



Thompson and his son converted an old F-800 truck into a pickup.

‘Pickup On Steroids’ Made From Box Truck

By Bruce Derksen, Contributing Editor

When Randy Thompson needed a place to store his 4-wheelers and ATVs, he thought the box from a vandalized 1999 Ford F-800 truck with 335,000 miles and a 5-speed standard transmission would do the trick.

“I went to see the truck to make sure the box would be a good option,” Thompson says. “Kids had pretty much destroyed every window, started a fire on the hood and windshield, and cut up all the seats and upholstery. It was a mess.”

After deciding the largely undamaged box would still work for his storage idea, he bought it, took it home, hooked up a battery to the 5.9L Cummins diesel engine, and to his surprise, it started right up after sitting for nearly 8 years. He knew he had something worthwhile and, with his then 9-year-old son, started upgrading it.

The pair completed all the work in their garage, removing the box and shortening the frame by 7 ft. They added custom-made brackets and installed an 8-ft. box from a

1994 F-350. One section of the drive shaft was removed and the other shortened about 12 in. A custom-made exhaust system and a rear bumper that the pair fashioned from 3/8-in. thick boiler pipe was added. They were able to use the same tires on the rear, although they rotated the outside tires 180 degrees compared to the inside tires as they had flat spots from sitting so long.

“It looks like a pickup truck on steroids,” Thompson laughs. “It’s usually my now 20-year-old son’s work truck in the summer, but we don’t run it in winter due to our New York weather. We also drive it on local cruise nights.”

Thompson estimates he put nearly \$11,000 into the converted truck, including the \$1,000 he initially paid. The largest cost was roughly \$7,000 for an upgrade in the Lucas Girling brake parts.

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They’re Using Chickens As No-Till Seed Planters

Dave Perozzi makes his chickens work for their meals. He broadcasts seed ahead of them as he moves them to new grass. Some of the seed gets eaten. However, some of it, especially the smaller seed, gets scratched into the dirt along with chicken manure to fertilize it. After the chickens have moved to fresh grass, the seed sprouts, improving forage for the cattle that follow later in the year.

“We started after noticing seed in spilled chicken feed germinating after the chickens had been moved,” says Perozzi. “The first year, I spread oats, daikon radish, and purple top turnips. I’ve tried others, including peas and sunflowers, but tend to circle back to the first three.”

Perozzi has also tried corn and pearl millet with different degrees of success. Oats, radish, and turnips have done well. While peas germinated, he found they couldn’t handle competition from pasture perennials and stalled out. He had some success with the larger seeds, but also noted failures, such as no sunflowers emerging.

“The chickens have an easier time finding and eating the larger seeds,” he says. “The smaller seeds are more likely to escape them, especially if the pasture plants are thick.”

A friend suggested Perozzi add clover seed to the feed ration. He cited its potential to pass through the chicken undigested.

“It might work, but I already have a good population of clover,” he says.

Perozzi is quick to point out that the right amount of soil moisture and disturbance of the soil is key to good emergence. After 3 years of experimenting with the practice,



Chicken-seeded purple top turnip.

he’s not sure if the practice is economically sound, given the effort and the cost of seed. However, when it works, it works.

“We’ve had times where we got spectacular regrowth, producing a really thick bed of radish and turnips,” says Perozzi. “We’ve also had times we barely found any regrowth.”

While the chickens do the work, they don’t see the benefit. Perozzi points to his heavy clay soils as the reason he pastures chickens on them only once a season. “One application of chicken manure a year is about all my soils can handle,” he says. “Later each season, I bring in our cattle. When it gets colder, they like the fall greens, both radish and turnip tops.”

Perozzi is hesitant to recommend the practice to others yet. He plans to continue with it himself. “I’m still trying to understand it,” he says.

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Jacobson shows his roller chain hinges on his pickup box.

Heavy-Duty Custom Pickup Box Uses Roller Chain Hinges

Roller chain hinges on his customized pickup box give Eric Jacobson lots of options. The box is one he built after the original box failed when a load of firewood shifted. Box sides consist of two horizontal sections. Jacobson can drop both for a flatbed, raise one for an easy-to-access box, or raise both for more holding capacity.

“I designed the box with the help of a friend,” says Jacobson. “I wanted heavy-duty box sides, but with the option of quickly converting to a flatbed. I had Number 80 roller chain and thought it might make good hinges.”

Jacobson did the welding, and a friend shaped the sheet metal to match the existing truck body. “He rolled steel panels for the wheel wells and made the side panels and tailgate,” says Jacobson. “We made the tailgate extra deep, to hold two compartments for tools and such.”

Jacobson designed the box sides in two sections. The top section is connected to the lower section with a heavy-duty continuous

hinge on the inside edges. This lets it fold down to the bed alongside the lower section.

Jacobson welded short lengths of roller chain on both sides of the upper section where it meets the lower section. In corresponding spots on the lower sections, he welded small clevises in place.

“When I want the full side of the box vertical, I can slip pins through the clevis and the last link on each length of roller chain,” says Jacobson. “This locks the two sections together for a solid side.”

On the outside of the box, Jacobson welded sections of roller chain to hinge the lower section to the bed. This allows him to lower both sections alongside the bed for easy loading and stacking of material.

Pins at the front corner of the sides lock the lower sections to the front frame of the box.

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Wheelchair is secured with tie-down straps, held in place by the same seatbelt they use in their van.

Made-It-Myself ATV Sidecar

After Verne Schlueter’s wife had a stroke, she was restricted to a wheelchair and was no longer able to sit in the front of vehicles. “One day she said to me, ‘It sure would be nice to sit next to the driver again,’” says Schlueter. “That got me thinking of some creative solutions.”

Schlueter pulled inspiration from motorcycle sidecars and designed a removable cart he can attach directly to a four-wheeler. His four-wheeler has a ball hitch, so he used a heavy plate attached to the mainframe with a trailer hitch and a small bicycle tire. He used two bolt hitches, 3/4-in. plywood, and 2 by 2-in. square tubing left over from other

projects for the assembly, which took about 2 to 3 weeks.

The wheelchair is secured with tie-down straps, held in place by the same seatbelt they use in their van. Thanks to the sidecar’s portable size, it’s possible to load it up on a trailer to take into town.

“My wife is in a nursing home now, so I like to use this sidecar with a golf cart on side streets, going about 5 to 10 mph,” he says. “It’s a lot of fun, but it’s definitely not a high-speed thing. Build one at your own risk.”

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