



Photos courtesy Kevin Adams

Ernie Adams takes his three 11/16th-scale “dwarf cars” on the highway to attend shows around the country.

Road-Worthy Dwarf Cars

When Ernie Adams travels the interstate in his '49 Mercury coupe, he's the one in the passing lane — despite the fact the car is a dwarf model that he built himself. The 80-in. wheel base vehicle with a Toyota engine and drive train will hit 100 mph, according to the 70-year-old Maricopa, Arizona, resident. He takes all three of his street legal dwarf cars (11/16th-scale) on the highway to attend shows around the country.

Car aficionados admire the detail and precision in Adams' handiwork right down to the ashtrays, glove box and operating parts. He spends about 3,000 hrs. and \$4,000 on each vehicle. He keeps costs down because he fabricates body parts from steel in his junk pile. People regularly drop off old large appliances; refrigerators are his favorite. His mini Mercury's dash was fashioned from an old refrigerator door. He shapes the metal with his home-built English wheel, bead roller and dyes. He creates moldings, by pulling stainless steel through his hand-built extruder with a winch.

Things that he pays for include new 20-gauge mild steel for the exterior, 14-gauge steel for the bottom, 1/4-in. safety glass for front and rear windows, professional sanding and painting, upholstery work, 12-in. radial tires and the engine and drivetrain.

He builds the cars to meet street legal codes. To be licensed in Arizona he saves all

his receipts for expenses to set the value of the vehicle. The car is inspected and given a VIN number.

Besides his latest car — the Mercury — he licensed a 1939 Chevy and a 1942 Ford with a hydraulically operated folding top.

He built a 1929 Ford Hillbilly Car just for fun. It comes complete with a potbelly stove in the back seat, a double barrel shotgun and other antiques covered with hokey one-liner jokes.

“I'm a guy who likes to live in my shop,” Adams admits. Complete with dining room table and chairs, neighbors often stop by to visit in the afternoon.

He adds that his interest in building dwarf cars began when he was a kid, when he advanced from a wooden crate car to a motorbike with a washing machine motor. He was only 11.

“I started working at 16 in a garage and was a mechanic all my life. In my younger days I junked out a lot of cars, so I learned how they were put together,” Adams says.

In January, Adams' son plans to put up a website, www.dwarfcarpromotions.com, to sell dwarf car related items including a DVD of a Route 66 trip via dwarf car.

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Ernie Adams, 52954 W. Halfmoon Rd., Maricopa, Arizona 85139 (ph 520 424-3158; skadams45@yahoo.com).

Mini Deere Tractors

“My grandsons like to drive them in local parades,” says Bill Wahlberg, Little Canada, Minn., about the two mini Deere tractors he built.

His mini 1935 Deere B is powered by an 8 hp, 1-cyl. Tecumseh engine, which belt-drives the transaxle off a Sears riding mower. The tractor's 20-in. rear wheels were taken from an old Deere R ground-driven manure spreader. To make the narrow front wheels, Wahlberg modified wheelbarrow wheels that he bought at Northern Tool. He cut the rims apart and welded in metal spokes, and then mounted new tires on them.

The cast iron seat is off an old implement. “The steering wheel is from a real Deere B, but the band on the wheel was badly worn so I made a new one out of 5/8-in. round stock and hammered finger indentations into it,” says Wahlberg. A 1 3/4-in. dia. car exhaust pipe and an air cleaner pipe mount on top of the tractor's hood.

Wahlberg also converted an old Murray pedal tractor into a motorized unit that's powered by a 2 hp Tecumseh engine.

Wahlberg and his son, Ryan, removed

the tractor's pedals and moved the pedal driveshaft forward, then cut out a hole big enough for the engine and mounted a pulley on the crankshaft. The engine belt-drives a larger pulley that he mounted on the driveshaft, which chain-drives the rear wheels just like on the original pedal tractor. A spring-loaded lever connected to an idler pulley is used to put the tractor into neutral or drive.

He replaced the pedal tractor's rear wheels with larger ones and also raised the tractor's front fork to keep the tractor level.

A small propane tank serves as the tractor's fuel tank, with the propane tank's fuel cap mounted on top of the tractor's hood.

“A small gear out of an old hand-operated shop drill serves as the steering gear. The 3/4-in. chrome exhaust pipe was made from a chair leg and is welded onto a 1 1/2-in. dia. car exhaust pipe,” notes Wahlberg.

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Bill Wahlberg, 2570 Jackson St., Little Canada, Minn. 55117 (ph 651 270-1128; billcotools@msn.com).



His latest car is a 1949 Mercury coupe. He also has a 1939 Chevy and a 1942 Ford with a hydraulically-operated folding top.



He keeps his costs down by fabricating body parts from junked steel.



There's great detail and precision in Adams' handiwork, right down to the ashtrays, glove box and operating parts.



Mini 1935 Deere B is powered by an 8 hp Tecumseh engine (center). Old Murray pedal tractor was converted into a motorized unit powered by a 2 hp Tecumseh engine (right). Note full-size Deere B in background.