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Robert Mann, Somerset, Calif.: Robert's impressed with his 1997 **Dodge 2500** pickup equipped with a Cummins diesel engine. "It runs great and handles my 28-ft. fifth wheel trailer and farm produce loads with ease. It gets 20 mpg on the freeway and 15 mpg in town or when driving in hilly terrain. It has required two expensive repairs, though, to the rear axle seals and when a rollover protection switch had to be replaced.

"I'm disappointed with a battery-operated pruning chainsaw that I bought at **Northern Tool**. The battery lost power with only a few minutes of use and then, after a few charges, the tool wouldn't work at all."

David Lees, Alexandria, Ohio: A 2004 **McCormick 105** tractor rates as David's "worst buy". "The hydraulic pump had to be replaced four times after only 750 hours.

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The last time it happened the pump got hot enough to melt the fuel tank. My dealer was unsuccessful in getting the company to respond to the problem."

Barry N. Fredrick, Milford, Conn.: "My 2001 **Campbell Hausfeld 3500** portable electric generator came with a built-in dolly, which makes it highly portable. I bought this generator at a farm supply store and would buy another one.

"I like my **Black & Decker 12-volt, 18-ga. cordless** nailer gun.

"The battery-powered, 5 1/2-in. circular saw I bought at **Harbor Freight** is my worst buy. After a single recharge the saw quit working."

Rollie W. Peter, Raymond, Kan.: Rollie's disappointed with his **Liberty** modular home. "During our pre-delivery inspection we found nails sticking out of the woodwork, unfinished woodwork, bare floors, two types of door trim on doors, doors hung out of alignment, stones falling off the fireplace, holes in the cabinets, and gaps of more than 3/4 in. between cabinet tiles."

Karyn Cassar, Woodburn, Ore.: "My 1-year-old **Leatherman Fuse** multi-tool has been a real time-saver. I use the screwdrivers on it to fix leaky hoses, the pliers to fix fences, etc. When I broke one of the tools on it the company promptly sent a replacement.

"I like my **Carhartt** women's double front sandstone dungarees. It's very hard to find work pants that last and that are made for a woman's derriere. However, I've gotten more than 12 months use from a pair of Carhartt pants even though I wear them constantly."

Louis Pavek, Ashland, Mont.: "It has more than 300,000 miles on it but is still going strong," says Louis, happy with his 1969 **Ford Bronco** equipped with a 302 cu. in. engine and heavy duty suspension.

"My **Miller 172 Mig** welder is my worst buy. The wire feed on it never worked right, even after I made several trips to the dealer. I finally junked it out and bought another brand, which works fine."

Lawrence R. Austin, West Middlesex, Penn.: "My 2008 **Kubota L2800** tractor is well built, with controls that are easy to use and a sturdy engine.

"My 2006 **Deere 145** garden tractor broke down with only about 50 hours on it, due to a bad engine. The company wouldn't stand by its product and pay for the repairs."

Kevin L. West, Pasco, Wash.: Kevin likes the **Greasecar** vegetable oil conversion kit he installed three years ago on his Ford pickup equipped with a 6.9-liter diesel engine (ph 413 534-0013; www.greasecar.com). It's an auxiliary fuel modification system that allows diesel vehicles to run on straight vegetable oil.

"This kit was simple to install and works as promised. Since installing it I've put more than 20,000 miles on the pickup with no problem. I figure the fuel I'm using is costing me an average of about \$1 per gallon."

Gerry Gascho, Tavistock, Ont.: Gerry's a dealer for the **Free Breeze** wood stove fan, which is powered by the heat of the stove itself (ph 519 655-2848; www.moderntradingpost.com/freebreeze).

"This fan doesn't need any batteries, fuel or electricity and is big enough to move a lot of air. It comes with a 14-in. dia., 8-bladed fan and a small Stirling engine that's housed in the square base of the unit. The Stirling engine has a sealed chamber that expands quickly when heated and contracts when it cools down. The piston in the engine drives an offset crank that drives the fan.

"I bought my fan eight years ago and it has worked great, requiring very few repairs. Over the years I've replaced two leathers, a job that takes only about 15 minutes. Otherwise I just put in an eye dropper of 10W 30 oil three or four times a year. A wooden knob on top is used to carry the fan around.

"The fan sells for less than \$300 Canadian."

Steven McClead, Mt. Laurel, N.J.: "My 2007 **Echo PB 2100** blower works great for general yard cleanup and also for blowing chaff and dust out of combines. It's lightweight which makes it easy to move around, and it always starts after just one or two pulls.

"The clutch on my **Harbor Freight** Sawzall went out after only about 10 hours of use. I could have shipped the unit back to the company but that would've cost more than the tool was worth."

John Greenfield, Hagersville, Ont.: John likes his 2003 **Dodge Dakota** quad cab 4-WD pickup. "We bought this pickup from our son with about 180,000 miles on it. It's in excellent shape and looks great. We've owned Chrysler products for 43 years with good results."

Etsel Clayton, Diggs, Va.: "It starts right up in any weather and, with 4-WD, it can go anywhere," says Etsel, pleased with his 2009 **Deere Gator** utility vehicle equipped with a diesel engine. "It has comfortable seats. No problems.

"My 2007 **Stihl** chainsaw is difficult to start and is my worst buy. I'm 71 years old and have to get my young neighbor to start this saw for me."

Brom Allen, Phelan, Calif.: "Having never owned a tractor before I did my homework and bought a 2008 **TYM** model, which is perfect for my 1 1/2 acres. It's equipped with a 23 hp, 3-cyl. Mitsubishi diesel engine with hydrostatic drive. This tractor is reliable and comes with a 5-year warranty."

Bob Winters, Cerrillos, New Mexico: Bob's the satisfied owner of a 2006 **Outback** dual FX inverter (outbacksolarproducts.com) and **Zomeworks** passive solar array panel tracker (zomeworks.com). "I live on a fairly remote mountain ranch and have generated my own power by necessity for 20 years. In 2006 I upgraded my power generating system, using the dual inverter and solar array, and they've both performed wonderfully. Recently, the inverter signaled an 'error light' to indicate a failed cooling



Fifteen 2 by 8-ft. solar collectors provide hot water heat for Joseph Rupinski's home.

35-Year-Old Solar Heater Still Going Strong

Joseph Rupinski put together fifteen 2 by 8-ft. solar collectors 35 years ago to provide hot water heat for his 3,500 sq. ft. house. He's still using them today.

"When I built the system, people said gas is cheap and that I'd never recoup my investment. But 35 years later I'm still getting free heat. It doesn't furnish all my heat but it helps a lot," says Rupinski of Twin-ing, Mich.

"At the time I built it there were no small pre-assembled solar collectors on the market. I put the collectors together myself, buying parts from a solar manufacturer. Building the collectors wasn't an easy job, and probably not one for the average person. It took a lot of time has saved money. I got a 55 percent tax rebate for the collectors, and my total cost was less than \$2,000."

The system includes a dozen 55-gal. barrels stacked in an out-of-the-way place in his basement. They're used to store hot water. "The barrels are an ideal way to transfer

heat from the fluid in the collectors to the air," says Rupinski. Some of the fluid runs through pipes under the basement floor and into a baseboard heating system.

Insulated pipes connect all the collectors together, with anti-freeze pumped through the pipes and into copper tubes inside the collectors. The heated antifreeze then goes to the basement and into a heat exchanger, which transfers the heat to the barrels. The anti-freeze then recirculates back to the collectors.

The pump and differential controllers are located in a mechanical room in the basement.

"Everything is done automatically. When there's more heat in the collectors than in the house, the collectors automatically come on. When the difference is marginal, the pump automatically shuts off," says Rupinski.

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Joseph Rupinski, 2531 Williams Road, Twin-ing, Mich. 48766 (ph 989 873-8213).

fan. Even though the warranty had expired, the company cheerfully offered to send a replacement fan for free. The Zomeworks solar array tracker continues to operate maintenance-free."

Jim Ruen, Lanesboro, Minn.: "I messed up my elbow a few years ago using a standard screwdriver to put a ton of screws into a large plywood shelving unit. Since then, I've been really careful about having the right tool for the right job, at least when it comes to driving in screws.



"My two favorite screwdrivers for small jobs around the shop and house are my ratcheting **Shröder** pistol grip and my **Danell** cordless. Both are ideal for getting into tight spots.

"The Shröder Comforce has a handgrip that pivots 80° for high torque screwing. The ratchet mechanism can be locked in a fixed position as well as in forward and reverse modes. In the pistol grip position, it can handle up to 20.6 ft. lbs. of torque.

"Pivoting from straight into pistol position also creates a comfortable thumb sad-

dle across the top of the driver for better control. With 24 tips to choose from and an extension for 1/4-in. sockets (sockets not included), this driver handles almost any small job you can find.

"I hate grabbing a cordless tool and discovering the charge is gone. The Denali 3.6-volt lithium ion battery seems to last forever. The company claims it will hold a charge for at least a year and as much as 18 mos. After several years, I have yet to be disappointed, and I don't recall when I last charged it. The torque it delivers is impressive as well.

"I like the LED nose light on it for those dark, inside the cabinet jobs. It comes with an assortment of titanium drill bits for making pilot holes, as well as a variety of straight, hex and Phillips driver tips. The pistol grip is easy on the wrist, and the carrying case is well designed with bits, charger and drill securely held."

Gilbert F. Conn, Pittsburgh, Penn.: "I love my 2005 **Husqvarna** zero turn riding mower. I use it three times a week to cut my half-acre yard.

"I'm disappointed with my 2001 **Ford F-250** pickup, which I just paid off. The back fenders rusted through, and I found out these pickups all rust in the same place. My 1985 Ford F-250 diesel pickup didn't rust like this. I bought the special \$800 paint job that's supposed to eliminate the need to use wax, and I also bought a special \$400 undercoating job. The rest of the truck looks new."