

Pedal-Powered Farmall

Dan Rubison, Shelbina, Missouri, likes to get kids involved during the annual Northeast Missouri Old Threshers Show, so he's always working on something that will appeal to them.

Last year he stripped the engine out of a perfectly good C Farmall, lengthened the frame a little, and mounted two banks of four bicycles. The result is a people-powered tractor with a working clutch and transmission.

"The tractor was donated for the project and was in beautiful shape," he says. Aside from removing the engine and adding about 4 ft. to the frame, he made very few changes to the tractor.

Rubison decided to use girls' style bike frames for the tractor. He says finding eight decent single speed bikes was the hardest part of the whole project. He put out the word that he needed bikes and a mountain of them appeared shortly, most left at his shop after hours. "There must have been 100 or so, and with all those, I still had to go looking for more because there weren't enough alike that worked," he says.

He mounted the bicycles back to back, so four riders face out on each side. Seats, pedals and sprockets for the single speed bike frames were left in place. The front wheel has been removed. Instead of a rear wheel, the bike riders power a shaft that Rubison says connects to the clutch and transmission. Regular bike chain transmits power from the bike cranks to a drive shaft.

Each bank of bikes powers a separate shaft, so there are two power inputs to the transmission and just how this works, Rubison won't tell. He also won't say whether he used the original clutch or whether he added weights or a flywheel to help maintain momentum.

"You'll just have to come look for yourself," he says.

All he'll confirm is that he left the coasters in place on the old bikes, so if somebody stops pedaling, his or her pedals don't continue to turn.

He says just one person pedaling can move the tractor. With eight football player sized pedalers, the tractor pulled a sled about 100 ft.

The project was completed in three weekends, with two or three people working on it, at an out-of-pocket cost of only about \$350. "The tractor and bikes were all donated. I spent about \$300 for steel and chain, and another \$50 for red paint," he says.

Rubison's pedal powered C will be at the steam show again this summer. And he's still working on that pedal-powered dozer. He's already got the Caterpillar tractor he'll use. The Northeast Missouri Old Threshers Show, held in Shelbina, is always the first weekend after Labor Day.

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Dan Rubison, Four R-D Repair, 403 East Maple St., Shelbina, Mo. 63468 (ph 573 588-4444).



Lengthened Farmall has room for four kids on each side to provide "pedal power."



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Low-Cost Wooden Caskets

Zane Dittmann, Bonners Ferry, Idaho, recently called FARM SHOW to tell us about a new business he started. He builds and sells "inexpensive caskets that people can afford."

Dittman is a journeyman carpenter who builds his caskets from pine, fir, larch, or cedar. They sell for \$295 plus S&H.

"I make very basic caskets and cut out the middleman, which is why I can keep the price so low. I don't sell to funeral homes or dealers," says Dittman. "The savings can be big. For example, if you buy a wooden casket at a funeral home you'll pay about \$1,800 and the lowest price you can expect to pay for a cardboard casket is about \$500. Of course, metal caskets are the most expensive. I'd say \$3,800 is a mid range price for a metal casket sold by a funeral home. If you wait until the need is there, funeral homes will nail you because 90 percent of their business comes from someone in grief who walks through the door and doesn't know there are alternatives."

Dittman will arrange shipping anywhere in the U.S., using common carriers to find the lowest shipping cost. "Even with shipping charges added, my coffins are still economical. For example, the shipping charge to Denver is about \$105. So if you add \$105 to \$295, your final price is still under the cheapest cardboard box you can buy at a funeral home," he says.

According to Dittman, funeral homes used to have a monopoly on caskets and didn't allow you to buy anything but their own. That monopoly has been broken, he says. "Funeral homes are now required to take you if you provide your own casket."

He says a few other businesses have started building and selling caskets direct to consumers. "However, most of them still cater to folks with more money, so they make the caskets nicer and charge higher prices. The cheapest price I've seen for a casket on the internet was between \$600 and 700 plus S&H. I'm doing the Henry Ford thing; that is, here's the basic model, it's not fancy but it's inexpensive, and if you want to get fancy I can do that too. Custom-sized or designed



Zane Dittmann builds caskets from pine, fir, larch, or cedar. They sell for \$295 plus S&H.

caskets can be ordered. It will just cost you more."

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Zane A. Dittmann, The Coffin Shop, Box 880, Bonners Ferry, Idaho 83805 ph 208 267-6222.

"Simply Wood" Affordable Caskets

When a close friend died suddenly from complications from a spider bite while cutting wood, Glenn Crowther learned first hand that the economic impact of such a loss on a family can be substantial.

Crowther and his family operate a small farm near Osborn, Missouri. Realizing that people wishing to honor their deceased loved ones would sometimes spend themselves poor on caskets, vaults and a funeral service, he decided something should be done to ease the financial strain on grieving people.

Crowther says his family believes death is a natural part of life and that a simple wooden casket is a dignified way to honor and bury the dead. At the same time, it avoids financially burdening the remaining family.

"We offer beautiful, simple wooden caskets," he says. "We also provide information to assist in understanding the concerns about using a product like ours."

The Crowther family business, Simply

Wood, produces and sells caskets from solid ash, cherry, red oak, red elm, walnut, or pine. All woods are Missouri grown. They also offer a low-cost plywood casket, either preconstructed or in kit form. Prices range from \$250 for the kit to \$1,320 for a 6 ft. 5 in. cherry model. Custom-sized or designed caskets can be ordered.

Crowther will personally deliver any casket for free within 25 miles of his shop, and for a charge of \$0.50 per mile for up to 100 miles. He'll arrange shipping anywhere in the US, using common carriers and freight brokers to find the lowest shipping cost. He says it normally takes about two weeks to produce and deliver a standard casket, but he maintains a limited supply on hand for immediate delivery.

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Rev. Glenn Crowther, Simply Wood, Box 70, Osborn, Mo. 64474 (ph 816 675-2563; toll-free 866 382-9663; email: beeman@cameron.net; website: www.simplywoodproducts.com).

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