

Rural Girl Built Her Own Harp

A passion for harps led Christina Marshall to add harp builder to her list of accomplishments. She first got interested in them at the age of 16, after already becoming an accomplished pianist and violinist. But at a price of up to \$5,000 for the harp she wanted, they were too expensive for her or her family.

"My dad asked me why I didn't just try to build one, since someone has to do it," recalls Marshall, now 23 years old. "I found a place in California where I could get plans. My dad designed a small sawmill that would work off our old Allis Chalmers and a kiln to dry the wood."

Marshall and her siblings were all home schooled so she was used to learning by doing. The kids helped their dad build the sawmill and the kiln. Then they cut up a black walnut tree from their backyard for the body of the harp and bought birch and maple for the soundboard and other fixtures.

"I used basic woodworking tools like chisels, scroll saw, band saw, table saw and hand sanders," says Marshall. "My dad helped a

lot with the big joints so I wouldn't lose a harp finger before I ever got to play one."

After building her first harp, Marshall learned to play and now studies with a master harp instructor. She is already considered a professional harpist. She performs professionally on harp, piano and violin and teaches 30 to 35 students at a time. She has recorded several CDs of hymns with her sister Sarah, an accomplished cello player. She also composes music and sells sheet music for her compositions and arrangements from the website she designed and maintains. She has continued building and selling harps, doing all the work herself. She builds to order and has completed 11 of varying sizes to date. Each is designed differently using combinations of oak, walnut and other woods.

She is currently building a pedal harp with more than 10,000 metal parts. A local man is doing the metal work, as Marshall prefers woodwork.

"As I sell more harps, I'm able to purchase better woodworking equipment that will



To build this harp, Christina Marshall, along with her father and siblings, built a sawmill.

handle larger pieces of wood," says Marshall, still very aware of the danger involved, especially for a harpist. "You have to be mentally working with tools. One slip could land you where you don't want to be."

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His Pickup Looks Like A Peterbuilt

Don Newkirk wanted a pickup that looked like a semi-tractor. After 3,000 hours of labor, he has one that grabs lots of attention, whether at parades or just on the street.

"I found a 1978 Chevy 3/4 ton with a body that looked like junk, but was good mechanically," says Newkirk. "I had already picked up a 1974 Peterbuilt body with a cab that was in good shape."

Newkirk had to strip out all the extras that came with the cab, such as fuel lines, battery lines, brake lines, etc.

One reason Newkirk went with the older Chevy was to avoid having to deal with air pollution requirements that were instituted after the 1978 model year in Ohio. After stripping the pickup down to the frame, he began by sandblasting and repainting it.

Before replacing the engine, transmission and other parts, Newkirk set the Peterbuilt cab in place. While it fit fine, he didn't think it looked right. After removing the cab, Newkirk cut away the frame from in front of the bed to the front end of the A-frame suspension. He dropped that section of the frame about 5 1/2 in., essentially the width of the frame rails. This created a saddle for the cab to sit in. He also had to make changes to the floorboards.

"I wanted to keep the flat look of floor boards in the Peterbuilt," says Newkirk. "To clear the transmission, I had to raise the floorboard about 3 1/2 in."

After making new mounts for the cab, he replaced it, as well as the engine and transmission. He put on all new brake lines, a master cylinder and booster.

"My next step was to start whittling on the hood," recalls Newkirk. "I took 5 in. from the length of the hood, cut the fenders off and narrowed the hood about 5 in. That meant I had to cut down the front grill to match and weld it back together."

He took 7 in. from the width of the front fenders. For a bed, Newkirk returned to the salvage yard, where he found one from a 1991 Dodge Dakota. It fit fine, but needed a little work.

"I had a metal shop roll rear fenders for me so they would be in a straight line with the front fenders," says Newkirk. "They also made a running board for me and bumpers out of 304 stainless steel."

Originally the pickup had its fuel tank mounted outside the frame rail and inside the bed. Newkirk didn't want it either on the side or at the rear, so the bed had to be raised a few inches. He fabricated and installed a



Don Newkirk took a 1978 Chevy 3/4 ton's engine and a 1974 Peterbuilt body and cab to create his truck.

new 31-gal. aluminum tank. He also modified the tail section to accommodate 1959 Cadillac taillights.

Once the truck was together, Newkirk rewired it, using more than 200 ft. of wire. He installed turn signals that light up in succession across the front of the hood.

In the cab itself, he retained most of the original Peterbuilt dash. Some no longer

needed gauges and all switches were eliminated. A new tach to go with the 350 Chevy engine replaced the Peterbuilt tach, which registered a high of 2,200 rpm's. Other gauges were moved around, and Newkirk installed heated Audi power seats.

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A Small Farm In Germany

Dietmar Ranft and his wife both work in town but a lot of their income comes from their small, but productive, 15-acre farm near Claussnitz, Germany. Diversification provides food and income all year long, according to FARM SHOW contributor Rex Gogerty, Hubbard, Iowa, whose family has gotten to know the Ranfts in recent years.

"I think their farm is a good example of how productive a small farm can be," says Gogerty.

Ranft grows corn, winter wheat, canola and hay. Some of it feeds his livestock; including three Charolais cows, which in turn provide milk, meat and calves.

Garden crops, including potatoes, turnips and other vegetables, are stored in a cellar under the barn.

The family sells excess meat and vegetables at local farmers' markets.

Ranft's son, Klemens, feeds the rabbits turnips, alfalfa and wheat. The family later eats some of the rabbit meat but sells most of it.

The farm's honeybees are housed in hives on a portable trailer so they can be moved around as needed. The honey is sold.

Ranft and a local butcher usually slaughter one of the few sows Ranft has on the farm yearly. They process everything including pigs feet, a restaurant delicacy.

The hens provide the family eggs and later meat.

Fish are raised in a farm pond each summer, which is drained in the fall. Then, they're moved to a small 10 by 12-ft. backyard pond where they're easily caught for food during the winter months.

To hold corn silage, he dug a 12 by 48-ft. pit that's four ft. deep and lined with 6-mil.



Dietmar (left) and Klemens Ranft put silage in their shallow pit. After gathering hay, they store it in their barn loft.

plastic. He stores the farm's 1 1/2 acres of whole-plant silage in the horizontal silo.

Ranft hires neighbors to help harvest silage and grain. Loose hay is blown into the barn loft.

Manure is collected from the barn and other outbuildings that surround a walled, cobblestone barnyard.

For primary tillage, Ranft pulls a 3-bottom, moldboard plow with an 80 hp Belarus tractor. The roll-over (two-way) plow eliminates

dead furrows.

Crop rotation, manure and minimal amounts of fertilizer keep Ranft's small fields producing good yields. By minimizing costs and using intensive management, the Ranfts are squeezing extra profit from every acre.

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