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Prompted by high gas prices, Kingsport's Wayne McNew has converted his 1981 Volkswagen diesel pickup truck to run on waste vegetable oil. A 25-gallon tank in the truck bed, left, holds the vegetable oil, which is donated by local restaurants.

## Waste not Retiree converts pickup to run on used vegetable oil

■ **Fortune Dragon** Chinese restaurant has been providing used oil for Wayne McNew's vehicle, creating exhaust fumes that smell like egg rolls.

By RAIN SMITH  
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The smell of food hitting oil usually signals dinnertime is near.

But for Kingsport's Wayne McNew, it means big savings on fuel costs. With the pedal to the metal, he leaves the undeniable aroma of egg rolls and onion rings in his wake.

"You have that smell from the exhaust," McNew said, standing beside his 1981 Volkswagen diesel pickup truck. "Basically it's what has been cooked in the oil."

Prompted by high gas prices,

and a desire to stay busy in retirement, McNew has converted his truck to run on waste vegetable oil. The 65-year-old former Eastman employee first pulled his modified automobile on the street two weeks ago and says there is little to no difference in mileage, power or performance.

He did note the engine runs quieter with vegetable oil, do-

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## Retiree converts pickup to run on used vegetable oil

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nated by local restaurants, than on fossil fuel.

"It was just something I wanted to try," McNew said. "I'm using it as a guinea pig, and I might sell it later, I don't know. I've put a lot of money in it, and this truck is ready to go anywhere."

McNew bought the truck from a man in Piney Flats, pulling it from a barn and fully refurbishing it. It's the third VW truck McNew has worked on, as he sold one over Internet auction site eBay at a \$4,000 profit, and helped a relative with another.

"I've fooled with these cars the last few years," McNew said. "I just piddle with them, you know, it's my hobby."

But this is the first truck McNew has outfitted to run on vegetable oil, inspired by a Geor-

gian who bought a truck from McNew over the Internet.

The buyer purchased equipment from Missouri-based Greasel.com, which offers kits that allow diesel cars and trucks to run on vegetable oil, prompting McNew to do the same.

But running diesel engines on vegetable oil is not a revolutionary — or even new — idea. Inventor of the diesel engine, Rudolph Diesel, debuted a motor that operated on peanut oil during the 1900 World's Fair in Paris. When the petroleum industry emerged shortly thereafter, the vision was abandoned.

"I'm still learning, but based on what I've seen with the (vegetable oil conversion) kits, they're pretty practical," McNew said.

McNew said installing equipment to convert his truck was fairly simple. He and a friend, retired Eastman engineer Lowell Grif-

fith, had the job completed in about three days.

With the conversion kit from Greasel.com — costing about \$1,500 — McNew and Griffith added a second fuel tank to store the oil, a heat exchanger to get the oil's viscosity close to that of diesel, filter, switching valve, and a couple hoses.

With a 25-gallon oil tank in the truck bed, and the 19-gallon original onboard diesel tank, McNew says he has a "cruising range of anywhere from 1,800 to 2,000 miles."

Later this month he'll put that mileage to use, traveling in his vegetable-oil-powered truck to Kansas City to visit family. On the way he'll make a detour to southern Missouri and headquarters of Greasel.com.

"I just want to pick their brain a little bit more," McNew said. "Some of the people there were

nice to me, answering questions I had and everything while I was installing it."

McNew said Asian restaurants are the best place to get oil, as they change it more often and it takes less filtering.

The Fortune Dragon Chinese restaurant on East Stone Drive has been keeping a 55-gallon drum for McNew, periodically filling it with used oil, creating exhaust fumes that smell like egg rolls.

"They were very interested in helping me," McNew said of the restaurant. "I took the truck over there to show them, and the owner was real impressed, wanted to help."