

## King-Size Dually Took 2 Years To Build

Dean Rothenbuhler says putting together a jumbo, dually pickup for his daughter was like putting together a 1,000-piece jigsaw puzzle. But before he could get started, he had to first find the pieces.

"When I started, all I had was an idea of what I wanted to build," says Rothenbuhler. "To get parts that would fit was the biggest problem and took the most time. Pieces came from everywhere."

The box and doors were from a Texas salvage yard and the four-door cab from a railroad company truck in Pennsylvania. The front hood came off a 1998 TopKick Chevy truck. The front end was taken from an over-the-road rig and the interior from a salvaged Suburban. The chassis is that of a 1998 2-ton Chevy used by a power company as a line truck.

Rothenbuhler started by stripping the chassis and chopping it back by about 9 ft. To get the height he wanted, he had a second frame made to match the first. Allfab, a supplier of boxes and other equipment to his trucking firm, did the fabrication out of new steel.

"We pulled the rear end up closer so the duals fit right in the fender wells," says Rothenbuhler. "We had to change the interior of the cab quite a bit to make room for the engine."

Rothenbuhler found a 3116 Caterpillar

engine with an Allison automatic transmission. Its size required that firewalls in the cab be shifted. It also required cutting the rear driveshaft and cutting every crossmember in the chassis for it to fit.

"We had to lengthen the front driveshaft and add a drop box transfer case," says Rothenbuhler. "It's all air power to operate the front drive, no linkage. It makes it really smooth if we kick it into 4-WD as we're going down the road."

All used equipment was carefully overhauled with key components – such as U-joints on the front axle – rebuilt. All body parts were repainted. Some items were custom-designed, like the 10-ft. wide steps to match the 4-door cab at its new height. Rothenbuhler designed them to include storage spaces on the driver side and fuel tank and battery storage on the passenger side. He took his plans to Allfab.

"We tried out different ideas, such as gluing stuff together to see how it looked," he recalls. "The storage side can hold folding chairs and stuff that's nice to have at truck shows and such."

As Rothenbuhler started assembling the various pieces, things didn't always fit as intended. "We went through a lot of drill bits," he says. "It took a lot of figuring to fit the cab on this frame."

Other new components included a front



Dean Rothenbuhler put together this jumbo, dually pickup. The 4-door cab is from a railroad company truck and has 10-ft. wide steps to match on either side.

bumper, which once it fit, was sent off to California along with the grill and other parts to be chromed. Rothenbuhler notes that the grill was plastic. The company made a metal form that fits on like a stencil. This was then chromed and attached to the grill.

He also added hood scoops, power windows, stainless steel mirrors and small chrome cubes for LED signals. LED's were also installed in a chrome strip between the steps and the cab as well as in the box. Those, Rothenbuhler says, were the most difficult.

"We had to make them to fit where the regular lights had been," he says.

Another customization was the 5-in. twin chrome stacks. They're tied together by a Y pipe. Because the stacks come up beside the rear doors, Rothenbuhler had heat shields made for them as well as handles to grab as passengers climb into the cab.

The entire process took two years. Once complete, the big truck stands around 9 ft. tall and about 24 ft. long. It weighs in at 13,200 lbs. and gets more than its share of attention.

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## "Snowplow Truck" Customized For Heavy Hauling Jobs

"It's geared down really low so it has a lot of pulling power, yet it's fuel efficient and has been trouble-free. My total cost to put it together was only about \$60,000," says Stanley Golbow, Austin, Texas, who bought a new 2005 GM C4500 1 1/2-ton, 4-WD "snowplow truck" and customized it for heavy duty hauling chores.

He bought the truck equipped with a cab, double frame rail chassis, and diesel engine for \$38,000. He spent another \$22,000 to build a flatbed, add heavy-duty homemade front and rear bumpers, and install 16,500-lb. electric winches equipped with 1/2-in. dia. steel cable on front and back. He also replaced the truck's original wheels with big new 46-in. high tires mounted on 12 by 20 wheel rims. The truck has a gross vehicle weight rating of 13,000 lbs.

"I spent about as much money as you'd spend for a new 2-ton pickup, but my truck can haul much heavier loads and also makes a great off-road vehicle. It also looks impressive," says Golbow. "I bought this truck because I knew I could customize it to my tastes, and because it was equipped with a 5:13 gear ratio rear end, which lets me pull big trailers without working the engine or drivetrain too hard. The truck came equipped with a fuel efficient 6.6-liter, 350 hp turbocharged diesel engine, which saves on fuel costs.

"The truck was designed with a heavy duty chassis for plowing snow. I bought it from a Chicago dealer who was clearing out trucks for the next year's models so I got it cheap. I had a local fabricator make everything."

Golbow says the truck's rear end was an important factor in his buying decision. "When most people buy a new pickup they don't think about the rear end gear ratios and assume the pickup they buy will pull anything. However, many trucks have high 3:50 or 4:11 gear ratios, which can result in damage to the rear axle or torque converter

if the truck is used to pull big loads. Also, the truck's brakes often aren't big enough. You can look at the last 8 digits of a pickup's VIN number to find out what the truck's gear ratio is.

"I've used my truck to haul loads that weigh up to 14,000 lbs. on a trailer that weighs 5,000 lbs. One time I hauled a 20-ft. long dumpster filled with 30 yards of dirt, trees, rocks, and concrete. I also drive this truck off-road just for fun. The 5:13 rear end lets me climb 20 and 30 degree grades with no problems. I've managed to bury my truck so deep that only a few inches of the tires were sticking above the ground. But I was able to use the winches to get the truck out."

The truck's flatbed measures 11 1/2 ft. long by 8 ft. wide and is made from 3-in. by 1/4-in. thick channel irons spaced on 12-in. centers, with 4-in. rails mounted on a subframe that runs the length of the bed.

The rear bumper is made from 1/8-in. thick diamond plate sheet metal framed by 4-in. dia., 1/2-in. thick steel tubing. "Both sides of the rear bumper are angled, so I can go through ditches without getting hung up," says Golbow. A pintle hitch and receiver hitch mount on back of the bumper.

The truck's original front bumper was made from light 1/8-in. thick sheet metal, so he replaced it with a homemade 12-in. deep bumper built from 4 by 12 by 1/2-in. thick channel iron.

The truck's 300-lb. spare tire mounts horizontally on a steel rack bolted to the flatbed right behind the cab. "By pulling 2 pins I can flip the rack to a vertical position and then roll the tire off the flatbed, without needing any help," says Golbow. "I use the rear winch to pull the tire up onto the bed and then stand it up and set it in the rack and flop the rack back down. I paid \$2,000 for both winches.

The truck's hood is original and can be flipped forward for easy access to the engine,



Stanley Golbow bought a new 2005 GM C4500 1 1/2-ton, 4-WD "snowplow truck" and customized it for heavy-duty hauling chores.

he notes.

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Both sides of truck's rear bumper are angled so Golbow can go through ditches without getting hung up.



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