

He Built His Own Stagecoach

A couple of years ago, Brian Kimble had a good reason for watching old episodes of *Gunsmoke*, *Bonanza* and *The Lone Ranger*. He was researching stagecoaches and taking photos of screenshots.

With the photos in hand, he took measurements off his granddad's old hitch wagon and drew up plans to build his own stagecoach.

"I just wanted one. I have always had horses, but I couldn't afford to buy a stagecoach," says Kimble. He was surprised to learn that just the blueprints for a stagecoach started at \$5,000.

He started with an old running gear he bought at a farm sale, and took the wheels to an Amish business to have them reconditioned with rubber strips. He purchased 4 by 6-in. beams and added an oak tongue to rebuild the running gear for his base.

He purchased 2-in. angle iron and 15 sheets of 3/4-in. plywood to build the frame and body of the stagecoach.

"There are 400 bolts in it," Kimble notes. Windows are set in 1/2-in. angle iron

frames, and the interior is completely covered with maroon upholstery.

"The biggest challenge was making the front driver's seat because it's narrower than the wagon," Kimble says.

After making sure everything fit, he took it apart twice to sand and polyurethane the wood and paint the angle iron. Kimble says he was grateful for all the sanding his cousin, Gary Newell, did.

"I like the natural wood look. It's like a piece of furniture," he says, noting he purchased quality plywood finished on one side.

"The coach is identical to the one on the *Lone Ranger* show," Kimble says. Burlap covers the back storage area, and iron railing surrounds the storage area on top. Kimble mounted a couple of horseshoes behind the driver's seat to hold the reins when he parks the stagecoach.

He finished it in time for a wedding last June. The happy couple and friends were inside the stagecoach, and the bride's father sat next to him in the driver's seat holding a double-barrel shotgun. (Important note:



After doing a lot of research, including looking at photos from old episodes of *Gunsmoke*, *Bonanza* and *The Lone Ranger*, Brian Kimble built his own stagecoach.

he contacted the sheriff department to get permission.)

"People ask me where I bought it," he says. With a stagecoach, Kimble has another excuse to work with his Belgian horses, Barney and Belle. They have no problem pulling the stagecoach with six passengers inside and three people in front. Kimble enjoys seeing kids' and adults' reactions.

He spent \$7,000 to build it, and plans to take it and his beloved horses to more events in the future.

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She Grows Her Own "Gems" To Make Artisan Jewelry

"I try to make my pieces so your eye is drawn to the seed," says Debra Groat, who grows her own "gems" for the jewelry she makes. Her jewels are colorful heirloom dried beans and corn kernels accented by metal, glass and stone jewelry parts.

With a passion for jewelry since she was 5, Groat recognized an opportunity in 2000 when she shelled heirloom beans that her brother had grown.

"I couldn't get over how gorgeous they were, and that they had a history behind them. I thought if I could make them into jewelry it would be a wonderful way to show them off," she recalls. She had been dabbling in making jewelry for a couple of years and started experimenting with the seeds.

Thirteen years later, she has a rainbow of 63 varieties of beans and several varieties of corn in jars in what appears to be a well-stocked pantry. In fact, they are on shelves with other jewelry parts in a roomy work studio over her home's garage.

Just getting the seeds in the jars, requires a lot of time and labor, Groat says. After going through the work of planting and growing them, she handpicks the beans and corn and spends many hours in the winter shelling bushel baskets of dried beans.

She packages them and freezes them for a minimum of three weeks to kill eggs or insects on the seeds. Then they are thawed and stored in jars for another 5 to 6 mos. to dry. After that, Groat drills a small hole through the center, and then lets them dry for another month. It's a technique she developed after much experimentation to ensure the seeds don't crack, flake or shrink later.

When fully dried she handpicks the "gems" to create earrings, bracelets and necklaces. Among her customers' favorites are the Cherokee Trails of Tears bean necklace with black onyx and antique gold tones and a Hopi Blue corn drop necklace.

"Most of my customers are gardeners, people interested in organics and heirloom seed or people who care about the



Colorful heirloom dried seeds are accented by metal, glass and stone gems.

environment," Groat says. In addition to the natural beauty of the pieces, they also appreciate the short history she includes. Brockton, Christmas Lima, Jacob's Cattle, Painted Lady Scarlet runner, Maggie and Red Calypso are just a few of the heirloom beans that Groat uses.

Keep them dry, and store them in a sealed container and they will last the same as other jewelry, she says.

Groat sells her pieces at events and art shows and through her website, named after her business name, Saverine Creek Heirlooms. Pieces are photographed on the website and range from \$24 to \$135.

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Set Up Your Own On-Farm Storage Business

Looking for a sideline business on your farm? Creating a self storage business is easier than ever, if you live near a city or recreation area, says Pat Watson, VP of self storage systems at Flexospan.

The Sandy Lake, Penn., business has been manufacturing steel buildings since 1969 and self storage buildings for more than 20 years. By using prefab parts, Flexospan can custom engineer a building to whatever size and configuration a customer wants. The partitioning system makes it easy to change the size of the units, which typically start at 5 by 10 ft.

"We roll form everything here. So we can send replacement parts right away," Watson says. Plus they can match parts when customers want to expand. Exterior steel comes in 15 colors.

Built with heavy 24-ga. steel, the company stresses quality material and engineering. Watson says she works with customers to come up with the right design, materials and roofing system for their location and zoning requirements.

The company's design includes heavy gauge steel load bearing walls so no support posts are needed. Interior walls are fastened from both sides for increased security for renters, and there are no gaps at the top of walls to ensure privacy.

When all the parts are made, Flexospan workers load them on one of the company's trucks to deliver to the customer's site. Due to cost of transportation, Flexospan sells only to customers who live east of the Mississippi River. They also have crews to erect them, but about 30 percent of customers put up their own buildings. Prefab parts bolt together and steel is screwed on.

"If they have any questions, we give them technical support from our engineering department," Watson says.

"We are hands-on and take pride in what we do," she says. "We're here to help customers grow their business."

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