

# 'Rat rod' rises from rusty parts, creativity

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**CINCINNATUS** — On a rusty floor lift in a quaint garage filled with antique metal signs and oil cans, dusty vehicle manuals, piles of unpolished tools and far enough from society to receive no cellular service, rests a creation more austere than its surrounding environment.

Its frame is from a 1988 Chevrolet S-10 truck. The motor is out of a 1960s Pontiac Tempest, which is hooked up to a transmission for a Camaro.

Its radiator is from a tractor, along with its two front fenders. The rear fenders are the front fenders of a Studebaker. And a Purina Poultry feeding pan is used as a piece of the air filter.

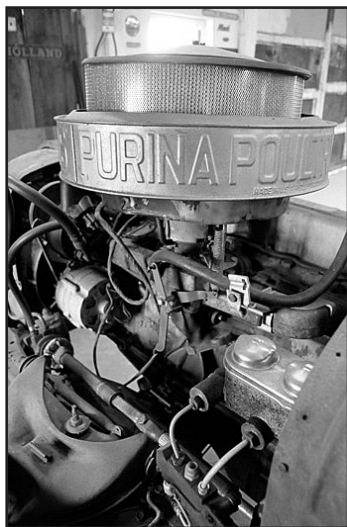
And it is to be registered as a 1928 Hupmobile.

"I call it 'the rat,'" said Ed Zeeuw of Cincinnatus, the Dr. Frankenstein behind his mad scientist creation — a conglomeration of various rustic car parts pieced together to form a vehicle known as a "rat rod."

A "rat rod" is a custom car, meant to imitate the hot rods of the 1940s to 60s, but built on a small budget using whatever scrap parts and pieces the builder can find. And they are not meant to look "pretty."

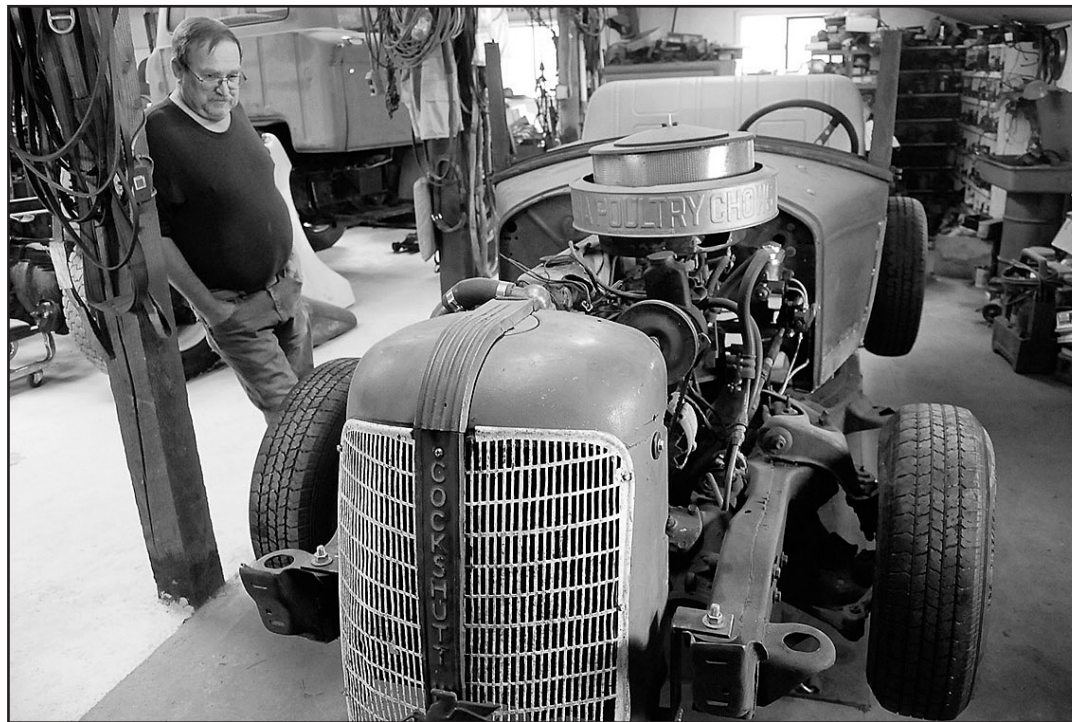
"I like oddball stuff," Zeeuw said. "I don't like things everyone else has. My stuff has to be a little different."

Cars have been his passion since he was 4 years old — the age he began driving his fa-



Bob Ellis/staff photographer

**Right: Ed Zeeuw looks over the "rat rod" he is building in his garage from car and tractor parts. ABOVE: A Purina Poultry feeding pan is used around the air filter.**



ther's tractor around the family farm. By the time Zeeuw got his driver's license he already had 13 cars registered to drive.

Cincinnatus has been his home since 1955 and in 1994 he decided to start his own business from home — buying and selling antique auto parts. He worked out of his garage, which now houses the "rat rod" and his other project, a 1969 Ford truck.

Many hot rods have been built in his garage since it was constructed 30 years ago, including a beautiful pink classic Mercury coupe. But this is the first "rat rod" Zeeuw has built.

He said he has collected an

assortment of car and tractor parts throughout the years, and decided using them to build a "rat rod" would be a fun new winter project.

So far, Zeeuw has spent less than \$1,000 to build the car, which is near completion.

The floor, fenders, doors, lights and safety equipment still need to be installed, but they are all parts he already has. Zeeuw plans to have the car ready to drive this summer, even though progress has been slower this winter due to him hurting his shoulder in November.

There is no plan for any paint, too. The car will stay a mish-mash of dull colors and rust.

"I have no intentions of making anything pretty," Zeeuw said.

His main focus is getting the safety equipment installed.

"I don't care if the door falls off, but if the brakes fail, you're going to be in trouble," he said.

While he jokes about parts falling off, and the car may look like that very well could happen, the car is built professionally. The welds are strong. Every bolt is tightened and checked twice. It is a quality build with the same attention for detail that would be given to the most high-end hot rod.

Building cars is a form of mind therapy, Zeeuw said. Be-

ing far enough away from the commotion society creates, he is able to work in his quiet garage focusing solely on his work. A few years ago his wife was diagnosed with brain cancer, and getting to "mess around" in the garage during that time was therapy to him.

"I like messing with things and playing with metal," he said.

The "rat rod" will be his most unique creation, yet, and is sure to make an impression on the Cincinnatus community.

"It is just the rat, but I'm sure the people in town will name it," Zeeuw said.