"Low-Bed" Pickup Sports Removable Sideboards

After the bed on his 1980 Chevrolet 3/4-ton pickup rusted out, Bill Kurtz decided to remove it and build his own "low bed" that's complete with removable wooden sideboards and a side-mounted "pop-out" toolbox hidden out of view.

Kurtz welded 16-gauge semi-galvanized sheet metal to a channel iron frame that he mounted down between the wheels. The floor is only 28 in. off the ground compared to the 38-in. height of the pickup's original bed. The removable sideboards are only 8 in. high, and there's a 5-in. high, 20-in. wide ledge on each side. The middle part of the bed is 50 in. wide. A 6-in. high removable wooden endgate mounts on back, and below it is the pickup's original rear bumper.

"The bed's low floor and sides make it much easier to use than the bed on a conventional pickup," says Kurtz. "I can reach halfway across the bed to pick up or place tools. Because I use the pickup mainly to haul fencing materials, tools, etc., I don't need sides more than 13 in. high. By removing the boards I can mount a camper on the bed. It really works great for that because without conventional pickup sides in the way there's about 15 in. of extra storage space under each side of the camper. The bumper has a ball hitch on it. I put the camper on and pull a livestock trailer behind the pickup every year when we go to the state fair. I also use the pickup to pull silage wagons from the field. I use a magnet and a length of square steel tubing on the hitch that slides inside another length of tubing on the wagon hitch. By reaching out the window and pulling on a rope I can unhook wagons without ever having to get out of the cab.

"If I want I can make the bed completely flat by placing boards across the ledges and mounting plywood on top of them."

The one-of-a-kind toolbox mounts behind the driver's door and is 18 in. high and 2 ft. wide. Turning a 2-ft. long, 9/16-in. dia. bolt at the top of the toolbox releases a spring-loaded latch, allowing Kurtz to pull the toolbox out. "Hiding the toolbox leaves the bed completely open. Another advantage is that there are no hinges to rust out," says Kurtz. "By removing the sideboards I could also mount a conventional toolbox across on top of the ledges and across the front of the bed."

The wooden endgate is secured by a lag screw at the bottom that drops into a hole in the bed, as well as by spring-loaded latches on each side. The sideboards lean inward at an angle just for looks and set inside angle iron guides that bolt onto the ledges in front and back. The bed can be protected by tying a canvas to steel hooks on the inside of the sideboards.

Kurtz made the wheel wells out of plastic in order to eliminate rust.

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He Builds Low-Cost Tile Inlet Guards

Eldon Campbell makes his own tile inlet guards. He's installed 60 of the guards on his aggressively terraced Edina, Mo., farm.

The biggest difference compared to commercial guards is price. For example, materials for the inlet guards I make for 6-in. dia. tile cost $5.40. Store-bought guards that size cost $18 to $20."

He starts with 1 by 1/16-in. strap iron, which he pulls and hammers around a specifically sized piece of pipe, depending on which size tile he's making the guard for. He then fits the rough strap iron circle into the inside of the pipe and welds the ends together into a perfect circle.

Next, he uses 1/4-in. dia. rod to form the uprights of the guards. He uses a square pipe fitted with bolts, bending the rods around the bolt pattern to get the proper angles in the uprights.

When enough rods are bent to make a

guard, they're placed in a square wooden template and the strap iron ring is welded around the outside, while tops of rods are welded together. A coat of yellow paint completes the guard.

It takes 45 to 60 minutes to make each guard. Working in his spare time, Campbell makes guards for 6, 8, 10, and 12-in. dia. tile, ranging from 12 to 20 in. in height.

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4-WD Pickup Converted To Self-Propelled Sprayer

When the body rusted out on his 1975 Chevrolet 3/4-ton 4-WD pickup, Robert Lascelles, Ipava, Ill., converted it into a self-propelled sprayer equipped with a combine cab, a 500-gal. tank, and a 50-ft. boom.

"The combine cab provides great visibility and makes it easy to count rows when I turn at the end of the field," says Lascelles. "Also, it has big 10.00 by 25 semi truck tires that provide a lot of clearance and flotation. I spent about $13,000 to build it but it's every bit as good as a used SpraCoupe that would sell for $26,000 or more."

Lascelles stripped the pickup down to the frame, engine, and automatic transmission. The original engine was worn out so he installed a new V-8 350 cu. in. gas engine. He mounted the cab off an International 1440 combine on the frame about 8 in. ahead of the original pickup cab using four channel iron brackets fitted with the pickup's original rubber cab mounts. He mounted a used 3-section, hydraulic fold boom on back. The semi truck tires had open wheel rims so he had new centers made to fit the pickup hubs.

"I use it to apply pre-plant and burndown no-till herbicides as well as postemergence herbicides," says Lascelles, who built the sprayer last winter. "I went over most of our corn twice with it last summer, covering a total of 2,000 acres. The wheels straddle two 36-in. rows and the boom covers 16 rows at a time. I use an 8-row 36-in. planter so when I spray I always drive in our planter wheel tracks. We drill all our soybeans. I go in first gear at 10 to 12 mph in the field so I can cover acres fast. The 4:11 rear end runs at 2,200 rpm's in first gear which is a little slow. I plan to replace it with a 4:55 rear end.

"I travel at 30 to 35 mph on the road. We farm 1,300 acres that are scattered out over 15 miles so we're on the road a lot.

"I really like the view from the cab. The problem with pickup sprayers is that the driver sits on the left side so when you make a right turn at the end of the field it's hard to see and count the rows. The combine cab has a center-mounted steering wheel and, with glass all the way around, I have great visibility. The engine has a lot of power and with the big tires and 4-WD I can spray in muddy fields without getting stuck. I replaced the original cab seat with an air ride seat out of an International semi tractor."

Lascelles bought the cab at a salvage yard for $1,500 and the sprayer from a neighbor for $5,500. He used everything in the cab that he could including all the gauges, gear shift linkage to the throttle, tilt steering wheel, and air conditioner. He removed the heater coil from the cab to allow the air conditioner to operate more efficiently. "I don't need a heater because I don't use the rig in the winter," he says. The rig still has the combine's steering system. Lascelles hooked up the steering valve and cylinder to the pickup steering arm.

A Honda gas engine mounted behind the tank is used to operate the sprayer pump. Lascelles mounted an air cleaner alongside the cab and ran a hose from it back to the engine to keep it supplied with clean air. He cut away part of the pickup's hood to keep the engine cool. A plywood sheet behind the engine keeps heat away from the cab. The rig has eight Halogen floodlights - four on front and four on back. Lascelles used 55-gal. plastic barrels to make the rear fenders.

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