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Schoolbus Converted Into “Up And Over” Bale Hauler

“It gets bales off the field quick without the need for a tractor or trailer,” says custom baler David Anderson of Burr Oak, Kansas, who converted a school bus into an “up and over” big bale hauler.

Anderson says his home-built rig compares favorably with commercial truck-mounted bale haulers that sell for as much as \$160,000 or more. “I spent about \$75,000,” he says.

The patent pending transporter is designed to pick up big square bales in the field, transport them, and stack them. It can load and unload twelve 3 by 3-ft. bales or eight 4 by 4-ft. bales. It can stack 3 by 3-ft. bales six high, and 4 by 4-ft. bales four high.

If you just want to transport the bales and unload them off the back without stacking them, it’ll hold fourteen 3 by 3-ft. bales or nine 4 by 4-ft. bales. “I can haul the bales to the edge of the field or wherever I want and unload them quick,” says Anderson.

The unit can also be used to retrieve the stacked bales.

The hydraulic-powered unit picks up bales with a pair of loading arms equipped with

self-centering clamps. Operation is controlled by seven toggle switches mounted on a console inside the cab. Two cylinders are used to squeeze the clamps, two to raise the loader arms, one to flip the clamp back, and two to raise or lower the deck’s tailgate. Power is provided by a hydraulic pump that’s direct-driven off the bus engine. Once a bale is placed on the bed, the clamps release and are returned forward for another bale. The cycle is repeated until a full load of bales are in place on the truck. Then the flatbed over the cab elevates to about 30 degrees, allowing the bales on top to slide back to the end. Once a load is completed, the bales are stacked on their edges instead of on their string sides which keeps the stack more stable. Or, the tailgate can be lowered to allow bales to slide to the ground.

Anderson bought the 1986 Ford 65-passenger bus from the Denver, Colorado, public school system for \$1,500. It was equipped with a diesel engine and an automatic transmission. He cut off the bus behind the cab. Then he cut through the chassis and made a



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Unit can stack 3 by 3-ft. bales six high, and 4 by 4-ft. bales four high. It can also be used to retrieve the stacked bales.

slanted flatbed. He used steel I-beams to build the flatbed, which is permanently mounted at an angle and extends up over the bus’s cab. The bales are then pushed back each time Anderson puts another bale on.

“I’m quite proud of it. My friend Darryl McCorkle helped build it,” says Anderson. “It took more than a year.

“The bus I used has a diesel engine and automatic transmission. You don’t want a manual transmission because the driver would always be riding the clutch.

“I used a bus instead of a truck because

used buses are much cheaper. I think the same idea could be used to pick up round bales or high moisture plastic-wrapped bales, because we’re not sparring the bales, we’re squeezing them.”

Anderson notes that the hydraulics were designed by Jamie Ferris of Universal Hydraulics in Hastings, Neb. (ph 877 463-5125).

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Silo Addition Expands Farm Home

For the past year, 76-year-old Garold Bradley of Lansford, N. Dak., has been engrossed in a labor of love as he works to complete an eye-catching addition to his farm home. The retired dairy farmer is adding the top half of a metal silo - which he used for 31 years - to one end of his home.

“I got the idea when I saw a round grain bin sitting out front of a Seattle grocery store. It had two floors in it that had been made into offices,” he says. “It seemed like a good way to add a two-story addition that wouldn’t require any siding, shingles, rafters, or sheeting. All I’d have to do is finish up the inside.”

His original house is 30 ft. wide and the silo addition is 30 ft. 6 in., so it was a good fit.

While he was dairying, the silo held 700 tons of oats, peas or corn silage, and it continued to be used even after Bradley shut down his dairy in 1995. For the next 10 years, neighbors stored grain in it.

In July, 2006, Bradley dismantled the top 17 ft. of the 40-ft. tall silo using a big crane to lift the 7 1/2-ton structure and set it onto two 40-ft. power poles on the ground, which were used to skid it 120 ft. to the south side of his house, using two big tractors.

Bradley had already built a foundation and a 32-ft. sq. floor that was level with the existing home, using 4 by 8-ft. tongue-and-groove plywood. The silo was set onto the floor and fastened down with about 150 3/8-in. lag bolts. The floor is held up by 18 posts that are cemented 4 ft. deep into the ground, he points out.

He opened up the end wall of his single-story house, and also removed some of the silo’s lower panels to join the two structures. Then he built two short walls to close in the side gaps between the silo and the house.

“I squared it (the silo) off to the house from the middle on each side, creating an upper level bathroom on one side, and a storage room on the other side of the top floor,” he explains. “After I had put in the second-story floor, I cut out doorways for these rooms from the silo wall.”

Bradley framed in the interior walls with 2 by 6 studs and installed 6 in. of insulation.

“A partition down the middle of the lower floor divides the family room from the master bedroom. It also serves as a support for the second story floor,” he says. “By combining our original living room with the silo’s family room, a 15 by 42-ft. room was created. The master bedroom is 15 by 30 ft., including a 6 by 12-ft. walk-in closet.”

In the open area where the house and silo meet, Bradley built a spiral staircase.

Bradley put in two windows and one patio door upstairs, plus two patio doors downstairs.

“I’m going to cathedral the top floor where the dome is, insulating it with spray insulation. I also plan to put in a skylight,” he explains. “The top floor will be a recreation room with an outdoor wrap around deck, and an exterior stairway down. The whole silo added almost 2,000 sq. ft. to our house.”

Bradley says he’s not planning to cover the outside, and will instead paint it to match the house (light tan trimmed in brown.) If he finds



Garold Bradley added the top half of a metal silo - which he used to store silage for 31 years - to one end of his home.



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that the addition becomes too hot in summer because of the metal, he says it wouldn’t be a problem to put on lap siding.

He’ll bolster the house’s current heating system with the addition of a corn furnace in the silo. It’ll have a fireplace mantel and pipes going to the upstairs, he says.

“I imagine I’ve got about \$25,000 worth of materials into it now, but I’ve bought most of my supplies so it won’t be much more than

that to finish construction,” he says. “I’ve been doing most of the work myself, with some help from my sons, my son-in-law and a couple of neighbors. We hope to have it finished this winter.”

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