

# They're Preserving Grain Elevator History

Nostalgia and a desire to honor a big part of rural Saskatchewan's landscape led 81-year-old Einar Franson to build scale models of nine different grain elevators. He displays them along the road that passes by his property near High River, Alta.

Before retiring, Franson was a grain buyer who moved often. Each of his three children was born in a different location, so replicas of elevators from those towns are special to him. He also replicated an elevator from the town of Colonsay, Sask., that his father helped build in 1912.

He started building the 1/12<sup>th</sup> scale replicas about 4 years ago and enjoys the challenge of each project from start to finish. Often his biggest hurdle is locating full view photos of the drive sheds.

"If I know how many bushels it held, I can determine the size, but it's hard getting good photos of the front of the elevator," he explains. "The office is often hiding the part I need to see."

Photos are usually taken of the roadside view of the elevator and not the driveway where the grain is unloaded. That makes it difficult to figure out where doors and windows were located.

Franson uses old elevator tin, scrap lumber, and cedar shingles to build his models.

"The details take a long time, like painting the letters and the panes onto the Plexiglas windows," he says. Franson spends up to 250



Photo courtesy Mark Sturk

Over the past 4 years, 81-year-old Einar Franson has built nine different 1/12th scale models of grain elevators. He displays them along the road that passes by his Alberta property.

hours on each elevator.

He's not finished yet as he would like to build seven more elevators, including one built in Fleming, Sask., in 1895, that

burned down a couple of years ago. He's in the process of gathering photos and making plans.

"I just wish I was younger and had more

time," he says.

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## He Built His Own Submarine

By Dee Goerge, Contributing Editor

"Most people can see what's on top of the water, but not too many people can see what's laying on the bottom," says Dan Brewer, whose "made it myself" two-man submarine lets him do just that.

He first got the idea of building a submarine in high school, when he tried scuba diving. Though he had a desire for underwater exploring, he couldn't equalize his ears, which allows air to enter the ear cavity to counter the pressure from diving.

By the late 1970's, he decided a submarine was the answer, and he researched and started building one. When an expert told him his design wouldn't work, he abandoned it. He started again in the early 1980's. Fifteen years later, he took it underwater for the first time.

"It works," says the Holland, Mich., sub builder, adding, "this was seat-of-the-pants engineering."

Since he didn't have money to buy genuine submarine parts, he built it as time and money allowed. The 9-ft. long, 46-in. diameter hull is made from an old anhydrous ammonia tank. The tower is made of a piece of heavy wall pipe, and the windows are made of 2-in. thick cast acrylic.

The hatch was the most challenging, Brewer says, as it needs a tight seal, and he couldn't afford to buy a real one. He cut the round end out of his first sub, put a heavy ring on the outside and cut an O-ring groove for the seal. He added mechanical hardware on the inside and outside to tighten and open it for safety reasons.

The submarine has 4 electric motors - Minn Kota trolling motors on each side to go up or down; a geared down, 1/2-hp 24-volt motor in the back and a crossways motor in the front that moves the submarine sideways.

He added a small Kubota diesel motor to power rubber tracks attached to the submarine that allow him to drive right off his custom trailer into the water. The motor is only used until the sub is in deep water, and is turned off before the vents and hatches are closed.

For short dives of 15 to 30 minutes, there is enough oxygen in the hull. For longer dives,

Brewer has a chemical scrubber to remove carbon dioxide and an oxygen tank that he bleeds slowly. Another safety feature is a 400-lb. drop weight that Brewer can release in an emergency so he floats quickly to the surface.

The 7,000-lb. vessel can go as deep as 200 ft.

"But I built it just to go 25 to 50 ft. down to float along the weed edge and look at fish," Brewer says. While he enjoys taking rides, he admits he is always on the lookout for interesting or valuable items.

"I know I'm not going to want to just sit there and look at it. I want to bring it up. So I have an arm and a basket (outside on the front) if it's small enough to carry," he says.

With his top speed less than a knot, he travels slowly and enjoys watching large fish and swarms of little fish. He hopes to take it to an ocean someday.

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Dan Brewer's "made it myself" 2-man submarine lets him explore lake bottoms. He hopes to take it to an ocean some day.



The 9-ft. long, 46-in. dia. hull is made from an old anhydrous ammonia tank. The 7,000-lb. vessel can go as deep as 200 ft.



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