



HUD-SON FIREWOD PROCESSOR **The Little Brute**

Would it be possible for a man confined to a wheelchair to operate a firewood processor?

The match didn't really seem to be a likely one, although we often hear about determined individuals who do not allow handicaps to stand in the way of accomplishing difficult tasks. So when Hud-Son Forest Equipment Inc. informed me that they had supplied one of their firewood processors to an operator in a wheelchair, I made it a mission to arrange a visit.

Pete Taylor

Pete Taylor lives in Mexico, New York, just below the southeast corner of Lake Ontario. After a car accident in the 1980s, which para-

lyzed him from the waist down, Pete understandably found his life to be quite different. He had grown up on a small farm but that type of activity was now out of the question.

Wanting to find some work, Pete tried a number of employment possibilities over the years, but every place he inquired seemed to find a reason not to hire him. And watching daytime television was not for him. Pete therefore knew that if he was going to find something meaningful to do at the age of 44, it had to be self-employment. The prospect of becoming a commercial producer

of firewood entered his mind.

A discussion with a New York forest machinery manufacturer, Hud-Son Forest Equipment of Barneveld, resulted in his ownership of a firewood processor. As he was unable to acquire employment, Pete qualified for a grant from a state agency which then financed a large part of the purchase.

The Little Brute

The firewood processor that he acquired from Hud-Son is the company's most popular model, known as the Little Brute (formerly Little Joe Hydraulic). The Little Brute is a fully hydraulic unit, small enough to be easily portable but sufficient for moderate production by one or two people. Pete assured me that he never works the machine alone, but I didn't see how he could anyhow. Logs have to be placed on the live deck, and I noticed that once he moved his wheelchair into place behind the controls, the split wood coming from the processor blocked his exit and had to be moved later by a helper.

Although some modifications may have been made on the machine, according to Hud-Son sales manager Mike Spadero, the standard controls are well grouped, just the right height for Pete Taylor. He avoids large wood; it's a relatively small machine, and the maximum capacity is an 18-inch-diameter log. The splitting wedge is a hydraulically adjustable 4-way wedge.

Pete has had the processor for a year and has produced about 350 standard cords. As he said, the work is "sort of full-time." He frequently does custom processing at the customer's site, which he enjoys. Weighing 2,800 pounds, the machine is easily towed behind a pickup. His charge for custom processing is about \$54 per standard cord. When they refer to a cord in upstate New York they are actually talking about a face cord (1/3 of a full cord of 48-inch wood), but the

Little Brute Firewood Processor

figures in this article are converted to "full or standard" cord.

Firewood prices are apparently a little less in Pete's area than elsewhere: Pete charges \$150 per cord for dry wood, \$180 for green. But that price is bound to increase. Bundles of camp wood piled out by the highway result in a few extra sales.

Hud-Son's current Little Brute model is equipped with a 23-hp Briggs and Stratton motor, two cylinder and electric start. Pete's older model has a 21-hp motor, and I noticed that it did lug down a little too often. Pete had to be particularly careful of his machine's log clamp as he was making the cut. There were times when the clamp didn't seem to hold the log firmly, especially if the log was crooked. But this is likely not the case with the newer machines. When asked about gasoline consumption, Pete estimated that he can cut about seven cords of wood for each six gallons of gasoline.

Engine	23-hp Briggs & Stratton, 2 cylinder, electric start
Loader	Hydraulic log lift
Log clamp	Hydraulic
Log capacity	18 in. diameter maximum
Wedge	4-way, manual adjust
Splitter	24 in., auto-cycle valve
Dual hydraulic pump/Hydraulic tank	10 gal. gravity feed bar lube
Trailer hitch	2 in.
Weight	2,800 lbs.
Price	\$19,995

OPTIONS

- Hydraulic 4-way wedge \$1,200
- Hydraulic live deck \$1,900

MANUFACTURER

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All of the processor controls are handy for Pete, who has been confined to a wheelchair for about 20 years.

An occasional problem for Pete from his wheelchair position is the configuration of the splitting trough. After being cut from the log by the chain saw, the short pieces will sometimes not fall properly into the splitting trough. However, Hud-Son has recognized this problem and changed the trough configuration in the new model. The flat I-beam has been removed from the base of the trough, and the sloping sides now form a complete V at the bottom. The push plate support has also been improved on the models manufactured since Pete acquired his.

Although the rate of production does not seem to be a major concern for Pete Taylor, he stated that he is quite satisfied with the machine's capability. The 24-inch

splitter has an auto-cycle valve, enabling the push plate to automatically return, and the log in-feed chain hydraulically advances the log to the desired length for the next cut. Thus, more than one motion can be done simultaneously, a distinct advantage for Pete from his position.

Pete also has the optional live log deck, obviously essential for his operation. The two-strand deck can be operated in either direction. For those who feel that a live deck is not necessary for their portable operation, the standard hydraulic log lift can be used for individual log loading or locked into position to hold a few logs for processing.

The Little Brute firewood processor is obviously a good match for Pete Taylor's unique needs. It's not a fast, commercial machine, but Pete doesn't need that capability. For the part-time producer, or one who wants a processor that can be easily towed and set up for custom work, the Little Brute firewood processor is appealing. ■

Bill Gove is retired from a forestry career with private industry and with state government as a wood utilization specialist and lives in Williamstown, Vermont. He is a regular contributor and is the author of several books on the history of railroading and logging.



Pete's handicap requires a live log deck to feed the processor. His nephew operates the loader.



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