

“We used a lot of different materials and parts and put quite a bit of time into building the tractor, and it’s paid back many times over the past 40 years,” Lowe says.



## 40-Year-Old Homebuilt Tractor Still Working Hard

Herb Lowe and his son Steve built a custom tractor nearly 40 years ago, and Herb says it’s still “paying me back for treating it right and keeping it inside out of the weather when I’m not using it.”

Lowe is 95 years old and says he and Steve built the tractor “when I had the ideas, and he

had the welding skills to put it together. I was working for Chevron Oil at the time, and my superintendent said I could use scrap metal from the yard to build the frame. We drew up some plans and Steve welded the frame together. The tractor is about 8-ft. long, like a small Ford.”

The tractor uses a 4-speed Chevrolet truck transmission coupled to a 1949 3/4-ton Ford pickup rear end. The axles were cut off to make the wheel track slightly narrower than a pickup. The 16-in. rear wheels are from an old 3/4-ton pickup and have 6:50 x 16 deep tread tires. The 13-in. front wheels, from an old trailer, are mounted on a bolster that Lowes built from scratch.

“We thought about different engines and finally settled on a 2-cyl., 16-hp. air-cooled Wisconsin that a farmer had on an old hay baler,” Lowe says. “He had two of them, and I guess I chose the right one because, after all these years, it’ll turn over a couple of times and start right up.”

Lowe says, “The transmission has a compound low, so the tractor has plenty of power. When you put it in fourth gear, a person can go much faster than you ought to, so you had better hold on and not turn too short. It turns quick, so the driver has to be careful.”

The Lowes built the tractor for work rather than just for show. The 4-ft. front blade plows snow or moves dirt and gravel. It raises and lowers with a hydraulic cylinder that Lowe says “holds steady at whatever level we

want.” They mounted a hydraulic 3-pt. and toolbar on the rear to handle a blade, spring tooth rake, or mower. An oil pump with a 16-gal. reservoir handles the hydraulics.

Lowe built a cardboard template for the hood and operator station and had a fabricator form the sheet metal. The hood has openings for the air intake and exhaust. They fitted a steering system from a wrecked car to extend from the front wheels up to the operator station. Lowe ordered a cushioned fold-down seat from Northern Hydraulics and says the tractor is comfortable to ride on and easy to drive. The 12-volt battery system provides electric starting and lights if Lowe needs to clear the driveway or mow when it’s dark.

“We used a lot of different materials and parts and put quite a bit of time into building the tractor, and it’s paid back many times over the past 40 years,” Lowe says. “We didn’t give it a name or a number, but I suppose we could’ve called it ‘Bulldog’ for the shiny Mack Truck ornament mounted on the front of the hood,” Lowe adds.

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Herbert Lowe, 108 Halfturn Rd., Rangely, Colo. 81648 (ph 970-675-2171).

Custom tractor uses parts from Case and Ingersoll equipment made in the 1960s mated to frames built in the 1990s.



## Family Teams Up For Custom Tractor Build

In 2012, when he was 9 years old, Ben Beiter was wide-eyed with excitement when he saw a custom-built garden tractor at an Indiana farm show. “I want one,” he exclaimed to his dad, Dave, who agreed to help Ben pursue his dream. That dream-to-reality journey required nearly 12 years, culminating when Ben finally rolled his shiny Colt Finger-Pincher 4320 onto the grounds of a Laurelville, Ohio, tractor show in 2023.

Dave Beiter says there was a lot of planning, procuring, designing, scraping, sanding, assembling, testing, re-fitting, painting, and putting it off till later that went into the project over the decade. His work and other renovation projects moved the custom build

to 2021.

They acquired a 3000/4000 series Ingersoll garden tractor to scavenge its hydraulic pump, power steering, travel control valve, transaxle, and miscellaneous fittings. The second part of the frame was from an Ingersoll 3014. They swapped out the original 3000 series hydraulic motors for those on the 400/4000 series to better accommodate 16-in. tires.

Ben wanted a special look for the front end, supplied perfectly by the hood, grille, and dash tower from a Case 155 garden tractor. They acquired other parts from various sources and installed a P220 Onan engine that Dave had from a different project tractor.

To create an articulated frame, the Beiters enlisted the help of a local fabricator, who produced a perfect design. Dave says a lot of trial and error was needed to mount the front transaxle and steering cylinders, but they succeeded with the tractor having a wider turning radius than initially planned.

Ben chose deep-offset steel Ingersoll wheels with Carlisle True Power 26x12-12 tires. That combination required a 2-in. frame lift, and the rear wheels were topped with Case 200 series fenders. They used parts from Case and Ingersoll equipment made in the 1960s and mated them to frames built in the 1990s without any modifications.

To fit the Onan engine in place, they raised the grille about an inch and the gauge tower about 2 in., then installed a twin-roll oil cooler from a 3000 series Ingersoll. The power steering rotary valve slid into the dash assembly. Slight modifications were needed to mount the travel control and power lift levers.

Ben bought a reproduction steel pan and cushion seat, and they found a reproduction period-correct steering wheel and center cap. A hinged-lid toolbox under the seat raised the seat to the desired height. Rather than installing brakes on the rear wheels, Ben welded a factory-original brake mount on the front frame and installed the band in reverse. He says front braking allows him to do burnouts without ruining the brakes.

Final touches included 2-in. diameter stainless steel exhaust stacks with rain flappers. They used CNH brand Iron Guard paint in the 1996 Colt paint scheme of power white and power red.

Dave Beiter says the entire project was fun and exciting with Ben, his brother Jonathan, and sister Rosemary all involved at various times. Ben says the finished tractor is incredible and everything he dreamed it could be.

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Beiter Family, Pleasantville, Ohio.



Ben and Jonathan Beiter work on the frame of the Colt Finger-Pincher 4320 they built.

## ‘Farmer Chopper’ Made For Showing And Mowing

Gary Dougherty always enjoyed watching the TV show “American Choppers,” and one of their episodes sparked an idea.

“I didn’t have enough money to buy a real chopper, so decided to make my own from a farmer’s point of view,” Dougherty says.

First, he spent \$20 on a used lawnmower with a twin-cylinder motor. He already had two Japanese-built motorcycle front ends, and a friend donated a Harley Davidson gas tank and seat to the project. Another friend offered up a pair of ATV tires.

“I made a shifter from a floor jack lever and moved the linkage from the rear to the front,” Dougherty says. “This was a little tricky.”

A welder friend lengthened the triple trees by 6 in. to make it stand out and look more like an actual chopper.

Dougherty cut up a chrome cattleguard from an old Ford truck and welded it to the manifold.

“Mounting the front end to the front of the lawnmower and making it look like a motorcycle was also a little challenging,” he says.

Dougherty drives the “Farmer Chopper” in parades and says it still operates as a mower. He’s unhooked the drive belt for safety around everyone who enjoys a close-up view of the unusual machine.

He estimates he spent about \$50 for the entire build, including five cans of spray paint.

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Gary Dougherty, 1232 Old Barn Lane, Freeport, Mich. 49325 (ph 616-262-5753; gdougherty@gmail.com).



Dougherty drives the “Farmer Chopper” in parades and says it still operates as a mower.