

One-Of-A-Kind Prototype Tractor Built By Henry Ford Himself

"I've been collecting tractors for more than 30 years and my goal has always been to have the most unusual machines that have ever been made," says Dick Cummings, a retired tool business owner from Shelby Township, Mich. His rarest tractor is a 1937 Ford prototype tractor built by Henry Ford and Harry Ferguson.

"Even though I'm not a farmer, I've taken this tractor to farm shows all across the country and the people I meet are just fabulous," Cummings says. "It has been an amazing hobby for me." One of Cummings's favorite events to participate in is the antique tractor parade across the Mackinac Bridge, which takes place each September.

Cummings acquired the rare 1937 Ford, built by Henry Ford himself, in the early 1980's and spent two years restoring it. "The tires were flat, the frame and cowling were rusted, and the motor wouldn't turn over," Cummings says. "When I took the motor apart, I was amazed to find that it had never been run because there was still chalk on the pistons." Cummings had to use parts from three different motors to get it into working order and today he says the flathead V-8 still

"purrs like a kitten".

Cummings spent three years researching in museums and at the Ford Motor Company, looking for documents to substantiate that Henry Ford and Harry Ferguson had built the tractor. In the process he found that the overall design was patterned after a 1935 WC Allis, that the original motor had been replaced with a new one, the grill is from a 1935 1 1/2 ton truck, and that the steering wheel is from a Model A Ford car. The front wheels also came from a car.

Cummings says the tractor was never manufactured because Ferguson filed a lawsuit against Ford for stealing hydraulic system designs. Suits and countersuits lasted for 13 years, and finally the two parties agreed to disagree. The tractor, meanwhile, sat in a garage and was later moved outside at Ford's farm where it spent several years rusting in an orchard.

"I've taken it to more than 100 shows and it's been featured in books, on calendars, at Ford company events and on television," Cummings says. Asked to place a value on the precious prototype, Cummings says only, "it's priceless and it's not for sale." For



Dick Cummings spent 2 years restoring this rare 1937 Ford prototype tractor built by Henry Ford and Harry Ferguson.

several years, a collector gave him a blank check and told him to fill in the amount he wanted. "I never did because this is one of a kind and it can't be replaced." Cummings says.

Cummings has an equally rare Farmall Super C that has 9 ft. of ground clearance. He acquired the tractor from Florida, where it was used in sugar cane harvest.

Cummings drives that tractor in parades and delights people with the rare sight of a porch swing mounted under the rear axle. "I'll guarantee you there's not another one like it," Cummings says.

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Rare Tractors Bringing Record Prices

Rare, antique tractors are bringing world record prices this year. Recently, a 1912 International Harvester Mogul Jr. 15-25 sold for \$462,000. A 1924 Deere 26-in. Spoke Model D tripled the previous price for the model, selling for \$225,000.

"We broke our own previous world record high price for a rare tractor, which was a 3060 Case that sold for \$420,000 a few years ago," says Kurt Aumann, Aumann Auctions.

Aumann is a leader in rare tractor auctions, doing around 30 a year with tractors or tractor-related equipment. A visit to the company website links to past auctions, like the Lake Side Farms auction. It included the Mogul, as well as the Deere Spoke and 112 other items from old magnetos to stationary and portable engines.

An auction held earlier this summer was called Field of Dreams. The Nebraska estate auction included 193 old tractors, parts of tractors, cars, trucks, grain binders, threshing machines and more. The former owner had started collecting the equipment in the mid 1950's, storing most of it in an open field. The most expensive item out there was a Minneapolis Threshing Machine Co. 22-44 3644. It sold for \$75,000, unrestored and missing its radiator.

A frame and a set of wheels for a tractor built in Nebraska in the 1910's, sold for \$17,500. Aumann estimated restoration would run into 6 figures, as it would require fabricating parts no longer available.

All Aumann auctions are simulcast online so people elsewhere can bid on items at the auction. A growing number are online only, such as the recent Paul Hale Collection of 41 tractors. It included not one, but two, rare Minneapolis Moline UDLX's, the first cab tractor. Bidders and others could watch from day to day as bids increased. One UDLX brought \$155,000, and the other \$90,000.

"Online auctions are a great tool for sellers who are in an out-of-the-way place or for several people, when none have enough items for an auction of their own and don't want to have to move their tractors to a central site," explains Aumann. "With online auctions we get more international buyers. They don't have to pack up and go to an auction in a far away place. The international arena is a growth area, not just for antiques, but newer farm equipment and even land sales."

Aumann has yet to hold an auction in Europe, but he has plenty of regular customers from Europe, Australia and elsewhere bidding at his auctions.

"We sell a tremendous amount overseas," he says.

Aumann, founding publisher of Belt & Pulley, an antique tractor magazine, is also a tractor buff. Many of the company staff are, too. His one rule is to not buy at his own auctions. Most of his tractors were purchased privately. That doesn't mean he doesn't get a thrill at rare tractor auctions.

"It's very exciting to see really desirable,



Rare 1924 Deere 26-in. Spoke Model D (left) recently sold for \$225,000. Minneapolis Threshing Machine 22-44 3644 sold for \$75,000, unrestored and missing its radiator.



1912 International Harvester Mogul Jr. 15-25 (left) sold for \$462,000. A Minneapolis Moline UDLX brought \$155,000.



rare tractors," says Aumann. "The excitement builds, the history of the tractor comes out, and the crowd competes to win it. As an enthusiast, I relate to the buyers and recognize that none of us are really owners. We are just caretakers of this equipment."

When the current caretakers of tractors purchased at his auctions are ready to sell,

Aumann will be ready to pass them on, perhaps at new world record prices.

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Mini Donkey Adjusting Well To Artificial Leg

Fitting a horse with a prosthetic limb is not new. But a recent case broke new ground – fitting a newborn foal with a prosthetic limb. Emma, a miniature donkey foal, was born with a severe hind limb deformity that required amputation. She was taken to Auburn University's College of Veterinary Medicine in Alabama when she was just two days old in late April, 2012. Five months later she's doing fine.

"Emma hasn't known anything other than a prosthetic limb. That's worked in our favor in getting her accustomed to it," says Dr. Fred Caldwell, DVM, lead veterinarian and surgeon at Auburn.

He and his team are working with Hanger Clinic, which makes and fits prosthetics

for humans and occasionally for animals, including a prosthetic tail for a dolphin featured in a recent movie. Staff at the clinic created the limb for Emma, made of carbon fiber, Kevlar and fiberglass so it's lightweight but strong.

Emma lives at a farm near the college, so Caldwell or members of his team can check up on her regularly.

"She's doing very well," Caldwell says. "She had pressure sore issues to overcome, but we have managed them by tweaking the fit of the prosthesis."

Emma is the vet's first experience with prosthetics, and he says it's been a learning experience that is important to his field.

"The more cases we have available to

us, the more we learn, and it hopefully can become an option for larger animals," he says.

"Emma's owner hopes Emma can work as a therapy animal with kids who have disabilities and service men and women dealing with losing a limb," Caldwell notes.

The miniature donkey weighed about 50 lbs. this fall, and will only weigh about 350 lbs. full grown. Between now and then she will continue to be outfitted with new prosthetics as she outgrows them.

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Photos courtesy of Auburn University
Emma, a miniature donkey foal, is adjusting well to her artificial leg. She was born with a severe hind limb deformity.