Determined inventor turns dream into reality

The transformation from concept to reality has at times been extremely painful for Lathrup Village laven.

Consider that the British-born that the consider that the consider that the British-born that the consideration to an observed that the consideration that the

Lake once took his innovative, lift-top trailer invention to an outdoor show only to find out nobody was in-terested. His bid to patent the trailer went nowhere



With a U.S. palent in hand, Lathrup Village inventor Russ Lake is ready to take his latest brainchild — a convertible, expandable cap for pickup trucks — to the marketplace.



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it," said Lake, owner of Trall-R-Van Inc. and an engineer for one of The Big Three automakers. "I realized then that the worst thing I could do would be to quit." So Lake stayed on the long road to what the hopes is success. That failure behind, he went to work on a similar product — a con-vertible, expandable truck cap for light trucks — spending all his spare time and \$30,000 toward its develop-ment.

time and \$50,000 toward its develop-ment.

Four years later, it's ready for the marketplace and stamped with a seal of approval from the U.S. Pat-ent and Trademark Office.

LAKE IS PRIMED for a pay back.
"I wouldn't do it, unless I believed
there was a market," said Lake
about his new product, which offers
easy access for loading/carrying
cargo and a new, low-cost camping

could do would be to quit.'

- Russ Lake

option.

Lake is banking on people converting open-bed pickup trucks by buying his product — which can lift up to more than six-feet high and resembles either a van, tent or conventional cap.

Only 20 percent of all light-truck owners now own caps, enclosures that extend from the passenger area, he said.

he said.

The versattle new cap should succeed where the convertible trailer failed, he said, because "people don't like towing trailers."

Lake routhedy but proudly demonstrates his invention to visitors.

"YOU UNLATCH, raise it and step into it," Lake said, lifting the lightweight aluminum and canvas cover. "You can add side curtains to

van, and it's a tent on wheels," he said. "And it's less expensive than solid. "And it's less expensive than solid." And it's less expensive than solid. "The convertible truck can plifts up on a hydraulic struit in front and braced by side legs, Lake explained. The canvas side-and-rear curtains slide into place through channels and are fastened to the truck itself with magnetic strips.

Lake will probably build a few lines, and the magnetic strips.

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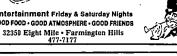
"That's not what being an engi-with the magnetic strip said about. It's creating a better product."

"That's not what being an engi-with the said with the lake is confident he has with his latest brainchild.



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