

15-Piece Tractor Train Is A Big Hit At Iowa Parades

By Dee Goerge, Contributing Editor

Even though he retired from farming, Gene Huelman has found a way to use his favorite tractor – a 1947 MD Farmall diesel. Instead of working in fields, the MD pulls Huelman’s 15-unit tractor train to the delight of parade-goers in towns in northwest Iowa.

“I don’t know exactly how I got the idea,” admits the Schaller, Iowa, resident. “I had parked some tractors in the driveway in a row and got the idea to hook them together.”

Huelman, who has collected and restored all of Farmall’s letter series from the 1940’s and 50’s, had plenty of tractors to choose from, including approximately 350 farm toys.

“It’s a good lineup,” he says. “They really gradually go down in size.”

Huelman’s tractor train includes the following models: 1947 MD, 1954 Super H, 1949 C, circa 1947 B, 1949 A, 1947 McCormick Deering Farmall Cub, 1970’s 682 Cub Cadet garden tractor, 1970’s 282 Hydro Cadet garden tractor, 1949 open grill H pedal tractor, 1/8-scale Super M, 1/16-scale M, 1/32-scale M, 1/16-scale Cub Cadet, 1/64-scale Farmall 400 and a 1 1/2-in. long Farmall tractor Huelman found on a keychain.

The 125-ft. train maneuvers surprisingly well around corners, he says.

“One thing about the Farmall tractors is that they have a place up front to put hitches on them,” Huelman says. He customized tongues made of rectangular steel tubing between the large tractors and made hitches out of scrap iron between the smaller tractors. He has them hooked up so the MD steers the whole line. The hitches for the toys connect to the tires so they don’t break off in cracks or holes.

Huelman laughs as he recalls how the toys went underwater through puddles at a parade just after a rain. He adds that though his big tractors are restored, the toys get the most attention.



Photo courtesy, Betty Bailey, The Schaller Herald

People in northwest Iowa love watching Gene Huelman pull this 125-ft. long tractor train in parades. The 15 hooked-together tractors gradually go down in size, starting with a 1947 MD Farmall diesel that pulls everything down to a 1 1/2-in. long Farmall that Huelman found on a keychain.

“It’s just comical. The little kids get down on their hands and knees looking at the little ones,” he says. Collectors appreciate the 1949 pedal tractor, which was a wreck before Huelman restored it.

“It was the first pedal tractor that Eska made that really resembled a tractor,” he says. “It has some real value.”

With all the restoration work and hitch design finished, Huelman’s biggest challenge

is transporting all the pieces. It takes him three trips with a 25-ft. trailer. Attending parades is easier when a company sponsors him and picks up his big tractors in one load, and Huelman can bring the rest on his trailer.

After a busy summer, Huelman threatens to “retire” his tractor train, though his wife, Marguerite, doesn’t really believe he will quit because showing it has been a lot of fun.

“People are welcome to copy it,” Huelman

says. And, he throws out a challenge. He’d like to see the green guys (John Deere) come up with a tractor train, too.

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“Made It Myself” Mini Stagecoach

“People love it,” says Robert Hancock, Ottumwa, Iowa, about his home-built mini stagecoach.

The stagecoach measures 4 ft. high, 2 ft. wide, and 5 ft. long. It can seat 2 small children. Passengers enter through a door that’s only 2 ft. tall and 12 in. wide. The stagecoach is painted fire hydrant red with yellow wheels, and has white lettering and scroll work on both sides. Hancock made everything on the unit except for the wheels.

“I patterned it after a photo of an old Wells Fargo stagecoach I saw in a magazine about 10 years ago. It looks just like the real thing,” says Hancock. “I didn’t use any plans and I didn’t build it to scale. I built it entirely from stuff I’ve kept over the years and didn’t spend any money at all.”

The stagecoach’s frame is made from 1 1/4-in. thick plywood. Leather suspension straps from an old horse harness support the body. The hangers are trailer springs cut in half and bent to shape.

The stagecoach’s entire body is somewhat egg-shaped and bulges out from top to bottom and also curves inward toward the front and back. “The body is made with 3/8-in. thick bendable plywood. It only bends one way so making the compound curves was rather difficult,” says Hancock. “It took a lot of bending.”

The inside upholstery is from an old Chevy car. The driver’s seat is covered with black material from the seat out of a diesel locomotive. Canvas covers the back luggage compartments. The luggage rack on top of the stagecoach was cut from a hog panel.

The stagecoach’s windows have roll-up coverings made from hog skin. “A friend gave me a chunk of hog skin, which I cut out to cover the windows,” says Hancock.

Making the lettering and scroll work on the stagecoach body was a challenging job. “First I made a pattern out of cardboard. Then I painted the body red and used a white felt pen to do the lettering and scroll work,” says Hancock.

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Robert Hancock, 6465 River Rd., Ottumwa, Iowa 52501 (ph 641 652-3383).



Home-built mini stagecoach measures just 4 ft. high, 2 ft. wide, and 5 ft. long. It seats 2 small children. “I patterned it after a photo of an old Wells Fargo stagecoach that I saw in a magazine. It looks just like the real thing,” says Robert Hancock.

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