

Pedal Tractor Business Booms

If you want to restore, buy or customize an old pedal tractor, check out Magnuson Pedal Tractor Parts. Former dairyman and tractor-pulling enthusiast Tom Magnuson has turned a fun hobby into a full-time business. Magnuson makes and sells pedal tractor parts, restores, customizes and even makes his own limited edition 1/4-size working replicas.

"A lot of what I do is restoration, welding parts and patching panels, cleaning old tractors up to look like new," says Magnuson. "One customer gave me a box of parts for a rare Ford model. I worked on it for a week, stripping it and heating and straightening parts. When it was done, it was worth nearly \$6,000. However, most restorations take only a few hours and are worth less than \$1,000."

As a former tractor puller, Magnuson has a special fondness for the sport. He customizes pedal tractors for full-size "pullers". He even carries polished aluminum rear wheels he has custom-built.

"I have orders for three of them now," he says. "Guys order ones customized to look just like the tractors they pull with, complete with sponsor graphics. They take them to the pulls and set them next to their full-size tractors."

Magnuson started out by restoring a single pedal tractor in 1988. He enjoyed it so much he began collecting quarter-scale models. At one point he had nearly 100 in his collection, one of nearly every cast aluminum, scale model built since 1948. The exception was an extremely rare Deere model.

In 1998, he sold his dairy herd and invested the proceeds in pedal tractor parts

and inventory. While he no longer maintains his full collection, he now has more than 200 pedal tractors in inventory for needed parts or resale.

When parts are hard to find and the demand warrants it, Magnuson will cast his own. He also makes accessories not available elsewhere, including weight brackets (\$12) and suitcase weights (\$7 each) to fit them. His high crop drop housings (\$125/pair) have working chain drives. He even offers an exact reproduction of a 900/901 Ford tractor-trailer canopy for \$175.

In recent years, he has taken this process to a new level, making numbered, special editions of rare, full-size tractors, modeled after full-size tractors he owns.

He may spend two weeks doing detailed blueprints for a tractor. A friend uses the plans to carve a model out of wood. That model is used to make molds for casting a limited number of the collector editions.

"I do a limited number to protect the value of the tractors," explains Magnuson. "The molds alone can cost as much as \$18,000. I made as many as 100 from a mold when I started, but now I've cut back to as few as 25 before I destroy the molds."

Magnuson's newest limited edition is for an Oliver 1655. He says he took the first four to a collector's show this spring. He sold four in half an hour and took orders for half a dozen more. The 2-wheel drive models were priced at \$1,100, and 4-wheel drives were priced at \$1,200.

Magnuson prefers people call rather than send emails. In one conversation, he can find out what shape the tractor is in, what needs to be done and disclose how much original or replacement parts will be.



Former tractor-pulling enthusiast Tom Magnuson customizes pedal tractors, making numbered, special editions of rare, full-size tractors.



Magnuson also makes and sells pedal tractor parts including this wide front (left) and axle housing. He has more than 200 pedal tractors in inventory for parts or resale.

Magnuson is always in the market for pedal tractors or parts people wish to sell, whether, as he says, they are "dead, or alive, original or broken". Knowing what collectors pay for pedal tractors, he also can advise on what a tractor is worth.

"I've restored pedal tractors worth as much as \$15,000, but most are worth less than \$1,000," says Magnuson. "Most people have no clue what their tractor is worth. People

will ask me to restore a tractor for their kid to use and find out it's worth \$4,000. Do you really want to leave that in the front yard?"

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Magnuson Pedal Tractor Parts, 2630 Prairie Ridge Rd., Verona, Wis. 53593 (ph 608 437-5061; cell 608 445-7361; info@pedaltractor.com; www.pedaltractor.com).

Service Offers Stress-Free Leasing Of Hunting Land

If you own land that has wildlife and you aren't using it, leasing it to a group of hunters could net you \$7.50 to \$22.50 per acre annually. And Base Camp Leasing will take care of the paperwork and liability insurance for you.

Steve Meng started the business in August 1999 when he moved to Indiana and couldn't find a place to hunt.

"I figured I wasn't the only one," says Meng, who started Base Camp Leasing out of Fishers, Ind. Since then, he's expanded the business to 24 states including the East Coast and Midwest.

Meng has agents in different areas that inspect property to make sure it meets criteria.

"Cover is the biggest asset," Meng says. "The property needs to have qualities that hold game, such as trees, grass or brush."

Generally, 40 acres is the minimum for a lease."

Once the land is approved as a good hunting site – usually for whitetail deer – Meng determines a per acre value from \$10 to \$30. Base Camp Leasing receives 25 percent of the fee.

If someone selects the property, the landowner receives a contract that includes the maximum number of hunters allowed in the party. That party has exclusive right to hunting rights on the property – even the landowner cannot hunt there. The leaseholder is responsible for posting the land with signs provided by Base Camp Leasing.

"Our landowners include a lot of larger farmers who have more property than they can hunt," Meng says. "The biggest reason they come to us is that they are tired of being bugged by hunters. It's easier to say

it's leased. We also have a lot of absentee landowners who inherited the property and live out of state."

They like Base Camp Leasing's service because it saves the hassle of the paperwork, includes liability insurance, and the income helps pay taxes. The people who lease are paying a premium price and are most likely to respect the property. The business provides insurance for landowners and hunters with a \$3 million liability certificate. If they choose to, landowners can meet the hunters before signing a contract.

States vary greatly on the kinds of people who lease the land. In Indiana about half are non-resident. In Kansas, nearly 100 percent are non-resident. In Michigan, all are residents.

"We consistently have 85 to 90 percent of the properties leased at all times," Meng

says. "Deer hunting is biggest, and there's quite a bit of waterfowl demand. Turkey hunting is sometimes a bonus."

He recently added Minnesota and Wisconsin, and landowners in any of the states he works in (see map on website) are invited to call him for a free information packet that lays out the process.

The arrangement has worked well for many hunters, including Meng, who now has land to hunt in four states.

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Base Camp Leasing, 10412 Allisonville Rd., Suite 107, Fishers, Ind. 46038 (ph 866 309-1507; www.basecampleasing.com).

Online Bovine Business Going Strong

Ron Frey admits he had his doubts about the feasibility of an "everything cow" website when he created Simply Bovine back in 2000, starting with 40 products. Today he sells 325 cow-themed products and business is good.

"There's lots more cow lovers out there than I thought," laughs the Dodgeville, Wis., business owner who commutes two blocks from his home-based office to his warehouse filled with cow goodies.

His main customers are people looking for party supplies with a cow theme. That includes cow prints on balloons, plates, napkins and cups for everything from kids' birthday parties to corporate bashes.

Simply Bovine is also a major provider of items for Atlanta-based Chick-fil-A's promotions that use cows holding signs that say "Eat Mor Chickin."

Another big market is people who decorate rooms in their homes with a cow theme, including everything from cow doormats to wine holders. California ranks first in the number of orders.

It's challenging to find new items, Frey says. He attends gift shows in major cities and uses the internet to search for U.S. and overseas markets. U.S.-made selections include aprons, potholders, boxer shorts, tote bags and cloth napkins.

Initially, he buys a few items to see how

well they sell. "I'm always amazed at the popularity of cow-themed candy," he says. Mini cow pies and cow tails cost 40 cents. Moo Chews and Udderfingers are also popular at \$2.99.

He was also surprised that the Achy Breaky singing cow (\$22.50) sold well. Another toy cow, Bessie Mae (\$29.50) sings in Spanish.

Frey notes that Simply Bovine is a good example of a business that likely wouldn't succeed if it were in a store. But on the internet, it's open to anyone, anywhere in the world.

All items ship through the post office or UPS for a \$7.95 shipping fee (in the U.S.). Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Simply



"Simply Bovine" is popular with people looking for party supplies or room decorations with a cow theme.

Bovine, LLC, 112 N. Iowa St., Ste. B, Dodgeville, Wis. 53533 (ph 888 223-1987; www.simplybovine.com).