

The Main Attraction: 1/2 Scale Peterbilt Tractor/Trailer



Just when you think that you have seen it all, something turns up that just blows you away. It makes you realize that no matter how old you are, you have not, or ever will, see it all.

Case in point. This past spring I was covering an AHS (American Truck Historical Society) show in Brooklyn, Conn. I was shooting some photographs when I noticed a large crowd of people gathering around something across the field.

The attraction turned out to be Fred Heim's Peterbilt 379 pulling a 26-foot Hill dump trailer. There was nothing unusual about the truck, except for the fact that this entire rig was only 1/2 scale. The truck was on a long custom-built trailer with its diesel engine idling and smoke drifting out of its twin stacks. It was as though somebody cast a spell on a real truck and shrank it down to half its original size.

I was amazed at the truck's stance and how well scaled it was. The crowd was so overwhelming that it was impossible to get any good photos. Fred Heim, who built the truck, invited me up to his house in Massachusetts to get a closer look.

Fred grew up in Maine, where, at an early age, he started working and creating with wood and other materials. He had an eye for scale models at a very young age. At the age of 10, he produced a replica of the town's Waiters snowplow out of construction paper and glue-his dad worked for the town.

This truck and some other projects Fred created were so impressive that his school had them displayed at various local schools. They were even displayed at the University of Maine.

From there, he started learning the craft of boat building, which he mastered. Fred ended up living in Marlboro, Mass., where he runs a successful construction business, building houses and developments. It is in a spacious four-bay garage, next to his house, where Fred creates his "toys."

He was building beautiful wooden trucks, around 1/16 scale, and decided that bigger would be better.

To drive the truck, your legs must extend out under the hood, so the engine was located behind the cab in what appears to be a tank for the wet system and a toolbox. The engine is a 26-horsepower Yanmar diesel, which runs through a hydrostatic drive to a 12-inch driveshaft. It is water cooled with the radiator and electric fan out front in the grille. The electrical system is 12 volts.

The 13-gallon fuel tanks were made from aluminum lobster pots, and the air cleaner tops are pizza pans. The fifth wheel looks and works like the real thing. Corian was utilized for the top plate on the fifth-wheel. All the running lights are turned from billet aluminum, and the classic headlights are Harley-Davidsons.



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