

rear-mounted blade, and springtooth drag. It's very maneuverable in tight places, easy to get on and off, and comfortable to operate. Well designed.

"We love our 2002 **Chevrolet Silverado** 2500HD 4-WD extended cab, shortbed pickup equipped with a 6.0-liter engine and manual transmission. It has a B&W turnover gooseneck hitch that drops out of the way, allowing full use of the pickup bed. It has plenty of power to pull our big horse trailer. This pickup rides and drives great. It's an easy truck to own."

Larry Weaver, Ephrata, Penn.: "I use my 2014 **Stihl FS70R** string trimmer a lot. It cuts the toughest weeds and never fails to start, even after being stored all winter. Excellent quality."

Bruce Schroeder, Brandon, S. Dak.: A 2013 **Cub Cadet** riding mower rates as Bruce's "worst buy". "Something seemed to

"Something seemed to either break or fall off this mower about every 10 hrs."

either break or fall off this mower about every 10 hrs., and none of the dealers in our area were able to keep it running. I put only about 90 hrs. on it last year but spent \$998.73 on parts. At 430 hrs. I finally sold it and bought a Deere."

Ron Doan, Lincoln, Neb.: Ron owns a 2009 **Chevrolet Colorado** 4-WD standard cab truck with a 5-cyl. engine. "This is a no-frills pickup with just cruise control and radio. It has about 55,000 miles on it and has adequate power both on and off-road. We'll replace this truck if anyone ever comes out with a standard cab smaller truck. Otherwise I'll keep it."

Harvey Zabel, Prairie du Chien, Wis.: "I used my **DeWalt** 14-volt drill-driver to drive screws while building 4 different pole sheds. The only problem is whenever I need it I have to go get it from my wife, who uses it all the time. She finally bought her own **DeWalt**."

Earl Lumbra, Montgomery Center, Vt.: "About 3 years ago I used **JB Water Weld** to seal a leaky gas tank on my Husqvarna chainsaw, and it solved the problem. A crack had developed in the bottom of the tank. I just sanded the cracked area down and then applied a single layer of the sealer. That fixed the leak."

David Mertell, Independence, Mo.: David's satisfied with his 2013 **Harbor Freight** 2-ton engine hoist and 2015 **Harbor Freight** 20-ton shop press. "I'm a 90-year-old do-it-yourselfer. In 2013 I built a 6 by 16-ft. fifth wheel utility trailer from the ground up, and in 2015 a friend gave me an Allis Chalmers B tractor which I restored to like-new condition. I used the engine hoist and shop press during the restoration project, and both performed perfectly."

Kenneth Greer, Ledyard, Ct.: Kenneth's disappointed with the **HLA Attachments** quick-tach disconnect plate he bought for his Kubota 410 loader tractor. "I paid \$2,300 for this plate, but it was built sloppy. I tried to free it up to get it to work, but accidentally broke a weld that was poorly made. There were no grease fittings and the holes wouldn't fit OEM pins. I spent 6 hrs. trying to make it work."

"I bought the plate from Cummings and Bricker, Inc., and they were no help at all. Finally the dealer sent the plate back for credit."

Adrian Shell, Niles, Mich.: "I like my 2008 **Ford F-150** 4-WD crew cab pickup equipped with a 5.4-liter engine. It has about

88,000 miles on it and is on its second set of tires. It's the best Ford pickup I've ever owned."

Verle Spence, Hartford, Iowa: "I own a 1992 **Troy-Bilt** high wheel, walk-behind 22-in. mower equipped with a 5 hp Briggs & Stratton engine. All I have to do is change the oil and spark plug and keep the blade sharp. I replaced the blade once because of wear. The engine doesn't use any oil. It's an amazing piece of equipment."

Paul Johnson, Fincastle, Va.: Paul likes the **Champion** gas-powered water pump he bought at Tractor Supply Company. "It starts with one pull every time and runs great."

David E. Beck, Lawtons, N.Y.: David's disappointed with his 2009 **Deere LA105** riding mower equipped with a 19 1/2 hp engine. "I bought this mower at Home Depot. Deere wouldn't help so I had to spend \$1,600 on repairs. That's a major manufacturing defect that the company should be responsible for."

David Case, Scotia, N.Y.: "I like my 2011 **Sears Craftsman** 18-in. electric chainsaw equipped with a 4 hp. motor. I've used it a lot but it continues to work great. It has had only some minor electrical problems with the electrical cord's plug end. I can use this saw with a portable generator. I like not having any fuel problems like with gas saws."

Warren Headley, Mt. Morris, Penn.: Warren's the satisfied owner of a 2014 **Branson** 4-WD loader tractor equipped with a 55 hp. engine. It has about 2,200 hrs. on it. "This tractor is one of the heaviest in its class and has plenty of power to handle the loader, as well as a rear-mounted 6-ft. rototiller and 8-ft. blade. I like the transmission, which has 12 forward speeds and 3 reverse, and the 2-speed pto which activates electronically."

On the negative side, he lists his 2004 **Yamaha** 450R motorcycle. "It's hard to start even though we've had it tuned up by a good mechanic and also our Yamaha dealer."

Ed Landis, Abilene, Kan.: "We don't drive a lot of miles on our 2015 **Jeep Renegade**, but we love it. It gets 32 mpg and is nimble and easy to park. It only has a small 4-cyl. engine, but it's very snappy."

Menno L. Chupp, Arthur, Ill.: "In 2013 I bought a 6-tool cordless **Milwaukee** M18 tool kit, and every tool still works like new except for the hammer drill. The motor on it burned out, but the company replaced the motor as well as the chuck. The problem with the chuck was our fault."

James S. Martin, Newville, Penn.: A 2016 **Sure-Trac** 30-ft. gooseneck Lo-Pro dual wheel tandem trailer rates as James's "best buy" (www.sure-trac.com; ph 260 758-9838). "I use this trailer to haul farm tractors, towing it behind a Ford F-550 truck. It's the best towing trailer I've ever used. It's built with flat iron cross braces instead of a torsion tube, which makes it 4 times stronger. Also, it tows equally well without swaying whether it's loaded or empty. The low profile design with full width ramps makes loading and unloading a much safer job. And because of the trailer's low profile design, the ramps aren't nearly as steep."

"Sure-Trac trailers are built with an all-I-beam frame and gooseneck using U.S.-made steel, and they're built in the U.S. Also, the paint coating is very durable."

Duane O. Hansen, Sheridan, Mich.: "I've had good luck with **Honda** engines. The one on my 1998 Honda 50 Trail mini bike still starts with just one crank, and my old Honda 3-wheeler and Honda snowblower always start with just one pull."

"My **Cub Cadet LTX 1040** riding mower is the same color as a lemon, which is quite fitting. It eats up deck belts and doesn't go

Tracks Help Combine "Walk On Water"

By Janis Schole

Like many farmers in western Canada, Shane Schafers' land was totally saturated by rain last fall, so bringing in crops was extremely difficult. Once he saw what was happening, the Alberta farmer took drastic measures to convert his combine to tracks.

"Shane is not one of those guys to wait around for optimal conditions that may never arrive," says his wife, Judy. "The wheels in his brain get turning immediately. Without a solution, some of the land wouldn't have been accessible until spring, and by then, the crop would be totally ruined with rot, mold and pests."

Schafers' 9230 Case straight header combine already had duals on it, but as the ground got wetter and wetter, they started plugging up with mud, spinning like "big racing slicks," and preventing him from getting anywhere.

"My dad and I farm 1,800 acres, and by this point, we had 800 acres of wheat and faba beans left to harvest," Shane says. "With \$200,000 to \$300,000 of crop still standing in the field, we needed to find a way to get it off. Modifying the combine the way we did cost about \$100,000, but it's an investment for the future, too."

First, Schafers mounted a \$26,000 Mud Hog hydraulic rear wheel assist system on the combine. The job took almost 6 hrs. to do.

The Mud Hog drive made a big difference, but the rain kept coming and after another 1 1/2 in., the field had surpassed its saturation point.

"The land was just like jelly," he explains "Between Sept. 13 (when we first started harvest) and November 10 (when we finished), we got a total of nearly 8 in. of rain and snow. That's very unusual for our area. We would sink in about 3 in. just walking the field on foot because there was a half-inch of water sitting all over the field."

On Youtube, Schafers saw a tracked combine harvesting rice fields in conditions similar to his own, so that's where he got the idea. After doing a Google search for combine tracks he found Soucy Tracks built in Quebec (www.Soucy-track.com). After speaking to the company by phone, he ordered a set, and within 30 hrs. the tracks were delivered to his doorstep.

uphill very well. I paid \$1,400 for it. One cheap feature is that it uses a cable to engage the mower deck. I've seen on YouTube where other people have tried to fix their problems with this mower."

Roger H. Eilderts, Wellsburg, Iowa: "My 1969 **Deere 4020** diesel tractor has about 9,300 hrs. on it but has required only normal maintenance and repairs. It has never been overhauled. When I bought it my dad thought I didn't need to buy such a big tractor. However, later on he told me I had made a good choice and he borrowed it frequently."

Fred Foster, Valley Grove, W. Va.: "My 2003 **Dodge Ram** 3500 4-WD 4-door pickup equipped with a 5.9-liter Cummins diesel engine has spent most of its life hauling or towing loads and has traveled through at least 14 states, but it's still going strong with about 231,000 miles. I've used it to haul everything from tractors and farm machinery to furniture, in a whole range of trailer sizes. I've also driven it through snowdrifts up to the mirrors and through deep mud, but it always keeps going."

Chris Nobes, Hesperus, Colo.: "During



Schafers spent about \$100,000 to add tracks to his combine last fall.

"The track system cost us \$75,000 and took 5 hrs. to install, but we'd do it again in a heartbeat," he says. "These tracks are 11 ft. long, which translates into a footprint of 3 lbs. per square inch of ground. The longer the tracks are, the better they spread out how the weight transfers to the ground."

Schafers says his combine only sank in about 6 in. compared to about 1 1/2 ft. with duals. This allowed him to keep the header up out of the water and continue moving.

"It's a bit of a rougher ride, and you lose about 10 miles per hour in road speed, down from 25 to 10," he adds. "It's also a lot of work to clean out the tracks at the end of the season, even if you do it while the mud's still soft. It took us about 4 hrs. with a high pressure washer. But the sacrifices were well worth it, since we were able to get finished."

He says the Mud Hog drive worked extremely well with the tracks, and were particularly helpful for turning at the ends of the field.

Judy adds, "It was a risk indeed, but the claims made by the manufacturer of the track system live up to its promises. Shane took his nervous dad for a test run though some of the 'lakes' in the field and made it through like magic! It was hard to believe what that huge, heavy machine could go through. There were literally a couple of feet of standing water in some places, and the combine motored on through, spraying water everywhere as if it was surfing. It was such a sight that as many as 4 vehicles at a time stopped on the side of the road, just to watch."

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the 50 years I've worked in construction trades I've probably used every brand of cordless drill there is, and I think the **Porter-Cable** 20-volt lithium ion, 1/2-in. cordless drill is the best by far. The batteries charge quickly and last a long time, and the drill fits nicely in my hand. The 1/2-in. chuck on it is a good feature."

Paul Kroeger, Porter Cors, N.Y.: "No problems with my 2009 **New Holland T1510** 30 hp tractor equipped with an 8-ft. Woods backhoe and 6-ft. snowblower. I only wish it had a step that would make it easier to get into the cab. I added backup lights and a soft cab enclosure. A slit I cut in back of it lets me reach out to hand crank my snowblower chute."

"I like my 2000 **DR** walk-behind 6 hp. Powerwagon that's equipped with electric start and snow chains. It doesn't really need electric start. I leave the chains on all year long."

"The fuel tank on my 2002 **DR** 18 hp 4-in. wood chipper had to be replaced under factory recall. I removed the shield on the

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