

Old Cat Dozer Gets New Life

By Jim Ruen, Contributing Editor

Walt Rodler gave a 59-year-old Caterpillar dozer new life, rebuilding nearly everything but the engine. After more than 70,000 hrs. of hard use in forests and on roads, the D69U sat unused for about 10 years.

"I took about 3 wheelbarrows full of mud out of it," says Rodler. "Steering clutches were down to ribbons, control levers were worn out, the battery box was mostly corroded away, and the blade was down to less than 1/8 of an inch. However, all I had to do to the 318 diesel engine was change oil!"

The list of what Rodler had to replace or rebuild was almost as long as the original component list for the big Cat. He did it, in part, because of the basic quality of older equipment.

"This old equipment is made from quality material," says Rodler. "Every part was high quality, not just the wear parts. They were easy to maintain, too. All you needed was a crescent wrench, screwdrivers, vice grip and a few wrenches, plus a can of ether to start the big engine when cold."

Rodler points to the quality of the hydraulic cylinders, another component that needed no rebuilding. Even though there was a spot on each ram where the chrome was worn off, they didn't leak.

"The hydraulic pump looked like it had a leak when it started, as it might drip a little, but it was a friction fit," he explains. "After an hour of running or when used frequently, there was no leak."

A few of the new parts included the steering bands, track tension adjusters and guards (replacing old threaded rod types with hydraulic adjusters), belts, brake bands and control arms for the winch, cables, alternator to trickle charge the pony motor (originally there was no charging system), a seat and arm

rests.

Some parts were OEM replacements. Others were harder to find, like a magneto that he sourced from a U.S. company.

Many parts were fabricated by Rodler. These were as simple as building up existing material with his welder to building the equipment needed to make the new build or rebuild.

"The push beams and trunnion ball were not quite worn out, but from what I could see, they had never been replaced," says Rodler. "I built the cup up and re-shaped it to fit the trunnion ball using 10018 electrodes."

Rodler took the track apart to work on the linkages, making brass bushings to tighten them up. Before he could do that, he had to bust loose the rusted tight bolts.

"I made up a hydraulic press with a channel-type system to cradle the track," says Rodler. "I put 10-ton pressure on them and heated them with an oxy torch. Then I hit them with a maul to jar them. With the heat, it broke the bolts apart."

Rodler notes that the pins with grease fittings on the linkages were worn, but he did a little lathe work and then increased the size of the bushings to compensate.

"I could have gotten new linkages, but that high grade steel can't be found today," says Rodler. "I have about \$15,000 to \$20,000 in the total rebuild, but the tracks alone are worth many times that. We'll never again see the quality of that old steel."

Other steel work included rebuilding control levers and re-plating the stripped out undercarriage and the blade with 3/8-in. AR250 plate steel. He also built up the carrier rollers.

"I made a special bench vice to hold the rollers with an electric motor that turned them



Walt Rodler rebuilt nearly everything but the engine on this 59-year-old Caterpillar dozer.

slowly as I rewelded them, building them up about 5/8-in. across the entire surfaces," explains Rodler. "I used 10018 electrodes to build up all 4 of them. I had to watch to not overheat them in order to maintain tensile strength."

While the diesel engine required practically no work, the pony engine used to start it was a mess. The starter was seized up and needed a complete rebuild with new brushes and bushings. The pony required all new cables, battery and a shutoff valve for the fuel line.

"The flywheel had to be realigned. Belts were rotten, and I had to rebuild the battery box," says Rodler.

Rodler fabricated a safety cage and rebuilt the seats and arm rests using material from a salvaged airplane gas tank bladder. It happened to be at a scrap yard when he stopped by.

"I start it occasionally to keep it moving,"



Photo shows dozer before Rodler started restoring it.

says Rodler. "One winter when we had a lot of snow, I slipped off the road with my Pettibone loader. I took the dozer out, set it at idle and let the winch pull the big Pettibone out."

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"HawkStopper" Protects Free-Range Poultry

You can keep hawks from feasting on free-range poultry with HawkStopper netting. It's a lightweight, multi-filament netting that acts as a visual barrier to hawks.

"A hawk's eyesight is about 8 times sharper than ours," explains Ken Johnson, Maine Outdoor Solutions. "They see things sharper and from a greater distance. While we can barely see Hawkstopper netting suspended in the air, it looks like jail bars to hawks."

Johnson came up with the concept after talking to a friend and former zoology professor. The zoologist had worked with the coastal fish farming industry to stop seabird predation of salmon pens.

"They used gill nets because they were plentiful, but they tangled easily," says Johnson. "HawkStopper is soft and tangle free. You can wrap it over your arm like you would a rope and then stick it in a bag for storage. It unfurls easily next time you need it."

Johnson says the HawkStopper is easy to hang and can be quickly suspended from posts, trees or other supports. The 6-in. sq. openings and the light, but strong multi-filament netting provides minimal resistance to wind and rain.

"We've had good feedback from customers," says Johnson. "Wind has not affected nets in place."

While the product has only been out a few months, Johnson is confident it will last. "We expect at least a 5-year life based on material specifications," he says.

A single 20 by 75-ft. HawkStopper net provides 1,500 sq. ft. of protection. At \$95 and free shipping, it doesn't have to prevent



Made from a lightweight, multi-filament netting, HawkStopper can be quickly suspended from posts, trees or other supports to keep predatory birds away.

too many losses to pay for itself.

"It would be hard to cover free-range poultry with any other material economically," says Johnson. "We think HawkStopper provides excellent coverage for a good price, and our customers do, too. I've introduced a lot of new products, and some just sit there. HawkStopper has really taken off."

Although initial buyers have largely been free-range poultry producers, Johnson is expanding sales into other markets, in particular inland fish farms. "We are now marketing also to owners of Koi ponds and freshwater fish producers," he says.

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Glenn Thompson bought a trailer equipped with a tilt bed and mounted a winch and screw-jack on front.

Modified Trailer Eliminates Need For Loading Ramps

Glenn Thompson of Fredericksburg, Texas made a simple and inexpensive modification to his trailer to make loading small tractors easy and safe.

"I have a collection of compact tractors and garden tractors so I often need to haul them around. I've witnessed enough accidents to develop a dislike and distrust for ramps," says Thompson.

"So, I bought a 10-ft. long trailer equipped with a tilt bed and mounted a winch and a screw-jack on front. This allows me to drive up to the trailer, connect to the winch, and haul the tractor on board. Once the tractor is loaded, I can lower the bed at my convenience. Loading small tractors this way is easy on my back, and safe."



"Connecting to the winch lets me safely haul small tractors on board," he says.

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