# Look What They've Done With Pickups

## Build Yourself A "Doodlebug" Truck

You can turn any pickup into a powerful workhorse by converting it to a "doodlebug" according to John Willamon, Byron, Minn., who got the idea 40 years ago when his father converted a 1930 Dodge into one of the first "doodlebugs". Willamon says the idea later became popular among area farmers. Some farmers even converted automobiles into doodlebugs.

A doodlebug is a pickup with an extra transmission, for low gear pulling, and a shortened-up frame for increased power, extra traction and more stability. The truck is also weighted down with a cement-filled sub-frame to increase traction. Doodlebugs can be used to pull mowers, hay rakes, wagons, sprayers, light tillage equipment and for any number of other chores.

"My father used his doodlebug to pull a horse drawn plow that had been altered to work as a mounted implement. It worked great for plowing," says Willamon.

He started with a 1971 Ford F-100 pickup with a 3-speed manual transmission. Willamon says the truck had seen better days and would have needed extensive repair if he'd planned to keep driving it on the highway. He decided to convert it for farm work as a doodlebug.

The first step was to remove the pickup box and rear springs, which he sold to a scrap dealer. He then removed the driveshaft and installed an auxilliary 4-speed Chevrolet transmission as close to the rear of the original transmission as possible, using as much bracing to mount the add-on transmission as necessary. The next step was to shorten up the driveshaft as much as possible and move up the rear axle, fastening it to the frame in its new position. Then he cut off the overhanging frame behind the axle, and attached a drawbar, and rerouted the brake lines. He built a ballast box around the frame and filled it with cement and then built a 72 by 32-in. cargo box on the rear frame above the ballast box and cut a hole in the cab floor and altered the seat to make room for the gear shift lever off the auxiliary transmission. The final step was to remove the driver side door to make it easy to get in and out.

"The 302 engine has more than enough power for most farm chores and, with the large selection of gear ratios, I hardly ever operate it with the engine running at much more than idle speed," says Willamon, who had help from a local machine shop in making the conversion.

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## Bracket Turns Spare Tire Into Step

"There's no good place to put the spare tire on a pickup so I built my own carrier bracket," says John R. Hubble, Jr., Victoria, Virg. His spare tire carrier holds the tire in an upright position behind the tailgate in transport and hinges down into a horizontal position to double as a pickup step when the tailgate's open.

Hubble says he never liked under-the-bed spare tire holders. "You have to jack up the pickup to get at the spare and then, when you get it out, it's dirty and corroded. On the other hand, if you put the spare in the box, it gets in the way.

"I'm short and I had trouble stepping up into the bed. With the spare in my bracket, it sticks out past the tailgate so it makes a perfect step. The bracket is strong enough to hold 2 or 3 men at once," says Hubble.

The tire bracket bolts to the spare using 3 lug nuts. It attaches to a hinge that welds to the bumper. When the tire is raised into the upright position, it automatically locks into position. To lower the tire, you just lift it slightly to unlock and then lower it down.

Hubble also uses the tire as a rubber buffer to push the pickup when the battery dies. "Nobody ever wants to push a pickup because of the high bumper. With the tire in place, you could push it with a Rolls Royce and not do any damage," he told FARM SHOW.

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## Homebuilt Pickup Bed With Dump Hoist

Larry Mensen, Manchester, Iowa, decided 2 years ago that his 1975 Chevrolet 3/4 ton pickup's bed, equipped with racks, was no longer was usable. So, he removed the bed and built an enlarged box, which he can raise and lower with a scissors hoist borrowed from an old ear corn wagon.

Mensen uses the box to haul hogs, and to dump firewood so he won't have to remove it by hand.

The box, equipped with a 1/8 in. deck plated floor, is 6 1/2 ft. wide and 8 ft. long. With racks down, it's 2 1/2 ft. high; with racks up, it's 4 ft. high and can hold twelve 240 lb. hogs.

"When I bought the truck 2 years ago, its fenders, rear cab corners, rocker panels and bed were badly rusted," says Mensen. "In fact, the bed was so rusted it no longer was safe to use. I decided it would be cheaper to partially rebuild the pickup than to buy a new one, so I welded in new fenders, cab corners and rocker panels. Then I removed the pickup bed, built the box frame, and cut the racks to fit the bed."

Removing the bed was simply a matter of unbolting 4 bolts from the frame.

To build the box's frame, Mensen welded two 6 1/2 ft. long "stringers" perpendicular to two 8 ft. long sections of 2 x 4 in. channel iron. The channel irons are set 4 ft. apart and parallel to each other. Around the channel irons, he then welded together sections of 3 in. angle iron as a framework for the box floor. Inside this framework, he welded 1/8 in. deck plating over the top of the channel irons, cutting holes along the sides as stake pockets for the wooden rack.

Mensen welded the bottom of the hoist to the truck frame, behind the cab, and also welded the top of the hoist to the stringers.

The hoist is powered by a motor and hydraulic pump, mounted inside a metal box welded to the truck frame behind the driver's door. By pushing a lever inside the metal box, Mensen starts a motor which powers the hydraulic pump to raise the box.

Altogether, Mensen figures he spent about $600 on the project - $300 for steel used to make the box, and $300 for new fenders, cab corners and rocker panels.

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# "Custom-Built" Pickup

*(Continued from cover page)*

because of the way the chassis 'scissors' over obstacles and uneven ground," says Riegle.

Another advantage of the F-250 is that the 4-speed transmission has a separate transfer case and three separate driveshafts, unlike later models where transfer case and transmission mount together. Riegle says separate components make the truck easier to maintain. Added space for the transfer case and driveshafts is also one of the reasons the F-250 has extra ground clearance.

For the body of the truck, Riegle chose a 1977 F-100. "This model works great because it's modern-looking and fits the F-250 chassis with little modification," explains Riegle. The F-100 had 102,000 miles on it. He bought it at a salvage yard for $1,200. He says he could also have used 1978 or 1979 models, which have basically the same body.

To mount the F-100 cab on the F-250 chassis, Riegle hung a pulley from a tree in the farmyard and then loosened all the bolts around the cab. He hooked a chain around both ends of a pair of oak 2 by 4's he put through the cab windows and tied a third chain to front radiator supports. He used a tractor to lift the cab off the chassis and put it into place on the F-250.

Both the cab and the bed of the F-100 adapted well to the F-250 chassis except for the gas tank and filler tube. "The gas tank is located behind the seat in the cab of the F-250 but it's at the back of the chassis on the F-100. I got a 20-gal. poly tank from a Dodge van and mounted it at the rear of the F-250 chassis by cutting through the cross members behind the rear end. The hardest part was fixing the filler tube so I could use the fuel port on the '77 body," says Riegle.

The engine for the custom-built truck, a rebuilt 390 cu. in. Ford, was salvaged from a 1969 F-250. "This is one of the best engines Ford ever made but, unfortunately, they stopped making it in 1976. I got a deal when I bought this rebuilt engine for $100," says Riegle.

One luxury feature Riegle wanted in his pickup was a tilt steering wheel, which Ford didn't install in their trucks till 1978. He used a steering column from a 1969 Mercury. "I cut off the original truck column and the bottom half of the Mercury steering colum and welded them together. The worst problem was connecting the truck wiring up to the steering column. I got a wiring diagram and by a process of trial and error we were able to get the ignition and turn signals to function normally" he says.

Other parts in the custom pickup include a Posi-Trac rear end from a 1969 F-250, which replaced the rear end in the '71 chassis, and rear bumper brackets from a '73 F-250. He also installed a homemade gooseneck trailer hitch, mounting it directly to the frame of the truck before he put the bed on for extra strength.

What would he do different if he were to build another custom pickup? "It would have been a bit easier with a 1973 or 1974 F-250 chassis because it would have fit the '77 bed better. I had to drill some holes to put the two together. Otherwise I wouldn't change a thing," says Riegle.

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