Parts produced at Chucky's Precisions, Pullers & Parts include: T-28, road-worn 18.4x38 BFG Power Savers; T-12, 9.50x15 four-rib front tires; R-19, front rim and insert; R-37, 18.4x38 pressed-steel rim; A-18, Roll-O-Matic front end; and W-19, IH suitcase weights.

CUSTOMIZING Ertl's John Deere 4320

Hello everyone! This monthmy focus is going to be on the newest Precision from Ertl, the John Deere 4320. When Ertl released this tractor, I just about gave the company reps a huge hug! Of all the Precisions, this was one of the nicest ones built for me personally. Maybe that is because I used to own a 1971 Model 4320 myself and have long-awaited building that exact model. Well, I won't be building that tractor this month, but it will be coming.

This month, the focus will be on transforming the 4320 into a hot stock type of tractor. This gives me a chance to familiarize myself with the Precision 4320 and also a chance to use some parts from our sideline business, Chucky's Precisions, Pullers & Parts, where we have really been focusing on providing a whole new line of parts for the 1/16 and 1/64 scale models.

Using a new-in-the-box 4320 as the first 4320 Precision I have ever customized, there will be a learning curve, just like all of the rest.

The first task will be removing the rear wheels. The 4320 has the same rear wheels as the Precision 4430 and 50, as well as a few of the shelf model tractors. To remove the wheels will require a little brute force. I begin by grabbing each of the dual rims and twisting and pulling until the rim comes free from the axle. Once I have the dual rim removed, I had to laugh. The inner rear wheels are installed backward! The tire tread is correct, but the rims are facing the wrong direction. Well that is water under the bridge now, because those wheels come off next and the rear wheels get put aside for a future project.

With the rear wheels removed, the next step will be removing the fender and ROPS assembly. On the 4320, the fender/ROPS assembly is mounted using clamps around the rear axle housing, held together with two screws. After I remove the two screws from each side of the ROPS assembly, I try to remove it from the tractor and I am reminded why these latest Precisions have been higher priced than the models produced a few years back—those working lights.

So, when I try to remove the fender/ROPS assembly, the wires to the lights in the fenders cause me some grief. After I pull the assembly back a little, the wires expose themselves. With this project, I am not worried about reinstalling the working headlights, so I give the ROPS a little harder tug and expose some more of the wire. Using my side cutter, I cut the three wires heading to the lights and the first side is free. Then I twist the assembly, giving me more access to the wires on the opposite side. As I do that, the wires pull out a little further than they did on the first side, exposing a pair of quick connects for the headlight wires, making that a lot easier!

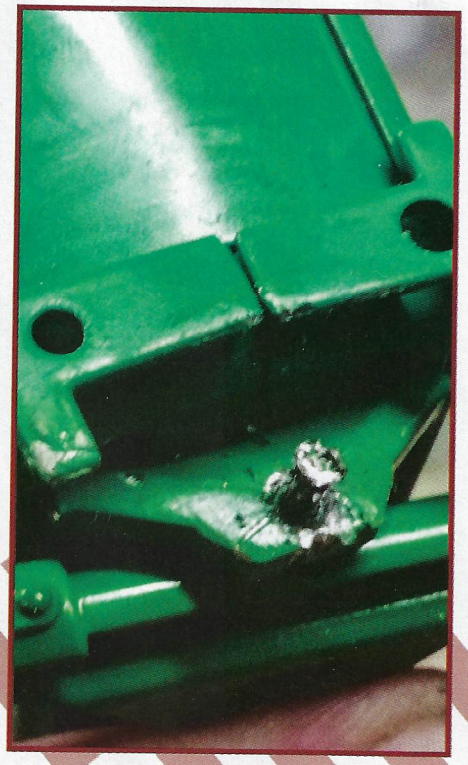
The new-in-the-box John Deere 4320.

Here, the top half of the dash has been removed, exposing two screws that will need to be removed.

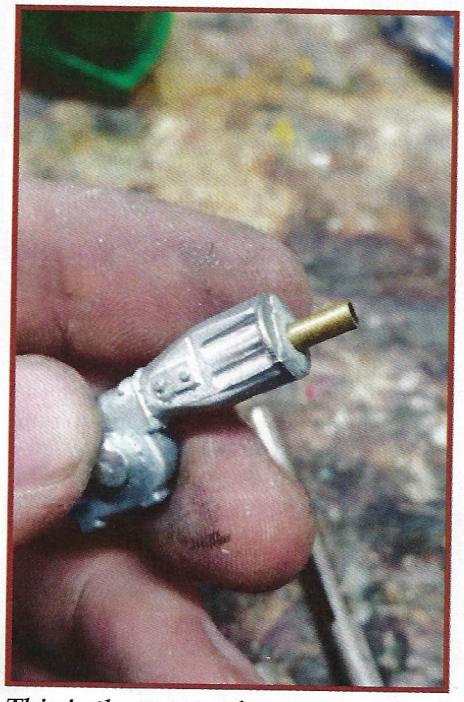
Now with the rear wheels and fenders removed, I head to the front of the tractor to remove the wide front end. This particular 4320 I want to build will be equipped with the Roll-O-Matic narrow fronts I am producing, rather than the wide front. I see this wide front is nearly identical to the ones used on the 4000/10/20 Precision Ertl made, so I figured this should be easy. WRONG!

At the front of the wide front, a pressed pin holds the axle to the mounting plate. In the past, Ertl has used screws here or a pressed pin with a big head that can easily be grabbed with a side cutter and removed. Not here, though.

On the 4320, the pressed pin has a small head that is very difficult to get under to pry out. I first use a small flat-tipped screwdriver and try to pry the pin out, with no success. Next, I try using my side cutter to get ahold of the pin. Here again, no success. Finally, I use two flat-tipped screwdrivers and press one under the pin's head, giving it outward pressure. I use the other screwdriver to get between the axle and the mount and push the axle away from the mount while holding the pin in place. I was able to move the pin enough to give me a chance to get my side cutter under the head of the pin and pull it the rest of the way out. With the pin out, the wide front fell off the tractor.



Here is the pin holding the wide front on the 4320 that was so difficult to remove.



This is the narrow front with the brass pipe bushing installed to fit the 4320 steering shaft.

With the wide front off the tractor, I have to take the story back a little. While fighting the tractor to remove the pin, I managed to break one of the three-point hitch arms. Not wanting to break the other, I figure I better remove them both, especially since this tractor will not have a three-point on it when it is finished. But parts are parts and broke parts are junk parts.

So, with my trusty side cutter, I remove the pressed pins that hold the three-point hitch arms to the lower mount. I then use a spring-loaded center punch to push the pin out of the top mount, and the lift arms are off. Next, I remove the top link of the three-point, which is held in place with a push pin that is a little more difficult to get to. Grabbing a small punch, I am able to free the pin with a small needle-nosed pliers. The top link will live again on another project.

This is the starter weight bracket pried free from the tractor, showing the mounting pins.

The next task is removing the hood. On this tractor, I want to remove the precleaner from the tractor and also remove the muffler and replace it with a chrome stack.

To get the hood off, I remove two screws right under the front of the hood. Next, I apply a little of my past Precision experience to this tractor. On the New Generation John Deere tractors that Ertl produces, the dash has to come off to get to two screws holding the rear of the hood to the chassis of the tractor. With the 4320, the top half of the dash comes off to expose two screws. After I remove those two screws, the lower half of the dash lifts out and the rear half of the hood comes free. I lift the front of the hood slightly and pull forward and the hood is off. I now remove the screws holding the precleaner and muffler.

I believe the tractor is now stripped and the rebuild is about to begin! Well one last thing—the front weight set. This particular tractor I am building will have a custom weight bracket and

a suitcase weight, so the factory-style weight set will need to be removed. To do this, I get behind the front slab weights with a flat screwdriver. Pop, they fall right off.

The starter weights provide a little more of a challenge. On the earlier New Generation John Deere tractors manufactured by Ertl, the starter weights have pins holding them to the frame of the tractor. So, I gently get between the frame and starter weight with my flat-tipped screwdriver and pry, without much luck. Next, I pry a little harder and the weight starts to come free from the frame. Making small movements in multiple spots along the seam of the weight, I eventually remove the weight from the tractor. Then I repeat this on the second side until the weights are removed.

Now the tractor is stripped and the rebuild can begin! I start by reinstalling a set of the pressed-steel rims and road-worn BFG 18.4x38 tires that I build to the rear of the tractor.

To do this, I use a piece of 3/16 steel rod from my local hardware store and cut it to length and the rear wheels are temporarily mounted. Next, I grab one of the Roll-O-Matic narrow fronts that I produce, along with a set of my 9.50x15 front rims and tires. I give the narrow front a test fit and see that the steering shaft of the 4320 sticks out a little more than 1/4 inch, which should give me enough shaft with which to work. But the diameter of the shaft is 0.075 and the hole in the narrow front is 0.125, which won't work. With the help of a piece of brass tubing as a shim, we are in business.

My next task is mounting the rims to the narrow front. On the narrow front I produce, I have extra-long mounting stubs cast into the axle for different front rim options. For this rim, the stub will need to be shortened with the band saw. Using my angle die grinder for the fine-tuning, I soon have the rims mounted to the narrow front and tires installed. I then mount the narrow front under the tractor. It is sitting on four wheels again, so onto our next step.

I stated earlier I want to remove the precleaner and muffler from the tractor and install a chrome pipe. With those items removed, I find a 1/4-inch chrome pipe and drill the hood out to match, using a step drill bit to make a nice clean cut. With the hole drilled, I reinstall the hood and add the pipe.

One last thing for today is mounting a set of fenders. The 4320 I am building will be equipped with a set of 4020-style fenders, rather than the double-tier drop fender typically known for the 4320. After a quick search through the "Chuckville Salvage Yard," I find a 4020 that fell on some tough times, but still had a nice set of fenders. Using a Phillips screwdriver and a pliers, the fenders were off and heading to the new home.

I test fit the fenders and see that they are not going to be tall enough to mount on the axle housing and clear the taller 18.4x38 tires, so I need to raise the fenders about 1/4 inch. I find some 1/4x1/4 brass stock and drill it to match the bolt placement on the fenders. Then I find some bolts 1/4 inch longer and the fenders are mounted and looking good!

I am going to leave this project here until next time. Until then, check out our new website, www.chuckysprecisionspullersandparts.com. The parts for this project are listed there and we are constantly adding more. We have tires, rims, weights, accessories and a few decals that are all new items. There is also a section called "Featured Articles" that archives past "Down to Details" columns that you can use as a reference for your future builds.

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Living just northwest of Dyersville, Iowa, in the heart of farm country and farm toy replica country, Chuck Steffens has found a niche in the toy world, building high-detailed replicas in his spare time. He shares his experiences with Toy Farmer *readers, hoping to lead other collectors to personalize one of their own tractors. Comments or suggestions can be directed to csteffens@wildblue.net.*

Finally, the 4320 is back on all four wheels and the preassembly is looking good.