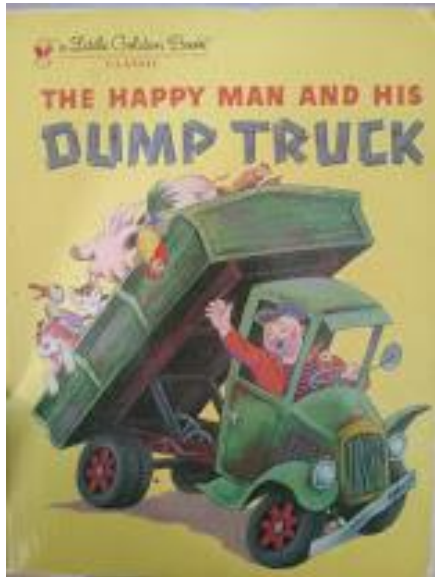


**The Happy Man and His Dump Truck ~By Todd Calvert  
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In 1950, a Little Golden Book for children was published by the same name (left). It was one of my favorites that apparently stuck with me. We still have that book and read it to our kids. Recently I realized that maybe I am becoming the man in the book; rapidly approaching his physique, mental demeanor and now, possession of such a fine vehicle for various important uses. Who knew that you are what you read? Self-prophecy? Incidentally, another book you may want to inspect is called "Are You My Mother?", also a Little Golden Book where a little bird encounters a car in the junk yard and wonders if it's his mom. Guess what kind of car that might be?

About a year ago, I decided to put the burned-out wreck of a late 1931 pickup truck to use. Really the whole thing should have gone to the metal recyclers, but I value a different idea of recycling I guess, or perhaps I'm just a hoarder. The idea came that I'd build a truck out of junk that wasn't good enough for a restoration, but could function as a work vehicle, garnering looks from the disgusted public as I amble down the streets of town. A member of the RVA's had a really nice AA frame and axles that he donated for the project, and work began. At this point I have built a chassis with a good running engine (with a huge sealed up crack in the water jacket), transmission that was freed up and now shifts smooth, and a cab beaten out and in place waiting for a protective slathering of paint and wood to be installed. It runs, rolls, and drives! I plan on making a flatbed out of it, the goal is to have something that can just sit around and get used upon occasion, or act like a rolling workbench or lumber drying platform. If you have a bed platform sitting around in the weeds rusting out, give me a ring!

I am now faced with a dilemma however. One day a friend innocently sent me a picture of a late 1931 dump truck (right) sitting out in the woods.



He said it looked like a good parts donation vehicle for the project and was for sale. The price was reasonable and being located just a hop and skip away in Garberville I went and got it with my good friend. We had a great long day catching up with each other and exploring new territory together towing the hulking behemoth up the coast and over the mountains (below).

The dilemma is that I now have two trucks, both of which have positive qualities. I like the dump feature of the dump truck, and that it's all metal, but I also like the low profile of the flatbed and the length of the potential bed. Both trucks have unique stories associated with them which are important to me.



I have made an acquaintance with the woman who sold me the dump truck which looks just like the one in the children's book, boogered up and held together with wire and endless pounds of brazing rod. Recently she sent me a letter from the previous owner explaining much of its history. It was parked in a barn before Pearl Harbor for storage as the owners were contracted to do wartime construction jobs in the Pacific Islands. They never came back for the truck. The truck was moved around from one location to another when the barn and land became part of the famous Sherwood Forest. After about a 50-year rest, it was made to run again for the Rodeo Parade of Fortuna, California by the second owners. They were in the sand and gravel business

and made a big paper rock for the bed and won first place! It was then parked again on a friends ranch, when one winter, a huge tree fell across the hood shattering the bell housing and motor mounts, real damage. It was identified for it's non-functional character and towed once again where sat for the next 30 or so years as yard art in a beautiful display complete with mocked up gas pump and service station (left and below). This was built by the woman who sold it to me and her



creative husband. Her husband has passed, and she no longer lives on the ranch where her truck has sat for decades, but when we went to go get it, many of her old friends saw us and stopped to visit. The sense of community that was shown to us in our short visit was incredible. She shared that they used to have picnics and sit around telling stories and eating at the truck. One of her friends who was out picking mushrooms, had just turned 90 years old spry and helped us to load the truck up and we had a great time visiting with him. He mentioned that he'd miss being able to hunker down under the bed to escape the rain.



I cannot in good conscience part out the truck. I have begun to disassemble it, in order to evaluate and repair it. Three quarts of water came out of the engine, but after working to free it up and take a closer look, it seems like it's going to be a runner. The clutch disk still has painted print on it. Looks like it had a new motor and clutch in it for the parade. Low gear in the parade with no clutch slipping?! The only good feature of the cab is the cowl. The fenders and running boards are solid enough and really show character without a dent-free inch showing. I'm excited to put this truck to use. Surely it has something to give since it was last used hard some 80 years ago. I can see it being very practical for work around the house. I especially like the hydraulic "unload the truck" feature! I cannot wait for my first trip to Copeland for a load of gravel! They get a kick out of me in my Willy's pickup? Wait till I pull up in this wreck! Again, if you have any old AA rims or tires to spare, give me a ring. I'm always looking for sheet metal that will help repair all the rusted out lower portions of the cab as well.

If you see a happy little man in an old dump truck giving the dumper a tip and see animals going for a ride. Odds are, that'd be me!

As always, keep turning those wrenches and keep on truckin'.