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Custom Packer Transport Built From Old Planter Frame

"I like to use a packer behind my drill in one operation to firm the seedbed, but a while back I didn't have equipment that matched

up with my 15-ft. John Deere 750 seed drill," says Bob DeBrabandere.

After considering his options, he decided to

repurpose his older 7000 6-row-wide planter frame to create a piece of equipment that would work with his drill for his 155-acre farm. After picking up a 4-row-wide planter, he removed two of its packer units to extend his 6-row planter to 8 rows.

"I was looking at the situation and thought that I could attach my packer to the old planter frame and turn it into a hydraulic lift transport," DeBrabandere says. "So, it became about a 10-ft. packer with two additional 4-ft. pups. Once I narrowed it down, it pulls perfectly behind my 15-ft. drill."

DeBrabandere used fertilizer box mounts, turned backward, and hung chains from them to lift the two pup packers off the ground. In about half a day, he finished the improvised unit using old spare parts and chains he had on hand.

He says the trickiest part was keeping the two pups from rubbing against the transport wheels when turning, but he added chains to prevent them from swinging over too far. He was initially worried that the planter frame wouldn't lift the packers, but they had no trouble handling the load.



DeBrabandere used fertilizer box mounts, turned backward, and hung chains from them to lift the two pup packers off the ground.

"It took me longer to figure out the details of my idea than it did to put everything together," he laughs. "It works great in the field, on my headlands, and for going down the road."

DeBrabandere even modified the unit to expand to a wider position for towing behind his cultivator by changing the hitch point between the main packer and the pups.

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O'Bar's "Frankin-Tractor" is a fun conversation piece. He simply enjoys riding it around.

One-Of-A-Kind Garage Sale Tractor

John O'Bar's garage sale tractor is truly unique. When he bought it for \$75, he could only guess where the parts came from. Once he got it home, he began identifying what he could. The findings led him to name it

"Frankin-Tractor."

The 7.2-hp AFH Wisconsin engine was easy to recognize and start.

"Surprisingly, it cranked right up with some fresh gas," says O'Bar. "The rear tires

were old military ones from the 1950s and hard as a rock on split rim wheels. I cut the centers out of the wheels and welded them into some 15-in. wheels with tires."

A serial number on the well-worn front axle showed it was from a 1926 Austin Seven automobile. The tie-rod assembly was made from an E-Z-GO golf cart, and the front wheels came from an early British car.

The origin of the clutch and flywheel is unknown, but the first transmission seems to be from a Model A Ford. The second transmission, mounted upside down, is a 4-speed with reverse from a 1950s GM Corvette. The heavy-duty rear axle proved to be an old Ruckstell 2-speed from a 1920s Ford Model TT truck that appears to have been narrowed down.

"This combination of transmissions and axle makes for some complicated and exciting shifting patterns," says O'Bar. "It will just barely crawl or do 40 mph on the road, if you dare. I'm not brave enough to go over 20, and it's terrifying to drive it over about 10 mph."

One thing the tractor was missing was brakes. O'Bar installed a lever-brake system with pads that rubbed against the rear tires. While not very effective, it's better than having no brakes at all.

The modified steering wheel is from a Model T, and the modified steering box is from a Ford Model A.

"The currently non-working rear 3-pt. hitch system looks to be from an early Jeep kit," says O'Bar. "Oil pressure is supplied by a small hydraulic pump chain-driven off the engine shaft."

When he got the tractor, the only shutoff was shorting out the spark plug wire. O'Bar wired a switch into the magnet and mounted it on the steering column. Other additions included a drink holder and a grab handle.

"I made the drink holder from a section of old driveshaft and mounted it to the left-hand fender," says O'Bar. "The tractor wasn't easy to get on or off, so I added a center bar with a trailer ball for a grab handle."

The Frankin-Tractor is a fun conversation piece for O'Bar. He simply enjoys riding it around.

"I'm sure the person who made it actually made it to be used and did use it at some point," he says. "I enjoy bringing these old pieces of history back to life."

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Jansen says his rare 9-18 Elgin tractor, serial number 518-B, built in 1917, is probably the only Elgin still in existence.



Rare Elgin Is One-Of-A Kind

It's no surprise that Karl Jansen owns perhaps the only Elgin 9-18 tractor in existence.

"I guess I'm genetically predisposed to old tractors because my dad collected and restored them before I was born," Jansen says. "As a five-year-old, I was already begging him to take me to antique tractor shows."

Motivated by their love for old iron and mechanics, Jansen and his brother Kent worked with their dad in his automotive and old-tractor repair business, eventually taking it over in 1986. Along the way, they've collected and restored their own tractors.

The Elgin is a prime example.

Jansen's friend, Jason Habing, owned the Elgin, and, like Jansen, he had never seen another one like it. Eventually, Jansen traded a Rumely Oil Pull to acquire it.

"The tractor was built in 1917 and must've been used lightly because the unusual friction drive didn't show much sign of wear," Jansen says. "It had been stored for 20 years when Jason bought it. After a little coaxing, it started and ran just fine."

The Elgin was a rare find for Jansen, and he enjoys sharing its history.

Created by the Waite Tractor Company

in 1913, the Elgin originally used engines from the Waukesha Motor Company in Wisconsin. Waite contracted with at least three businesses to build the tractor. Those didn't pan out, and the company relocated to Elgin, Ill., and reorganized as the Elgin Tractor Corporation. A 4-cyl. Buda engine replaced the Waukesha engine. Unlike other tractors that frequently stripped drive gears, Elgin claimed their tractor would never have that problem. It was a true statement because the Elgin didn't have any gears.

Jansen explains that the Elgin has a disc-type friction transmission, which was patented in 1904 by John W. Lambert. This design was used in trucks, fire engines and farm tractors. Power from the engine was transferred to a small "slave" disc, which then moved through a shaft to a spoked wheel inside the rear steel wheels. Jansen points out that the design wasn't effective because the mating surface of the friction wheel was barely 2 in. Under difficult pulling conditions, the drive didn't hold, and the rear wheels wouldn't turn.

Despite that major flaw, the Elgin company continued to boast that it was the best tractor ever invented. Soon, however, the tractor moved from Elgin to Ohio, where the owners once again made bold claims. They supposedly sold \$200,000 worth of stock

and promised 1,000 jobs. However, only 50 employees ended up building tractors, which soon had a Rutenber Motor Co. engine. In early 1919, it was upgraded to an Erd Motor Co. engine and renamed the 12-25.

Apparently operating on smoke and mirrors, the company announced in May 1919 that prevailing economic conditions would force it to shut down. In October 1919, its entire inventory, which it valued at over \$100,000, sold for around \$40,000.

Jansen says that although Elgin's boisterous claims, ineffective production, and poor sales doomed the company, he's glad to own the only 9-18 remaining. He mentions the engine still runs, and the tractor attracts a lot of attention at parades and shows.

The person Habing bought it from had installed rubber treads on all its wheels to make it easier to drive on pavement. Repainted at some point, the metal now shows extensive weathering. Jansen says he might restore it cosmetically, and he'll definitely keep the tractor's original operator instructions label, located on the inside of the wooden tool storage compartment.

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