

## HE DEVELOPED HIS OWN, UNIQUE RODEO ACT

# Farmer Uses "Comedy Car" For Clown Act

By Frank J. Buchman

While some farmers haven't found much humor in their business recently, Bernie Johnson of Assaria, Kan., has added an entertaining sideline to his farm life.

Johnson farms in partnership with his dad, Eldon, and performs as a rodeo clown and stunt car entertainer in his spare time. In addition to rodeos he performs at combine demolition derbies and other events.

Johnson started working as a rodeo clown over five years ago. "I tried to ride a bull at a rodeo when I was going to college but didn't do too good and decided I'd rather be out in

front of the bull instead of on its back. I've been clowning ever since," he explains.

While animal acts are common at rodeos, there are only a limited number of car stunt performers in the U.S.

He started with an old Volkswagen he found in a pasture. The wrecked car, with a 4-cyl. engine, cost only \$250. He's spent much more than that totally rebuilding the car for his act.

His act ranges from 8 to 12 min. in length. Complete with clown's grease paint and outfit, Bernie drives in, blows a charge, the engine dies, he



Photo courtesy Grass & Grain

**Bernie Johnson takes his stunt car to rodeos and demolition derbies around the country dressed as a clown.**

throws a chicken out, fire comes shooting out all over the car, and he pulls out a big bottle of whiskey to save the situation.

Once Johnson gets the machine started again, using a specially devised push crank, he pops wheelies

and spins the car around on its rear wheels.

"The announcer is 50% of my act. He has to work closely with me for it to come off right," Bernie notes.

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## HOPES TO WHITTLE HIS WAY INTO GUINNESS BOOK OF RECORDS

# Wood Carver Creates 155 Ft. "Log" Chain

Retired Kansas farmer James Porter, of Riverton, is attempting to whittle his way into the Guinness Book of World Records with a "log" chain that he's carving out of basswood.

So far, the still-growing wooden chain stretches 155 ft. and is made up of 860 of the 2½ to 3-in. long links that Porter has whittled.

He started his chain back in the summer of 1984. Since then, he's been working on it in his spare time—something he says he has plenty of now that he's retired.

Each link takes about 40 min. to complete. Once he has an 8-ft. long section carved out, he attaches it to the main chain with a clevis that is also carved out of wood. Besides clevises, he also carves out wooden hooks, swivels and even boxes with balls inside and adds them to the chain.

Porter, who's dulled more blades on his carving knife than he cares to count, plans to keep whittling way making what may be the world's longest "log" chain even longer. "I want to enter it as a world record. I don't know of anyone who has done anything like this before," he notes.



Photo courtesy Joplin Globe

Each of the 860 links, 2½ to 3 in. long, took 40 min. to carve.



"I do it because no one else does," says the Reverend Timothy Anderson who decorates his car each Christmas.

# Minister Decorates Car To Promote X-Mas Spirit

By Dianne L. Beetler

Early in December each year, when people start decorating their Christmas trees, Timothy Anderson gets out his holiday ornaments, too. But instead of trimming a tree, he decorates his car.

"I spend so much time in my car I enjoy taking Christmas with me," says Anderson, pastor at Immanuel Lutheran Church in Altona, Ill.

He places an inflatable Santa Claus, in the back seat and puts a sleigh with reindeer in the rear window. He tapes Christmas cards to the glove-compartment door, and drapes

sparkly garland with ornaments around the windows.

In less than an hour, Anderson transforms his car into a mobile Christmas decoration, and he doesn't take down his ornaments until January 8. "My wife says she feels like she's riding in a float," he notes.

Anderson started his humorous Christmas custom in 1971 while in college. "I decided to do it because nobody else did," he says.

He enjoys the stares that his car attracts. "It helps bring happiness to people and that makes me feel good."