

Inventor of heavy-duty Bedder Hedder out to secure America's cargo

by *Mark_Maynard*

Mitch Weiss looks at pickup truck beds in a way most people don't. He sees the potential for projectiles from unsecured cargo, loose trashcans and recycling barrels that could soon add to the trash along the roadside, and fuel cans lashed precariously and prone to leakage.

There has to be a better way, and he's working on it one rack, bracket and bolt at a time.

BEDDER HEDDER - The Bedder Hedder bolts to the truck bed head and acts as a barrier between the bed and the cab. CNS Photo courtesy of PU-Products LLC.

Weiss is the owner, chief engineer and designer for PU-Products LLC. His small company in El Cajon, Calif., manufactures a variety of pickup-bed storage devices for contractors, Baja travelers, desert racers, cyclists, campers and others as the ideas evolve.

The tag line for his company is "Made here. Not there," to emphasize that all the work, such as welding and painting, is done in America.

Weiss, once a contractor for concrete curb work, said the idea for pickup racks came to him like a ton of bricks. While transporting a steel concrete-mixing tub secured to a pallet in the bed of pickup, he had to make a sudden stop. The load crashed into the pickup's header, or bed head, and pushed in the cab.

After \$1,600 in repairs, he was determined to prevent such a recurrence. He devised and built a heavy-duty, diamond-plate barrier that bolts to the bed head. The barrier acts as a second layer of steel between bed and cab.

A couple of years later, Weiss got into off-roading and had another invention revelation.

"I didn't feel safe bungeeing fuel tanks and gear in the truck bed, so I welded some boxes and designed them to attach to the diamond-plate bed head. The tanks could be accessed from the side for convenience in filling at the gas station. And anybody, even women, could lift the fuel can," he says.

And from that came his Bedder Hedder rack, which is the foundation for many adaptations and innovations to come.

"There is nothing else like this on the market," Weiss says.

The Bedder Hedder will fit General Motors pickups from 1988 on and Ford Super Duty pickups from 1999 on. The various racks are made of 1/8-inch stainless steel diamond plate and slot into the header. They are secured with an Allen screw and are designed to attach and detach quickly.

He has racks for propane tanks, racing fuel cans, 5-gallon plastic buckets and even a locking device for a pesticide sprayer. There are boxes that attach to the sides of the bed and at the corners of the tailgate. There are brackets to secure the front wheel of a motorcycle or bicycle. He has a rack that fits a standard-size cooler. And he also sells a cooler insert for a 5-gallon bucket. The bucket with lid is dust-resistant, unlike the common cooler, Weiss says. He's also working on a scuba-tank holder and a garbage-can bracket.

Prices start at \$229 for the main Bedder Hedder, but more for powder coating. A propane-tank rack is \$95. The Baja Rax kit, \$249, holds two 11-gallon jugs, and has nylon straps for leverage in lifting. Cables and locks are additional. Any item can be ordered in powder-coated black or silver or coated in your choice of color.

He also has a line of fuel-jug holders for the Yamaha Rhino side-by-side, all-terrain vehicles.

For details visit www.pu-products.com or call 619-334-1913.

TWO COOL DEBUTS

Interesting debuts at the Chicago Auto Show included the BMW Alpina B7 and two Corvettes.

BMW Alpina B7 - This special high-performance version of the 7 Series sedan has a 500-horsepower, 4.4-liter V-8 and six-speed automatic transmission with steering wheel shifters. BMW claims zero-to-60 mph in 4.8 seconds.

A sport-tuned suspension includes Active Role Stabilization, 21-inch Z-rated performance tires and special alloy wheels. The B7 aerokit includes a rear spoiler for enhanced stability and handling at high speed.

Approximately 200 cars are planned for the U.S. in 2007. The manufacturers suggested retail price is \$115,695.

Special edition Corvettes - General Motors debuted two special-edition Corvettes: the Ron Fellows ALMS GT1 Champion Corvette Z06 and the Indianapolis 500 Pace Car Replica Corvette Convertible.

Fellows has long been a key connecting rod in Chevy racing, including the Corvette Racing team in the American Le Mans Series.

The 2007 Corvette Z06 in his honor is painted arctic white - including the door handles - and is the first Z06 offered in this color. Front fender graphics are reminiscent of the Corvette GT1 race car, with double Monterey red metallic stripes and silver borders. There's also a maple leaf logo integrated with the graphics, a nod to Fellows' Canadian homeland.

The interior is set off by red seats, center console, door panels and instrument panel. The armrest is red leather with the Corvette-signature "cross flags" logo that is hand-signed and numbered by Ron Fellows.

The aluminum 7.0-liter LS7 V-8 is rated 505 horsepower and 470 foot-pounds of torque.

Available this spring, the asking price will be \$77,500, including destination. With OnStar and navigation system - the only options - the price is \$79,945.

The Indianapolis 500 Pace Car Replica Corvette Convertible resembles the car that will pace the 91st running of the Indianapolis 500 on May 27.

Special features include atomic orange paint with gold ribbon graphics, Indy graphics and door logos, Z06 rear spoiler, new aluminum "split-spoke" heels, sterling silver ebony seats with embroidered Indy 500 logos.

Its aluminum, 6.0-liter, LS2 V-8 engine is rated 400 horsepower and 400 foot-pounds of torque.

The run of 500 cars will be available this spring. The MSRP is \$66,995, including destination. With paddle-shift six-speed automatic - the only option - the price is \$68,245.

RESERVATIONS, PLEASE

Get in line and take a number for the new 2008 Volkswagen R32.

Volkswagen has an order-reservation process for the 250-horsepower, high-performance Rabbit model, which goes on sale in August.

Significant demand is expected for the new model, which was revealed at the Chicago Auto Show. The 2004 edition sold out its United States allocation of 5,000 shortly after its debut.

Current GTI and R32 owners will be notified of the opening of an R32 microsite on www.vw.com. An R32 prospect will be referred to a Volkswagen dealer. The first 832 people who place a deposit with an authorized dealer will be eligible to buy one of the first R32s to be delivered.

The R32's 3.2-liter V-6 is paired with a six-speed dual clutch DSG transmission, with steering-wheel mounted shift controls.

CERTIFIED USED FROM THE GENERAL

General Motors wants consumers to know it has faith in the quality of its used vehicles and is now selling its certified-used Buicks, Chevrolets, GMC, Oldsmobiles, Pontiacs and GMC trucks with a transferable five-year/100,000-mile powertrain limited warranty with no deductible.

The warranty applies to model-year 2002 vehicles and covers more than 900 components related to the engine, transmission, transfer case (if applicable) and final drive assemblies on vehicles sold in the United States. Also included is roadside service, a three-month/3,000-mile bumper-to-bumper comprehensive limited warranty, vehicle history reports, a 117-point vehicle inspection and a three-day, 150-mile customer satisfaction guarantee on all GM Certified Used Vehicles.

Saturn is expected to announce a similar program later this year for its certified used vehicles. And Cadillac, Saab and Hummer certified used vehicles have a six-year/100,000-mile bumper-to-bumper limited warranty effective from the vehicle's in-service date.

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