

Editor's Notebook



Mark Newhall

Editor & Publisher



FARM SHOW editor Mark Newhall recently took the new SkyRide for a spin around its quarter-mile overhead track.

SkyRide Looks For A Market

I took an afternoon off recently to visit a rural inventor working on a giant project – a human-powered amusement ride called the SkyRide.

Inventor Scott Olson, Waconia, Minn., already has several hugely successful inventions under his belt, including inline Rollerblades and the Rowbike. We featured the first prototype of his new SkyRide last year (Vol. 35, No. 5). He has since developed a ready-for-production model with a quarter-mile overhead monorail and fiberglass “pods” that hang beneath, powered by bicycle-type pedals. I hopped on and took a ride, reaching speeds of 15 to 20 mph, swinging widely on turns. It was fun!

Scott envisions the SkyRide in amusement parks or at outdoor recreational facilities, such as ski resorts. It might also catch on as a quiet and exciting way to travel through zoos or wildlife areas. Health clubs might even latch onto it as a new workout machine, with a SkyRide hanging above running tracks.

Scott’s a true entrepreneur who puts substantial resources at risk to bring his ideas to market. His farm is a showcase of innovative new ideas. You can check out the SkyRide at www.skyridefitness.com or call 952 220-1250.

Fighting Unfair Government Regulations

A Minnesota farm family recently won a court battle against their local municipality, challenging an ordinance that prohibited the sale of out-of-state produce at their on-farm greenhouse operation. Their lawsuit was bankrolled by an independent legal group called the Institute For Justice that challenges unfair government regulations around the country.

Keith Bergmann and family live in the semi-rural community of Lake Elmo, basically an outlying suburb of the Twin Cities. In 2008 the town outlawed the sale of fresh farm produce from outside the limits of the city’s sprawling borders. The idea was to promote local farmer’s markets and keep “outsiders” from profiting by selling to local citizens. However, farms with retail operations like the Bergmann family were badly hurt by the ruling because – among other things – they sell thousands of pumpkins and Christmas trees each year which come from out of state. The family has operated Country Sun Farm & Greenhouse for more than 40 years.

With the help of the Institute For Justice, the Bergmanns

filed suit last spring challenging the constitutionality of the ordinance. Last fall a Federal judge ruled that the city’s ordinance “unconstitutionally discriminates against interstate commerce”. He said the plaintiffs had clearly shown that the law virtually wiped out the local pumpkin and Christmas tree business. Soon after the ruling the city modified its ordinance. Now farmers need only apply for a simple permit to sell produce, no matter where it originates.

The 20-year-old Institute for Justice, headquartered in Arlington, Va., works with small business people and entrepreneurs across the country who have run into business-killing government roadblocks. The Institute often challenges licensing and permitting laws designed not to protect the consumer, but to protect an industry from new competition. Some cases are strictly local while others have statewide or national implications. For more information, go to the Institute’s website at www.ij.org or call 703 682-9321.



Photo shows two of Merendini’s three prototype powered wheelbarrows. He’ll sell all three for \$750.

An Inventor’s Tale

Bill Merendini has three powered wheelbarrows for sale. They were prototypes for a design he patented and sold to a large company. The story behind why he still owns them is a cautionary tale for other inventors trying to get a product to market.

“It was a great design. We couldn’t overload it. It would go right up a hill with anything we could put in it,” says Merendini, noting that the thing that set his wheelbarrow apart from anything else on the market was its auto braking transmission. Release the throttle, and the brake activated, preventing the weight from pushing the operator or the load down an incline. A large lawn and garden equipment maker liked the concept and bought the rights.

“They offered me \$150,000 outright, or I could take \$50,000 and receive \$6 for each unit they sold,” he recalls. After looking at research into how many units the company projected they could sell, Merendini took the second option. Unfortunately, he never asked what would happen if the product never made it to market.

After testing his prototype extensively, the company made some changes and then asked Merendini to build three new prototypes, paying in advance for them. While he was building them the company was sold to a larger corporation.

When Merendini called the new company to arrange delivery, no one called back. When he finally made contact with management, no one knew anything about his wheelbarrow or the patents. No one was aware of any plans to do anything with it. Eventually Merendini received a letter giving him ownership of the three wheelbarrows he had built, but not the patent. “Perhaps if I had asked for a clause regarding failure-to-market, I would have gotten my patent back, too,” he notes.

All of this happened 15 years ago. The wheelbarrows have never been used and are still clean, fresh and brand new. Their 1.6-hp Tecumseh motors haven’t been started since they were put in a warehouse. If anyone is interested, Merendini would sell the three units for \$750, plus shipping.

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Bill Merendini, P.O. Box 444, Brodheadsville, Penn. 18322 (ph 570 992-5026).

Catch Up On What You’ve Missed!

Our new “Encyclopedia of Made It Myself Ideas - Volume II” features the best farmer-built ideas from the past 5 years of FARM SHOW. Thousands of readers have already bought copies of our first Encyclopedia, published in 2005. Even if you’ve saved all your past issues, all stories in both books are indexed and cross-referenced to make them easy to find.

This new 482-page book features more than 1,200 made-it-myself ideas featured in FARM SHOW from 2005 to 2010. One enthusiastic reader told us it’s the “best bargain in farming”.



Our first “Encyclopedia of Made It Myself Ideas - Volume I” is still available. It features all the best farmer-built ideas featured in FARM SHOW from 2000 to 2005.

Each book sells for just \$14.95 (\$18.95 Can.) or you can buy both books together for just \$26.95 (\$36.95 Can.) plus \$4.95 S&H (just one shipping charge no matter how many books you order). These books are a great way to catch up on what you’ve missed!

Order online at www.farmshow.com or send payment to: FARM SHOW, P.O. Box 1029, Lakeville, Minn. 55044.

What’s Old Is New Again

In 1893, Iowa inventor William Morrison showed the first practical electric car at the Chicago World’s Fair. Morrison’s 4-passenger surrey featured rechargeable batteries, rack-and-pinion steering, and high-spoked wheels for traveling the rutted roads of the day. Capable of speeds up to 14 mph, the car had a range of 40 miles and took 10 hrs. to recharge. Electric cars were popular before 1900, with many makes and models for sale. More than a third of the nation’s 4,000 cars were electric-powered.



William Morrison’s 1893 electric car carried 4 passengers and ran 40 miles on a single charge.

Liberty Quotes

“I have wondered at times what the Ten Commandments would have looked like if Moses had run them through the U.S. Congress.” *Ronald Reagan*

“We can’t constantly explain to our voters that taxpayers have to be on the hook for certain risks, rather than those who make a lot of money taking those risks.” *Angela Merkel*

“Political language is designed to make lies sound truthful and murder respectable, and to give the appearance of solidarity to pure wind.” *George Orwell*

“The state spends much time and effort persuading the public that it is not really what it is and that the consequences of its actions are positive rather than negative.”

Hans Hermann Hoppe

“Depression and mass unemployment are not caused by the free market, but by government interference in the economy.” *Ludwig von Mises*

“If you believe it reprehensible to possess the means and will to use lethal force to repel a criminal assault, how can you call upon another to do so for you?” *Jeffrey R. Snyder*

“Any fool can make a rule, and any fool will mind it.”

Henry David Thoreau

“The dissenter is every human being at those times of his life when he resigns momentarily from the herd and thinks for himself.” *Archibald Macleish*

“When men get in the habit of helping themselves to the property of others, they cannot be easily cured of it.” *New York Times, 1909*

“If we won’t choose to pay the price of liberty, then by default we shall suffer the cost of servitude – whether it be the iron chains of a tyrannical oligarchy or the regulatory chains of unelected, faceless bureaucrats. When we witness our neighbors abused by regulations, will we skulk away and hope we’re not next? Or will we stand by them and challenge – as freedom-loving Americans – the tyranny of lawless leaders?” *Phil Trieb*

When Lena was 6 mos. pregnant with her second child, her 4-year-old daughter, Little Lena, came into the room as she was getting dressed and said, “Mommy, yew are getting fat!”

Lena replied, “Ya, honey, but yew must remember I half a baby growing in dis tummy.”

“Vell, I know dat,” Little Lena replied, “but what’s growing in your butt?”

Ole, Sven and a group of friends went deer hunting and paired off in twos for the day. That evening, Ole returned alone, staggering under the weight of an 8-point buck.

“Where’s Sven?” the others asked.

“Sven had a stroke of some kind. He’s a couple ov miles back up da trail,” Ole said.

“Yew left Sven laying out dere and carried da deer back?” they inquired.

“Vell, it was a tough call,” answered Ole. “But I figured no von is going tew steal Sven!”

After the baptism of his baby brother in church, Little Ole sobbed all the way home in the back seat of the car.

His father asked him three times what was wrong. Finally little Ole replied, “Dhat preacher said he wanted us browt up in a Christian home . . . but I vant tew stay vit yew guys.”