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July 18, 2011



Fighting the Elements

By Brad Graham, July 18, 2011

So here we are living high up in the country hills at almost 1,600 feet, twice as high as the city we left behind a few months ago. For those who are just tuning into our journey, we decided to leave the smelly, noisy city life behind and head for the hills (literally), moving to a very secluded 120 acre plot of land with a million dollar view of the mountains all around. We have always loved the country, and with the cost of city living skyrocketing, it just made sense to start over while we had the chance. The real estate market was heating up, and we scored an amazing deal on our property, so we decided to live in a camper and tents for the summer while we wait for our modular home to arrive.

But, this meant that I would no longer have a garage to work in.

I have always said that all you need is a basic \$150 dollar welder, an angle grinder and some dedication to build any of our projects. Now, I aim to prove it once more.



Figure 1 - Only 118F in the sun today, and that's nothing compared to yesterday!

The city we left is next to Lake Superior, so the summer heat is usually cut down a lot by the cooling effects of the lake. However, this is not the case out here in the mountains, an hour away from town! To be honest, I have never in my life experienced heat like I have this past last week, even though we have been to the Caribbean several times for vacation!

Record temperatures, along with being in an open field and not having a home yet, means that we are
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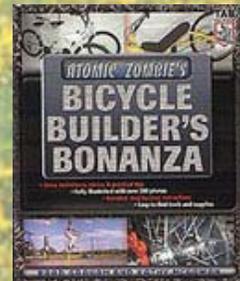
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fighting the elements and everything Mother Nature has to throw at us. Since my welder has to be next to a temporary hydro service, the heat reaches unreal levels, and the thermostat needle wraps past the 130F mark, even in the shade! Needless to say, I plan all of my welds carefully and spend no more than half an hour welding at one time.

In the old construction trailer, the temperatures stay “cool” at between 100F and 115F most of the day thanks to no windows, doors and a huge tarp over the thing to keep most of the rain out. I crank up a massive fan and do most of my cutting and welding wearing nothing but a pair of shorts and some “flip-flops”. I am now highly skilled at directing grinder sparks away from my exposed chassis! Ouch!



Figure 2 - The TimberWolf is a fusion of DeltaWolf, DeltaRunner, and Marauder

Despite working in sauna-like conditions outdoors, things are coming along quite nicely!

I started a new trike called “The TimberWolf” last week and it is now getting the transmission and steering components installed.

Ok, I admit that the wheels were already done (salvaged from the original DeltaWolf), but the rest of the trike is made from scratch. This trike is designed to be the perfect country commuter, having suspension, under seat steering, and a slightly higher seating position. I wanted a sporty delta trike that would also become a robust vehicle for rough terrain with the ability to add cargo space and a motor for helping out on the huge hills we have around here.

The TimberWolf will actually make a great vehicle for a full or partial fairing because it has under seat steering and a 15 inch seat height, which will make climbing in and out of a fairing easy. I will be adding the hub motor system from my Silent Speedster to the trike right away because the hills around here are

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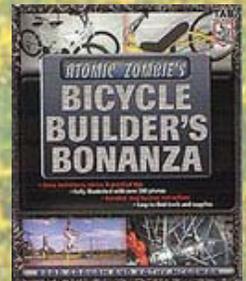
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Figure 3 - Mid afternoon thunder clouds roll over and water the garden

extremely long and steep. Also included on the TimberWolf will be a small rear cargo box for carrying batteries and some groceries, optional front suspension, a steering system exactly like the Delta-Wolf USS Mod, rear frame suspension and a very comfortable seat.

So, at this point, I am working on the trans-

mission and steering components, working around the very extreme weather that is been thrown at us.

Yesterday, the official temperature was +100F (38C), but with a 75% humidity value, felt more like 113F (45C) and it almost took me down! One minute the sun was baking the ground and then a few minutes later massive dark thunder clouds were hurling lightning all around. It was weather I have never seen before, but I guess being up on the mountain top away from the "lake effect" allows the wrath of Mother Nature to hit with full force.

I must admit that the extreme weather is really exciting to watch! Being in a small camper as lighting blasts the ground in all directions is about as close to the elements as you can get, and having a 360 degree view of the horizon as far as the eyes can see makes it seem so much more intense. For years, I have tried to capture a lighting strike with my digital camera, but one single night, I managed to capture so many strikes that I eventually became bored of it! The dark thunder clouds shown in Figure 3 suddenly surrounded me on a nice sunny day while I was out welding, and I did not even notice until the first thunder crack made me jump. It lasted only half an hour, brought torrential rain, massive ground strikes, and then rolled right out as fast as it came in.

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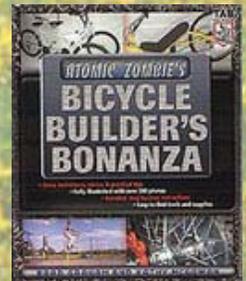
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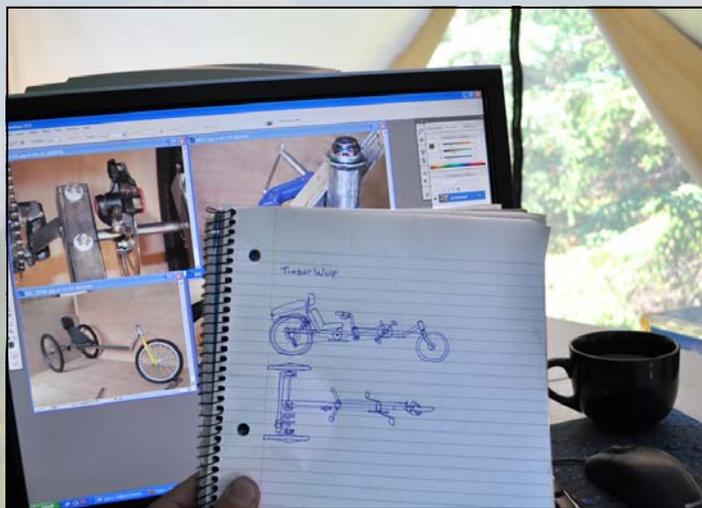


Figure 4 - Working out the plan in my office (AKA - Tent Number 2).

My new office is only a 10 foot by 10 foot pop tent, but the view is much nice that what I came from. I can now look out the open screen and see the deer walking around the hill, compared to years of listening to the yahoos next door fighting and smelling their endless cigarette smoke where we used to live.

Sure, it may get like an oven in here and rain on my keyboard the odd time, but this is like perfection compared to living in a deteriorating neighborhood next to a bunch of losers. At least we can forgive the rural critters for trespassing into our stuff!

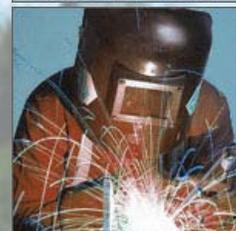
On days where I can actually take the tent heat, I work on the TimberWolf plan details, and hope to have the project available for download by the end of this month. With two large fans aimed at my seat and a large tarp over the top of the tent, the temperatures are usually just under 100F, which seems cool after being outside for a few minutes.

I would imagine that this is just a small sample of the weather we will see out here.

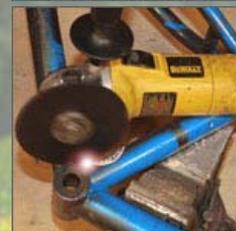
Oh well, once we are in a REAL house, there will be a cool basement to hide in, and a garage to make welding a little easier, but so far I am enjoying the challenge, and have not noticed any loss of quality in my work although it does take a lot longer to get the same amount done. If I had to choose between city life and the extremely minimal conditions I have right now, I would choose this.



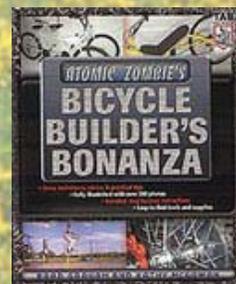
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Figure 5 - The night sky is always a spectacular sight to behold out here

It is usually light enough out here to work until around 10:30 pm, and the sunsets are spectacular every night. The unpolluted air and unobstructed view of the endless horizon brings a night sky that is only comparable to the photographs shown in astronomy books.

The view of the Milky Way is breathtaking, along with the shimmering Northern Lights on cooler nights last month.

This is one of the many reasons that fighting the elements will certainly be worthwhile. When we are once again settled and organized, we will be exploring many new DIY technologies to help those who want to become more self-sufficient and loosen some of the expensive chains that hold us captive to the grid. Don't get me wrong, I am not going all "Uncle Jeb" or anything like that, but I do think that with a little creativity and effort a much better lifestyle can be achieved, much like the way a human powered vehicle can benefit those who are willing to take their foot off the accelerator.

Will touch base with you all next week. The sun has just ducked behind a large cloud and I am off to cut some tubing!

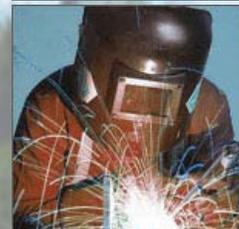
~ RadicalBrad

I actually have a small fridge in here as well, so there is plenty of cold water on hand to stay hydrated. At night the temperature rolls off quickly, sometimes enough that a jacket is necessary, so a little planning has to be done based on the weather forecasts.

Just can't keep a motivated bike builder down! We must persevere!!



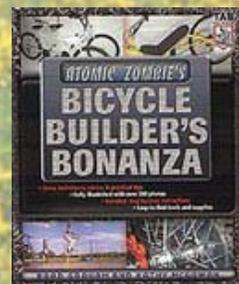
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