

They Upgrade, Rebuild Or Restore Peterbilts

Courtland Truck Works will get your Peterbilt back on the road in whatever way you want, including total restoration, a road-worthy rebuild, or completely reinvented.

The company got into the business by turning an old Peterbilt into a motor home. With 23 years under its belt, employees have completely restored many old models. They've also upgraded others with new engines, transmissions and all the fixings. The company will also supply parts for do-it-yourselfers.

"Some guys like upgrades, and others just want to get their trucks back to what they were," says Mike McQuiddy, Courtland Truck Works. What all their customers have in common, he adds, is what his wife calls "red oval disease".

"The old Peterbilts weren't the biggest or the baddest, but they were the most well-liked by truck drivers," he adds.

When it comes to restoration, Courtland will fabricate any parts they don't have in stock or can't find. "Gear sets and transmissions are the only things that get sent out," says McQuiddy. "We are constantly buying rigs and have a backlog of trucks to pick up and part out."

Restored trucks are often limited in use to driving to truck shows. Current emission

standards require substantial upgrades if older trucks are going to be used for commercial transport.

Bob Spooner delivers Courtland's restored and rebuilt Peterbilts with his own 1961 Peterbilt 281 that he bought new. At 77, he may be one of the oldest commercial drivers in the country, as well as the longest operating, having started commercial trucking in 1959. His Peterbilt is approaching 9 million miles on the classic truck.

Spooner notes that while the truck may be old, nothing under the hood is. In fact, even the cab was replaced after he and the truck survived a tornado that lifted it off the ground and dropped it on its side.

Courtland did most of the recent work, including the truck's third engine and an 18-speed transmission that replaced the 5-speed main box and 3-speed auxiliary. All the wheels are now hub pilot style, and it has front brakes. It even has cruise control.

Recently Spooner returned from a delivery in Ontario and a few weeks later headed for Tennessee. The California-based firm has shipped out restored or rebuilt Peterbilts to most states in the U.S. and Canadian provinces, as well as overseas.

"We have more customers out of the country than in," says McQuiddy. "The Swedish market is crazy for Peterbilts, and



Courtland Truck Works in California specializes in upgrading, rebuilding, and restoring Peterbilt trucks. This truck was fully restored.

the Australians are just as bad. We've hit about all the European countries other than France. We've sent a bunch to England."

McQuiddy says a ballpark figure for an upgrade starts around \$150,000. A full restoration from the ground up of a long 3-axle, leaving no bolts unturned, can run \$300,000.

"What is done and to what extent depends entirely on the customer," says McQuiddy.

"Some just want parts and will do it themselves. Others want us to do the hard stuff like stretching out a frame or changing out suspensions."

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Self-Service Farm Stand Creates Extra Income

After seeing a neighboring farm's self-service farm stand, Curtis Millsap of Springfield, Mo., decided to set up his own in a storage cooler he and his farm employees built to store produce. Curtis had always liked the idea of having a roadside farm stand but it was difficult to justify staffing it. "Self-service makes a lot more sense," he says.

Millsap's large storage cooler provided an ideal space for selling produce. Built off the end of one of their greenhouses, the storage cooler is made from 8-in. thick insulated foamboard recycled from an old warehouse. The cooler is powered by a Coolbot device that connects to a window AC unit. The Coolbot (www.storeitcold.com) "tricks" the AC unit into running as cold as a refrigerator and keeps the cooler in the high 30's and low 40's, depending on

the temperature outside.

Curtis installed stainless steel shelving units that can be customized to the desired height. The produce is stored in clear plastic totes with the prices displayed right on the lid or side of the tote. This allows customers to see the products and prices clearly while also protecting the fruits and vegetables.

Customers total their order in a receipt book and leave cash or a check in a mailbox installed right outside the cooler door. Many of the Millsap's customers are nearby friends and neighbors, and Curtis said everyone is very honest and there have been no issues with theft or vandalism.

Curtis noted that signage with large lettering has been very important to build awareness of the self-service stand. Located just a couple of turns off of a main highway, there are close to 10 signs between the turn

onto the Millsap's country road and the farm stand itself. The stand is also promoted through the farm's social media pages and at their weekly pizza night events.

Millsap Farm grows a variety of fruits and vegetables that make their way onto the farm stand shelves, from greens to tomatoes, raspberries, oyster mushrooms, herbs, cut flowers and more, plus they source items like eggs, goat cheese, grapes and honey from other local farmers in their area. The self service stand averages an extra \$100 to \$200 a week in income, and that number can be a bit higher based on what products are available that week.

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Photo shows the variety of produce for sale at the farm stand.

Woolen Mill Partners With Smaller Producers

The Mountain Meadow Wool mill can turn your flock's wool into everything from spun yarn to hoodies complete with your brand. Wyoming's only woolen mill buys wool for its own products and custom processes wool for products the wool's producers can sell. "My mother and her business partner started a yarn shop here in Buffalo 17 years ago," says Ben Hostetler. "They wanted to offer locally sourced yarn and got a bale of wool from a local producer. They realized they could do it here, and it has grown ever since."

One thing that makes Mountain Meadow different is that they offer premium yarn and other products identified by the ranch the wool came from. Another is that they use all natural processing, just detergent, with no chlorine or other additives.

Perhaps the biggest difference is their partnership with producers who agree to be paid for their wool as it is processed. The producers receive a baseline price that is above the market price when the wool is delivered. If the market price goes up, Mountain Meadow tries to match it.

"It's a true partnership with benefits for them and us," says Hostetler. "We warehouse the wool at no cost to them, and in turn, they get a premium price."

The program has improved for producers as the mill's business has grown. Hostetler says that the first year they took the wool on consignment, it took 4 years to use it all. "Now we use it all in a year," he says. "The producer's willingness to wait for the money during our initial growth has really helped."

The producer program currently consists of 7 ranches in Wyoming, one in Colorado, and one in Montana. In addition, the mill buys wool from as many as 30 other ranches for specialty releases by breed, such as Alpaca, Churro or Mountain Merino. All told, Mountain Meadow uses about 40,000 lbs. of wool each year.

"About 70 percent of the wool we process is sold by us," says Hostetler. "The rest comes from small flocks around the country. They send it in for custom processing."

The latter can have their wool returned at any stage, from fiber to yarn to finished product if desired, with the farm's brand or

name woven in.

"We have a lot of ranchers who want something special made with their wool," says Hostetler. "They own the wool all the way through the process."

Others want something made from their wool, but they don't know what. "I spend a lot of time up front investigating what they want to make and what the end market is for the product," says Hostetler. "We don't want it to sit on the shelf."

Once decisions are made, it is generally 2 months from the time the fiber arrives until it reaches the yarn stage. To reach a finished product stage takes about 3 months.

"If it meets specifications, fiber can be made into most of the products we sell online, from blankets and throws to hoodies and sweaters," says Hostetler. "We don't have a minimum amount if making yarn, but our mill is best suited to orders of 50 lbs. of wool or more. If more than 10,000 lbs., it will be more economical to go to a larger mill, but it may be harder to assure traceability back to your flock."

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Mountain Meadow Wool mill offers premium yarn and other products identified by the ranch the wool came from.

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