By Lorn Manthey, Contributing Editor

Log Splitter Made From Scrapped Combine

"We've probably split more than 200 cords of wood with this machine that we made from an old self-propelled combine," says Henry Bohlen of West Burlington, Iowa. "It's handy to move around and has a lot of power. Does a great job on any type of hardwood."

Bohlen's project started when he found a junked Massey combine that had a decent drive train and frame. First he removed the feeder house and all of the harvesting components, leaving a bare frame with the original drive wheels, drive train and rear wheels. Since the combine's original engine was hurting he replaced it with a Chrysler industrial flathead six. He also put in a new radiator, a 12-volt electrical system and a different gas tank. He mounted a 24 gpm hydraulic pump on the front of engine that powers the splitter and the auxiliary lift that he uses to raise heavy logs onto the splitter.

Bohlen says after getting the basic idea for the machine, he just figured it out as he went along. "There was very little frame left with most of the components of the combine gone so a 9-ft. long, 8-in. wide H-beam was added from the engine to the two rear wheels and that same beam became the main structure for the splitter mechanism."

"It's handy to move around and has a lot of power," says Henry Bohlen, who made this self-propelled log splitter from an old Massey combine.

Wide flange beams are much easier to work with for log splitters than regular I-beams, notes Bohlen. A 4 by 30-in. long hydraulic cylinder moves the wedge to push the wood into the stationary pedestal. Pushing the wedge into the wood is much more convenient because you aren't always dragging the pieces back that still need to be split again.

Bohlen says the combine's hydraulic system provides plenty of power to split maple, oak and various hardwood logs. One side of the machine has a hydraulic hoist to lift heavy pieces of wood onto the splitter… "a real back saver," Bohlen says.

The self-propelled splitter also has a hydraulic blade that's mounted on fabricated arms on the front. The blade is useful for light duty work but the machine is too light in weight to push very much.

Much of the welding and fabrication done was a project for a student in a world-class vocational welding class in Burlington High School in Burlington, Iowa. The student did a great job and won a first place national award from the Lincoln Welding Company annual contest.

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Henry Bohlen, Wildlife Lakes Elk Farm, 13852 Washington Rd., West Burlington, Iowa 52655 (ph 319 752-4659; henry@wildlifelakes.com).

Cast Iron Radiators Reborn As Stand-Alone Space Heaters

Don't throw out any old cast iron radiators. Pierre Lemieux can give them new life by converting them into stand-alone space heaters.

"Cast iron radiators are extremely efficient, but coats of paint can reduce efficiency by 10 percent," says Lemieux. "Cleaned up, they're 18 percent more efficient than electric convection heaters and offer a more comfortable and healthy heat than forced air or convection. With our heating element, they're also more efficient than hot water or steam systems."

Many cast iron radiators are prized for their decorative look. Lemieux notes that different parts of Canada and the U.S. feature different designs. He adds that radiators made in North America are much higher quality than those made elsewhere.

"The foundry work is amazing in detail," says Lemieux. "I have a Verona from American Radiator, probably cast in the Detroit area, and you can almost pick out the grains of sand it was cast in. It's a work of art."

Lemieux has developed his own system for removing old paint and has developed a proprietary heating core. To preserve the detailed look, his crew uses water pressure at 12,500 psi with low water flow.

"The old paint is often lead contaminated, so the less water used, the better," says Lemieux. "We run the wastewater through a centrifuge to remove the lead and then reuse the water."

The heating element is made to order by a Montreal manufacturer. Lemieux keeps a large inventory in order to match differing Canadian and U.S. plumbing styles. The length of the heating elements, as well as wattage, varies to match the many different sizes of radiators.

"We offer wattages from 250 to 5,000 watts in increments of 250," says Lemieux.

Customers can send their old radiators to EcoRad for restoration and heating core installation. Lemieux and his crew will even do larger restorations and core installation on site.

EcoRad converts old cast iron radiators into stand-alone space heaters, removing the old paint and installing a more efficient heating element.

One of the biggest costs in restoration of the radiators is shipping the heavy cast iron units. Depending on distance from Montreal, it may be less expensive to order from company stock than to have personal radiators restored. The company maintains a large inventory rescued from demolition or remodeling of old buildings. Prices start at $695 (Canadian).

"It will cost around $400 to ship a pallet of 6 radiators from Minnesota to Montreal," says Lemieux. "Unless you have a radiator with esthetic value, it may be better to buy one from our stock. However, if you have several, it's worth it to ship them for refurbishing."

Prospective customers are encouraged to contact the company with the size of the room and its location. A worksheet is also available on the company website. The increased efficiency of the EcoRad installed heating element will often require a smaller radiator unit than needed with piped hot water or steam.

"With the heating element in the radiator, each kW of energy goes directly to heat the room as there's no loss of heat to pipes," says Lemieux. "Each room can have its own radiator and thermostat, so you heat only those rooms you use."

If peak power rates are a concern, the thermal mass of a radiator can lower heating costs, points out Lemieux. "If peak time starts at 7 a.m., turn up the thermostat at 6 and off at 7," he advises. "The radiator will continue to heat the room for 3 to 4 more hours."

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