*Back Home by Chris Hardie*

**Plowing forward with project snow**

Living in Wisconsin and facing winter means finding a way to deal with snow — whether I shovel it, blow it or move it through mechanical means.

Our first snowfall of the season came the Tuesday before Thanksgiving when about 4 inches of heavy and slushy snow fell on our farm. I must be out of snow-shoveling shape because I really struggled. Wet snow can weigh as much as 21 pounds a cubic foot and I was clearly using too large of a snow shovel.

I shoveled the sidewalk and then turned toward my 40-year-old skid steer, which on that day was available for the task of clearing the driveway by pushing and dumping the sloshy mess.

But I’m moving up on the snow-removal scale this year after my wife, Sherry, convinced me it was time to buy a snowplow. The plan was to remove the winch — which didn’t work anyway — from the front of my 1998 pickup and replace it with a plow.

The decision to get a plow was completed many months ago, but in my typical “why do today what you can put off to tomorrow” planning, I didn’t purchase a plow until early November. It arrived via freight in a big box on a pallet.

Now, Wisconsinites have a lot of experience with plows. The first snowplow was patented in the 1840s; the first snowplow was deployed by a team of horses in Milwaukee in 1862. Because it was Milwaukee, it stands to reason there was the transportation of beer kegs involved as well.

When the automobile became popular, the car-mounted plow soon followed. Norwegian brothers Hans and Even Overaasen — I should point out that many Wisconsinites have Norwegian descent, so of course that makes perfect sense — along with Carl Frink of New York each created designs for car-mounted snowplows in the 1920s.

Both the designs included the uncanny ability of the plows to deposit large piles of snow blocking entrances to driveways and sidewalks.

The Overaasen snow-removal company still exists because apparently it still snows in Norway. Not only do they make plows, but in 2013 the company also delivered a 2,200-horsepower snowblower to the Oslo Airport. That’s only 2,192 more horses than my snowblower, just for the record.

Frink America operated until 2000 in Clayton, N.Y. Frink, a tire-shop owner, was acting on a dare from a friend when he constructed a steel snowplow that attached to the undercarriage of a car or truck to clear the bus route from Clayton to Watertown.

Attachment to the undercarriage is an important part of a snow plow, as I discovered. The original plan was that the snowplow would be taken to a local mechanic to be assembled and attached to the truck. But once I opened the box and saw all the parts, my frugal Norwegian blood stirred because I knew I was looking at several-hundred dollars of labor time. So I rounded up my scant supply of box wrenches and a couple of big hammers, watched an assembly video online and began.

Before anyone tries this at home, here’s a bit of advice. The directions assume the assembler is familiar with snowplow construction and parts. The photos were so small and grainy they could have been taken with surveillance cameras.

Being a veteran of many furniture-in-the-box projects, I soldiered on. By the end of day one — with about four hours of time invested — I had the main plow body put together.

Day two was a little trickier when it came time to attach the plow to the truck frame. I had purchased a plow mount specifically designed for my pickup. Reaching the frame required the destruction of the plastic bumper. It was then that I discovered the bolt holes for mounting were about 4 inches inside the frame, requiring some fancy finger-finagling. After two hours of fiddling, fussing and cussing, I realized the custom mount didn’t fit — no matter how much I coaxed it with larger and larger hammers.

I also realized that lifting the plow onto the truck was a job for more than one person — even with the help of my special friends, me and myself. As I was removing the partially connected plow, the frame fell on my right pinky finger and blood started flowing.

I extracted my hand, wrapped it in my dirty T-shirt and headed for the house. When I informed Sherry of my mishap, she muttered something about a few hours of paying for assembly time was going to pale in comparison to the cost of an emergency-room visit.

After I washed and dried the poor pinky, I decided it wasn’t that bad and wouldn’t require stitches. But my do-it-myself project was finished.

Turns out the custom mount wasn’t so custom after all. The mechanic said he needed to grind away a quarter-inch of steel on each side in order to make it fit. But fit it did and now I have an 84-inch snowplow ready for action.

Now where did I put those operating instructions?

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***Photo cutlines:***

*121720-agrv-life-hardie-1: The parts to Chris Hardie’s new snowplow arrive in a box. (Chris Hardie photo)*

*121720-agrv-life-hardie-2: The main structure of the snowplow is put together by Chris Hardie after about four hours of labor. (Chris Hardie photo)*

*121720-agrv-life-hardie-3: Hooking the plow to the frame of Chris Hardie’s old truck proves too big of a task for him, requiring the help of a mechanic. (Chris Hardie photo)*

*121720-agrv-life-hardie-4: Chris Hardie is ready for plowing snow – if he remembers where he put the directions for operating the plow. (Chris Hardie photo)*

*121720-agrv-life-hardie-5: The first car plow is invented in the 1920s by the Overaasen brothers in Norway. Photo courtesy of Overaasen.*

*121720-agrv-life-hardie-6:  The Overaasen snow-removal company, which made one of the first car plows, still exists. In 2013 the company delivered a 2,200-horsepower snow blower to the Oslo Airport. Photo courtesy of Overaasen.*