractors

"Look What They're Doing With Garden Tractors" features hundreds of stories on garden tractor modifications, rebuilds, repowers, and one-of-a-kind accessories from past issues of FARM SHOW. This 168-page book sells for just \$12.95.



Order Form

YOUR ACCOUNT NUMBER #

If you are a subscriber, please give us your customer account number that appears on your address label. It's the number above your name.

	Quantity	Total Price
FARM SHOW On DVD-ROM or USB (circle DVD or USB)		\$
Encyclopedia - Vol. I - 482 Pages		\$
Encyclopedia - Vol. II - 482 Pages		\$
Encyclopedia - Vol. III - 482 Pages		\$
Encyclopedia - Vol. IV - 482 Pages		\$
Special Offer! All 4 Volumes of Encyclopedia!		\$
"Great Shop Ideas" Book - 168 pages		\$
"More Great Shop Ideas" Book - 168 pages		\$
"Great Shop Ideas - Vol. III" Book - 168 pages		\$
"Great Shop Ideas - Vol IV" Book - 144 pages		\$
Special Offer! All 4 Volumes of Great Shop Ideas!		\$
"Money-Making Ideas" Book - Volume I - 96 pages		\$
"Money-Making Ideas" Book - Volume II - 128 pages		\$
"Money-Making Ideas" Book - Volume III - 168 pages		\$
"Money-Making Ideas" Book - Volume IV - 152 pages		\$
"Money-Making Ideas" Book - Volume V - 128 pages		\$
Special Offer! All 5 Volumes of Money-Making Ideas!		\$
"Energy-Saving Ideas" Book - 128 pages		\$
"Energy-Saving Ideas - Vol. II" Book - 128 pages		\$
"Bring Old Farm Equipment Back To Life - 128 pages		\$
"Look What They're Doing With Garden Tractors" - 168 pages		\$
"I Made My Own Tractor" - 128 pages		\$
"Gardens To Greenhouses" - 128 pages		\$

Payment Method

Check (Payable to: FARM SHOW)
☐ Mastercard ☐ Visa ☐ Discover ☐ Amex

Card #

Important! Expiration Date: CVC:

Name

Address

City

State /Prov.

Zip

US Standard Shipping Included
 Priority Shipping Add \$5.95 S&H

Canadian Orders \$ 5.95 S&H Plus 5% GST

GST#131272023

Grand Total

To Order By Phone, Call Toll-Free

1-800-834-9665

Or you can order online at

www.farmshow.com

Mail to: FARM SHOW, P.O. Box 1029,
 Lakeville, MN 55044