Battalion Bits BT10: Minneapolis Moline NTX

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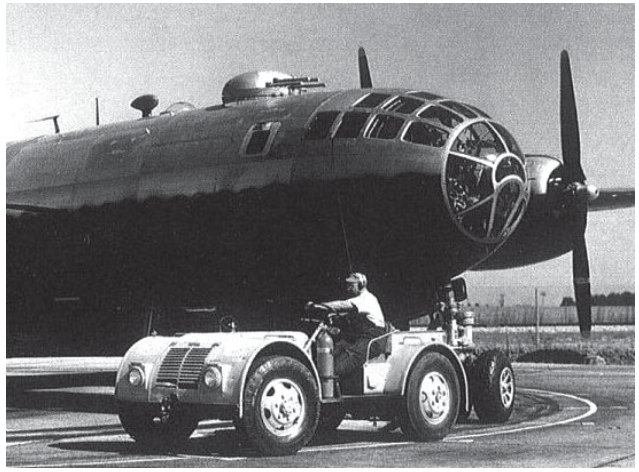
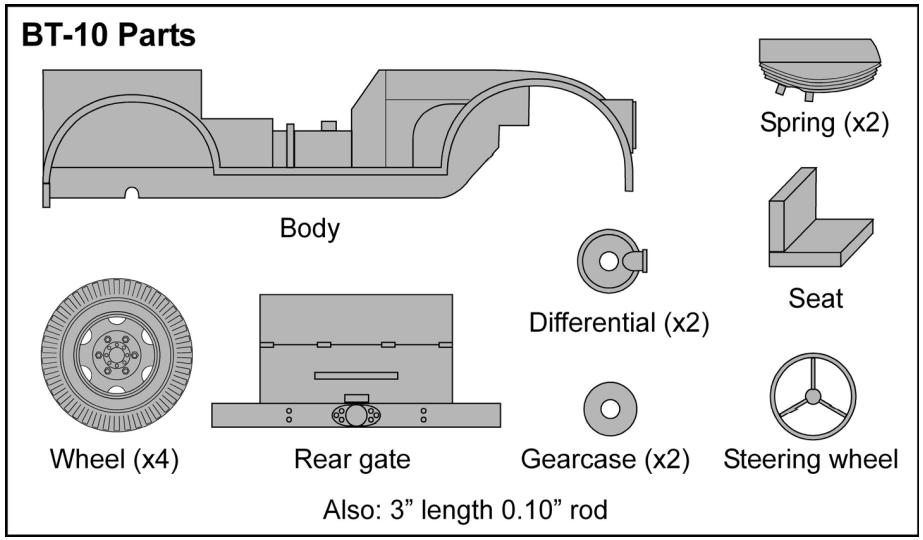
Background



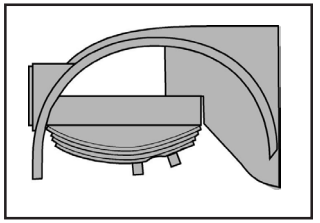
The Minneapolis-Moline NTX was a four-wheel drive aircraft tug, from a company better known for farm tractors. The NTX was designed for use at forward air bases, where conditions might be primitive in the extreme. Approximately 840 NTX actors were built from 1942 into 1944. Many of these rigs saw service on Navy and Marine Corps forward air bases in the Pacific, and a number were used stateside. A large number of NTXs never saw action; stockpiled in anticipation of a long, drawn-out war in the Pacific, they were likely scrapped at war's end. Only a few of these machines still exist in the hands of collectors..

The NTX was low and compact, to reduce shipping volume and to fit under the wings of an airplane. Its four-wheel drive gave it the traction to pull large aircraft, even on rough jungle airstrips. It was powered by a 45hp engine and could do all of 43 mph in top gear, although it was seldom driven past 30 mph.

The front axle is very similar to what was used in the front of WWII era GI deuce-and-a-half 6x6s but it had rear brakes only. The vehicle had a pretty minimal front suspension but better than its rear, which had none at all. This would minimize squat under heavy towing loads, and how nimble a suspension do you need at 30 mph.

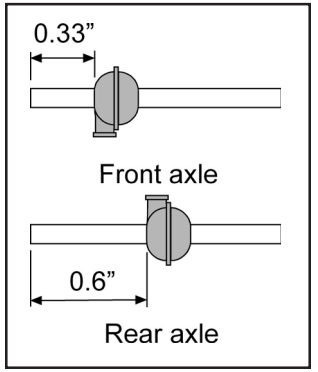


Body Assembly



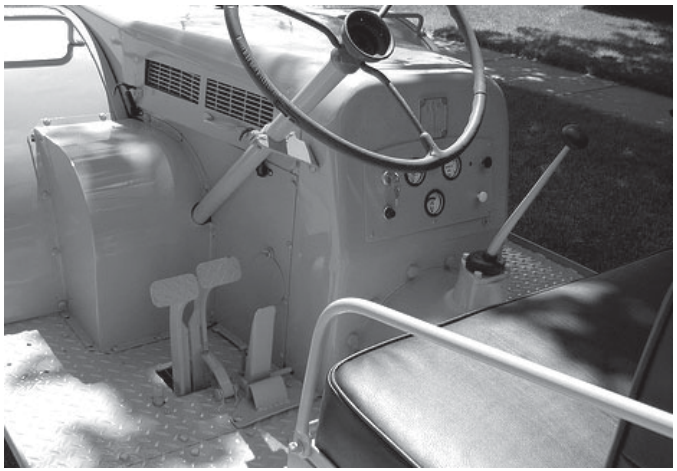
Clean up the pour sprue at the back of the body, and glue the rear gate in place. The two springs fit into recesses under the front of the body. See the sketch at right for correct orientation. The two protrusions on the springs will locate the front axle.

Chassis Assembly



Cut two lengths of 0.10" (2.5mm) rod, both 1.3" (33mm) long. Slide on the differential and gear case and assemble according to the sketch at right. Note the front axle differential is offset, while the rear is centred. Glue the axles as shown, and cut short lengths of 0.062" (1.5mm) rod to serve as driveshafts. Note the driveshaft locations are marked on the transfer case. Clean up the wheels and glue them in place on the axle ends. Note there is more clearance around the front wheels ... no suspension in the rear means close fit.

Final Assembly



Glue the seat in place. Clean up the Cut a length of 0.04" (1mm) rod to 0.5" (13mm) long, and glue in place in the recess on the left front fender. On the real machine, there is a simple brace between the steering column and the engine compartment. Make up a gas, brake and clutch pedal from plastic stip according to the photo at right and glue in the area on the floorplate.

There are several grab rails seen in pictures on the fender tops, and some machines show side rails beside the seat cushion.

References

Various photos on the internet and an article in Off Road Magaazine.