

Miller's refurbished ice cream maker and custom cart provide a nice side income for his family.



JD Engine Drives Ice Cream Maker

In his spare time, Jacob Miller started a portable ice cream-making business that produces smiles for all of his customers and extra cash.

Miller's business, called Putt Putt Ice Cream, has been delighting crowds not only through its delicious product but also the way the homemade ice cream is produced, using a rebuilt 1946 John Deere stationary engine. Miller has taken his vintage ice cream maker on the road for two years, churning out fresh vanilla to customers at summer events throughout northeastern Wisconsin.

Miller grew up watching homemade ice cream makers use a similar setup. A friend of Miller's totally rebuilt the 76-year-old water-cooled engine, which produces about one and a half horsepower. Miller mixes ingredients in a stainless-steel bucket that holds about five gallons, then adds ice and salt around the bucket. That reduces the ingredient temperature down to 0 degrees. The first batch of ice cream takes about 40 minutes to make, and after that Miller can produce a batch in about 30 minutes because the bucket is cold.

"Churning out five gallons at a time I can keep sales rolling and customers happy,"

Miller says. He sells the creamy custard-like goodness out of a trailer that's similar to a mobile food stand.

"It takes a lot of prep time," Miller says. "Then of course there's the event I'm serving at, clean-up and pack-up time. By the time I get home, the days are very long. If the event is a couple of days long, I'm only getting 3 to 4 hrs. of sleep."

Miller admits the process would be easier and faster with an electric system, but he wouldn't get the same reaction from customers. He says, "They marvel at the old-fashioned setup. Older people see it and remember a similar setup growing up on a farm. Then, of course, the younger generation, especially children, are very curious and wonder what the machine is. It brings in all age groups, which is a good selling point."

Promoting his side business through Facebook and Instagram, Miller has seen hungry customers travel more than two hours to try his homemade ice cream.

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Minnesota Man Collects Jacks

By Nancy Packard Leasman

Jim Checkel has amassed a collection of all sorts of lift jacks. He displays them in his 1913 barn in rural Kasson, Minn., on the farm his grandfather purchased in 1947.

Checkel grew up on the farm and, as a child, played with jacks. "When I tell people that, they think I mean the children's toy," he said. But he meant the heavy metal mechanical devices. He learned early on how useful they could be. In the 1980's, he won a heavy-duty Handyman farm jack at a hardware store. Then his uncle gave him a jack. Neighbors and friends learned of his interest in jacks, and more came his way. It wasn't long before he was a collector. He now has 349 of them and says that might just be enough.

The jacks in Checkel's collection are made of different kinds of iron, aluminum, and plastic along with handles of wood (most likely oak, hickory, ash and maybe iron-

wood). His favorite is a 100th-anniversary limited edition Hi-Lift made in 2005. "I called the company to see if they still had some," he said. He had missed the initial celebration, but they still had some of the 200 green metal and chrome treasures. He sent the company a photo of his collection, and they sent him a jack.

His oldest jack is from an 1849 Conestoga wagon, and he has a slightly newer 1853 wooden buggy jack. He usually pays about \$25 for jacks, but many have been gifts.

Jim recently retired from the Mayo Clinic's neurology research facility. He is a world traveler, having visited 34 countries and most U.S. states. He's always looking for interesting jacks at auctions, both live and online.

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Trucks on exhibit range from a 1903 Eldridge, believed to be the first truck manufactured in the United States, to a 1981 Kenworth K100.

I-80 Truck Museum Houses Rare Trucks

If you like trucks, the Iowa 80 Trucking Museum has them, with more than 120 trucks of all sizes, types, makes and models. The museum grew out of Iowa 80 Truckstop founder Bill Moon's personal collection of over 65 trucks. His dream of a trucking museum was brought to life by his wife Caroline and his son and daughter after he died in 1992.

"In 2004 we built a 14,400-sq. ft building that was essentially a storage shed," says Dave Meier, Iowa 80 Trucking Museum curator and Moon's son-in-law. "In 2007 we added a visitor center, and we keep adding display space. Today we are over 100,000 sq. ft."

The original 120 by 120-ft. building is now 500 ft. long with a 160 by 200-ft. addition to one side. The clear-span buildings showcase the trucks with ample space for visitors viewing them. Trucks on display are often rare and one-of-a-kind. Others are simply examples of the role trucks have played in industry, agriculture and transportation.

Exhibits also include toy trucks, petroleum-related equipment and signs, trucking company hat pins, chauffeur badges and license plate tags. Visitors can view short films about trucking history in the REO theatre.

Trucks on exhibit range from a 1903 Eldridge, believed to be the first truck manufactured in the United States, to a 1981 Kenworth K100. They are a mix of fully restored, lightly restored and used conditions. The museum's 1910 Avery still has the original owner's name painted on the wood body.

"We have a 1925 Douglas with a Dempster well drilling rig on it that is unrestored, but it has so much character as is," says Meier. "At some point, it was painted barn red, and homemade repairs were made. The cab is all wood, and the slatted wood roof had been covered with black tar roofing material. When that failed, the owner fastened tin over the top."

Moon started his collection in the 1970's. "Bill realized that old trucks were getting cut up for scrap and thought that was terrible," says Meier. "He started buying them, which you could do then for their salvage value."

The first truck Moon restored was a 1949 Brockway. He turned it over to a mechanic, who told his assistant to break it down.

"His assistant completely disassembled it," relates Meier. "Since then, that's how

we restore all our trucks. We go through everything."

As the museum has become more well-known, some trucks have been loaned to the museum while others have been given outright. A family in Ohio donated a 1973 Diamond Reo that their father purchased new. When he died, his wife put the truck in a shed, and the family got it out once a year for about 25 years. They would wash it, drive it around and park it back in the shed.

"When their mother died, they called to ask if we wanted it," says Meier. "They sent a picture, and it looked like new. It's like a shrine to their dad."

Meier notes that many of the trucks have stories attached. They can be seen on placards at the museum or the museum's website and list of trucks on display. One such truck is the last Kenworth Bullnose ever built. When Ray O'Hanesian, a longtime friend of the Moons, ordered it in 1959, the Bullnose model had just been discontinued. However, the company still had the dies for the cab and honored the order.

O'Hanesian replaced the engine 12 times and swapped out several transmissions. He also shortened the wheelbase from 264 in. to 224 in. and raised the cab to make room for a larger radiator.

After he retired in the 1980's, he continued driving it to shows until donating it to the museum in 2010 with more than 5.2 million miles on it.

"It now sits on a banner stand at the museum with his name on it," says Meier.

Some trucks are harder to restore than others. The museum's 1912 Mack Jr. pickup is one of only 1,361 made from 1905 to 1916. It was missing a magneto, carburetor, brackets on the firewall to hold the leather top in place and a few other items.

"Mack Trucks loaned us the parts we were missing so we could get replacements cast," recalls Meier. "It took quite a while to get it restored, but there are only about four left that we know of."

"We are still actively collecting trucks and memorabilia," says Meier. "We have three or four under restoration at any one time. We collect things we like that are fairly priced for the condition they are in."

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