Smith made horse-hauler out of 78-passenger International schoolbus.

POWERED REAR ENDGATE-LOADING RAMP

Schoolbus Converted To "Motorhome" For Horses

By Bonnie Heidtke

Loren Smith's mules and horses travel in style, riding in a home-built "motorhome" while listening to music.

Smith made the horse-hauler out of a 78-passenger International schoolbus that he bought for $800. The state inspected bus is legal for road use.

"I bought the largest one they make so I can get my 8 by 12-ft. wagon in front and the horses in back. I can also use it to haul two cars," he says, noting that the bus is fitted with a powered loading ramp that raises and lowers electrically.

It took Smith about two weeks to remodel the bus. He removed the 22 seats (using some of them on wagons and a pontoon boat) and built a wooden wall behind the driver's seat so he wouldn't have to heat the entire bus in winter. He set up three tie stalls on each side of the bus in the rear compartment and put bars over the windows so horses wouldn't get hurt if they banged into them. He can still open the windows with the bars in place.

Smith built a hay rack to mount on the roof of the bus and made a ladder to get up there. He also made an awning like a motorhome so he can set it out and have shade next to the bus.

He says the bus is economical to license and insure, since he qualified it for farm plates. Liability insurance is just $19 a month.

"I like International buses because they turn shorter than Fords or Chevys. And they get 12 to 14 mpg when empty," says Smith.

He made the powered rear door and loading ramp by cutting off the back of the bus and making a heavy wooden door that fits the opening. It hinges on the rear bumper and a cable winch - mounted on the roof of the bus - raises and lowers the door. He mounted a 12-volt battery under the rear of the bus to power the winch. The battery is charged by the bus's main generator. A switch mounted on the side of the bus controls the door.

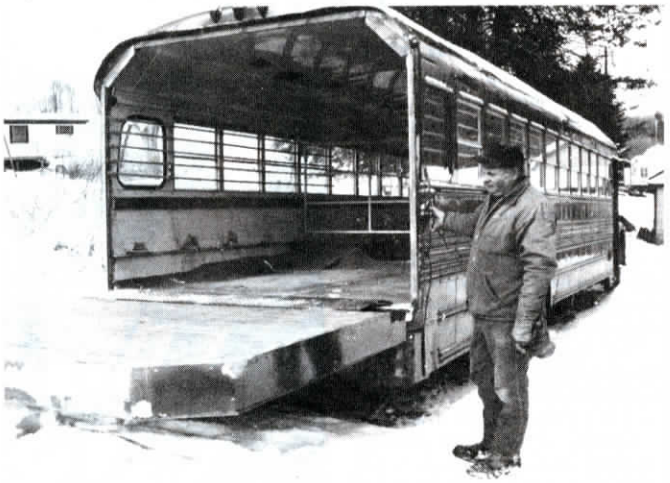
He mounted tail lights and turn signals on the back of the door and left all interior lights intact. He left the heater at the back of the bus. However, Smith says the bus is well-insulated so when horses are inside, it stays fairly warm.

"One reason you can buy horses so cheap is because scrap yards have a terrible time crushing them," says Smith, noting that there are steel beams going crossways every 8 in. in the flooring and the floor is 12-gal. sheet metal covered by 3/4-in. plywood.

If used on the road, converted buses cannot be left their original color. Smith says it took 4 gal. of automotive paint to paint the bus black and red.

Total cost of the bus conversion was $1,100. It took him about 2 weeks.

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Loren Smith, P.O. Box 105, Rt. 1, Spring Valley, Minn. 55975 (ph 507 352-4106).



Powered loading ramp raises and lowers electrically via cable winch mounted on roof.

Lamczyk built corn picker out of an old Gleaner E combine and New Idea 2-row, tractor-mounted corn picker. The 3-row corn head came off his Gleaner K combine.

HUSKING BED FROM NEW IDEA PICKER

Corn Picker Built From Old Combine

"It gets a lot of strange looks but it works good and saved us a lot of money," say brothers Dave and Barney Lamczyk, DuBois, Ill., about the 3-row self-propelled corn picker they built out of an old Gleaner E combine and a New Idea 2-row, tractor-mounted corn picker.

The Lamczyks got the combine free from a friend and bought the picker from another farmer for $500. They stripped the combine down to the frame, keeping the cab, engine, drive train, and wheels and axles. They lowered the engine and remounted the gas tank behind the cab. They used angle iron and steel plate to reinforce the frame and mounted the picker's husking bed over the rear wheels. The picker's two elevators - formerly mounted along each side of the tractor - were bolted onto a "tower" that they welded about halfway back on the frame. The picker's unloading elevator is bolted onto the frame behind the husking bed. The Lamczyks use a 3-row corn head from their Gleaner K combine which they use to harvest shelled corn. They pull a 250-bu. gravity wagon behind the picker.

"It really picks corn fast - about 100 bu. in 30 minutes," says Dave, who notes that they built the picker 1 1/2 years ago. They used it last fall to pick 2,000 bu. of ear corn that they grind and feed to their cattle. "We spent a total of $1,000. We had been using a New Idea 1-row pull-type picker but it went too slow. Another problem was that we had to run over corn whenever we opened up a field. The 3-row head is as wide as the combine so we can pull into a field and start picking with no waste at all. We use a hydraulic valve to disengage the rear elevator whenever we turn at the end of the field. The husking bed will hold up to 5 bu. We start the elevator up again as soon as the wagon lines up again behind the elevator.

"The 4-cyl., 50 hp engine has plenty of power. The picker is easy to maneuver and back up because the steering wheels are on back. The entire machine is well balanced. There's enough weight on back to keep the picker level even when going downhill with a full wagon.

"Everything is mechanically driven. All three elevators are chain-driven off the combine's main shaft. The husking bed is chain-driven by a right angled gearbox off the main shaft. A shaft-driven chain delivers corn from the feederhouse up to the two elevators. We welded lengths of angle iron onto the chain and mounted rubber paddles on the angle iron to keep ears from shelling.

"It's easy to service. By removing a roller chain and two cotter pins we can slide the husking bed and rear elevator backward off the frame. By removing two bolts and a chain we can remove the rear elevator separately. We mounted extra lights behind the cab so we can see the elevators and husking bed better at night.

"We pull on a rope from the cab to control a metal deflector at top of unloading elevator. By changing the position of the deflector we can pitch ears into the front of wagon or we can pitch them to rear of the wagon.

"Each of the two elevators has a stalk deflector on top that separates stalks from ears, dumping stalks onto the ground."

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Dave Lamczyk, 1396 W. Du Bois Rd., DuBois, Ill. 62831 (ph 618 787-8831).

He pulls 250-bu. gravity wagon behind picker. Cribbed corn was picked last fall.