



“We’ve used it a lot in the woods, and it shows,” says Matt Hilgenkamp about his 1981 Ford Courier pickup.

Battered Old Ford Wins “Ugly Truck” Contest

If ever a pickup deserved to win an “ugly truck” contest, it’s this one. Matt Hilgenkamp’s 1981 Ford Courier is truly an ugly, beat-up monstrosity.

“It has become quite a conversation piece,” states Hilgenkamp, of Arlington, Neb., who recently won a contest sponsored by The Fence Post magazine.

“I bought the pickup used with about 120,000 miles on it for driving to work and used it for about a year until one day it broke down on the highway. I used another pickup to tow it, but on the way home it came unhooked and went right past me and into the ditch. It got banged up but was still driveable.

“It was a hot summer so we made it into a convertible and started using it for doing fence work and driving around the farm. It

went over a lot of tree stumps, and one day the back end of the pickup flew off when we hit a tree. The original lights got knocked out by tree branches, and the front bumper was damaged when it hit a steel post. With no hood to support them, the doors started sagging so we used baling wire to shut them permanently. We used the hood for a sled, pulling it behind the pickup.

“After all this the pickup still refused to die. We ran it without water in the radiator but still couldn’t kill it. There was no fan or anything - just oil, gas, and a battery. We used it that way for a long while until it finally died.”

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“Scooter is powered by a 12-volt battery and has two wheels on back.

“Hardly Davidson” Electric Scooter

“I wanted an electric scooter but I didn’t want to spend a lot of money. I came up with something I call a Hardly Davidson,” says Paul Besler, Winnipeg, Manitoba.

A small bike fork mounts on front of the plywood and aluminum frame. A pair of 12-in. high rubber drive wheels, spaced about 4 in. apart, mount on back. A 12-volt battery mounts on the platform and powers two in-line, super magnet motors mounted inside a padded wooden box that serves as the seat. The two motors are used to belt-drive a 9-in. pulley, which in turn drives the scooter’s right rear wheel. The other rear wheel is non-driven.

An on-off foot pedal relay that’s wired to the battery is used to put the scooter in motion. A 25 amp double pole, double throw switch mounted on the front side of the box puts the scooter in forward or reverse.

“My grand nephews rode it for the first time last winter. They got a big kick out of

it,” says Besler. “Everyone who sees it wants to know if I would build one for their grand kids. Since the photos were taken I’ve added reflectors on back, as well as a rear view mirror and an electric horn. It weighs only about 40 lbs. so I can easily lift it into a car trunk.

“The scooter has enough power to handle kids up to 60 lbs. and up to 9 mph depending on battery voltage. The pulley that drives the rear wheel is connected to expansion springs, which results in a smooth, fast start as the driver steps on the foot pedal. The motors require very little current. A plug-in, 1-amp charging system is used to recharge the battery. Whenever the battery voltage goes below 9 volts, the foot pedal relay cuts out which tells the driver that it’s time to recharge the battery.”

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“Motor cars” were used originally to transport railroad section workers up and down tracks. Enthusiasts get together for “track rides” where up to 30 cars may show up.

They Ride The Rails In Old Railroad “Motor Cars”

Richard Hinds and family, Springfield, Ill., have an unusual hobby. They “ride the rails” in a restored railroad motor car.

Motor cars were used originally to transport railroad section workers up and down the tracks. However, railroads no longer use them and in recent years the idea of riding the cars on old abandoned tracks has caught on. Now there are motor car clubs in several states as well as Canada. Enthusiasts get together for “track rides” where it’s not unusual for 20 or 30 cars to show up.

The 6 by 8-ft. cars can be easily transported to meet locations on trailers.

Hinds says his entire family enjoys the unusual hobby. “We like to hear the clatter and bang of the wheels as we go down the tracks,” he says. “You see a lot that you don’t see from the highway, including wildlife. People who see motor cars for the first time often wonder what they’re looking at. Motor cars haven’t been used for 10 or 20 years in some places, so many younger people don’t even know they exist.

“We haul the car inside a covered trailer. It has a ramp with a set of rails on it, which allows us to winch the car on and off the trailer. Usually, motor cars have to be lifted onto the track using lift bars on front and back

of the vehicle. However, our car has a hydraulic turntable under it that automatically lifts the car, rotates it 90 degrees, and sets it down on the track.”

Hinds says club members ride their cars on abandoned tracks, or on tracks where they know the train schedule and have permission to ride.

“When we get together we travel anywhere from 30 to 100 miles round trip,” says Hinds. “We keep a respectable following distance behind other cars. We don’t have the right of way at railroad crossings so we always stop. The crossings are flagged as a safety precaution. Our car is powered by an Onan 2-cylinder gas engine and has a 2-speed transmission with a reverse gear. Top speed is about 30 mph. The car is equipped with a flashing beacon on top and also has head lights, brake lights, and lights for going backward.”

Motor cars are getting hard to find, notes Hinds. “A few dealers bought up most of the cars when the railroads quit using them. Motor cars are still used in some parts of Canada so you’re more likely to find them there.”

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Hinds’s 6 by 8-ft. car is powered by an Onan 2-cylinder gas engine.