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By Bill Gergen, Senior Editor

“Big Rig” Log Skidder Built Out Of Dodge Truck

“It lets me haul up to 8 logs at a time out of the woods and load them onto a trailer. Works amazingly well,” says Alfred Caissie, Wellington, P.E.I., who converted a 1961 Dodge 3-ton, 4-WD truck into a heavy duty, 4-WD log loader.

The rig rides on big 1400 by 24 wheels off a road grader and is powered by the truck’s Dodge 318 cu. in. gas engine and 5-speed transmission. It has a big electric winch on back and 8 chokers attached to a main cable, allowing Caissie to hook onto felled trees anywhere and winch up to 8 at a time up to the rig.

“It’s built strong, but I didn’t expect it to work as well as it does. I built it in 2001 over a 2-year period. The big wheels provide a lot of clearance in the woods,” says Caissie.

“The truck sat in a scrap yard for many years before they put it up for sale. Someone else bought it and then sold it to me. Squirrels had been living inside the truck, and I had to remove a wheelbarrow full of nuts out of the dash before I could start working on it. The only thing that was still in decent shape was the running gear.”

Caissie stripped the truck down to the frame and used 8 and 10-in. channel iron to build

another frame around it for reinforcement. A big home-built cage made from 2-in. sq. tubing protects the driver, who sits on a bench seat off a 1978 Dodge van. The power steering system is off an old IH combine. He used 1/8-in. thick steel plate to build the rig’s hood and 1 1/2-in. expanded metal to build a guard on front.

The winch mounts on the frame just behind the cab and is pto-driven off the rig’s transmission. The cable rides up and over a pulley and then down to the chokers, which are each about 10 ft. long and fitted with a hook at one end. “I hook a choker onto all the trees, then winch them in and drive away,” says Caissie. “I use a lever connected to the transmission to put the pto in gear to engage the winch.”

He adapted the road grader wheels to fit the truck’s axles. “I cut out the center of the truck wheels, then cut out the center of the road grader wheels and welded them in. It worked out well,” says Caissie.

Homemade protectors keep brush from damaging the wheels’ valve stems. Caissie threaded the end of a short piece of pipe, then screwed a cap on and welded the other end of the pipe to the wheel rim. “Whenever I want

to put air in the tires I just unscrew the cap,” says Caissie.

The truck’s brake pads and drums were worn out. But instead of replacing them, Caissie saved money by stripping away the truck’s entire brake system and then using the truck’s transmission as a brake.

He bolted a disc brake to the drive shaft where it’s connected to the back of the transmission. He also bolted a used car brake caliper onto the truck’s frame on both sides of the disc brake. “Brake fluid runs through a line from the truck’s brake foot pedal to the calipers, so whenever I apply the brake pedal it locks up the transmission and slows the tractor down immediately,” says Caissie. “There’s no brake system on the wheels at all. It completely eliminates the need for brake pads and hardly cost me anything to build.

“I never thought it would work as well as it does,” says Caissie. “I built it because I wanted to operate a sideline business selling firewood without having to hire any help. I drag the logs home or leave them in one place out in the woods and then use my forklift to load them onto a home-built, self loading, hydraulically-operated trailer.

“I added more than one ton of extra steel on

it for traction, including a big front-mounted weight on front that’s off an old forklift. I built a metal platform on the frame behind the cage where I can bolt on another bench seat. I use it to take my wife and kids with me joyriding during the summer.

“I don’t know how much I spent to build it, but it cost me quite a bit of money to put it all together. I installed a new radiator, carburetor and starter and rebuilt the alternator. Just for fun I added 6-volt electric air horns off an old 1930’s car on front of the cage. The cage has lights all the way around so I can work at night.”

The big rig doesn’t have any tail pipes coming out of the hood. Instead, it has dual exhaust pipes coming out of the manifold under the belly. “The bottom of the machine is covered with 1/8-in. thick steel belly pans so brush and tree limbs can’t get caught in there and cause any damage,” notes Caissie.

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Caissie uses tractor hydraulics to operate this home-built, trailer-mounted log loader. The 20-ft. long rig is equipped with a jib that swivels 180 degrees and also up or down.

Trailer-Mounted Log Loader

“I use my home-built, trailer-mounted log loader to transport logs out of the woods. It’s built heavy and saves a lot of time,” says Alfred Caissie, Wellington, P.E.I.

Caissie uses the hydraulics on his Massey Ferguson 4-WD tractor to operate the log-loading trailer. The 20-ft. long rig is equipped with a jib that swivels 180 degrees and also up or down.

“I cut the logs into 15-ft. lengths, then use controls on front of the machine to load them onto the trailer. I copied it from a big log loader owned by a friend but made it smaller,” says Caissie.

The jib’s base mounts inside a big steel

pipe that sets on a car spindle welded onto the trailer’s frame. A hydraulic cylinder is attached to a steel bracket at the base of the post and uses the sprocket and chain off a motorcycle to rotate the spindle. Other cylinders are used to raise and lower the jib’s arm and to operate the grapple.

The machine’s wheels and axles are off an old Knight manure spreader. Caissie used square tubing and channel iron to build the frame.

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Matthew McKinzie burns out tree stumps using old tractor wheel rims. “I cut down the tree, then build a fire on the stump with the wheel rim in place around it,” he says.

“Wheel Rim” Stump Burner

Digging out tree stumps is ordinarily a job for a bulldozer or an expensive stump grinder. Californian Matthew McKinzie came up with a relatively easy and inexpensive way to get rid of stumps when clearing land. He burns them out using old tractor wheel rims.

“I use the idea mainly on thorny locust and hedge trees because they burn hot even when cut fresh. I burn up not only the stump, but the entire tree. Normally everything is gone within 3 to 4 days,” says McKenzie.

“I cut down the tree, then build a fire on the stump with the wheel rim in place around it. Normally everything is gone within 3 to 4 days. I stoke the fire once a day, burning the stump to below ground level. I’ve also used

this idea to burn elm trees, but I first mix in some hedge trees to make the fire burn hotter so everything else will burn up.”

He says the wheel rim contains the heat inside the ring without letting it escape, focusing the heat down into the ground. “It works even better than stacking brush in a pile. No matter how tight the pile is stacked, it still won’t burn as well as inside a ring because all the heat escapes,” notes McKinzie.

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