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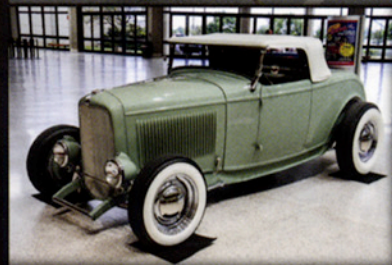
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EVENTS

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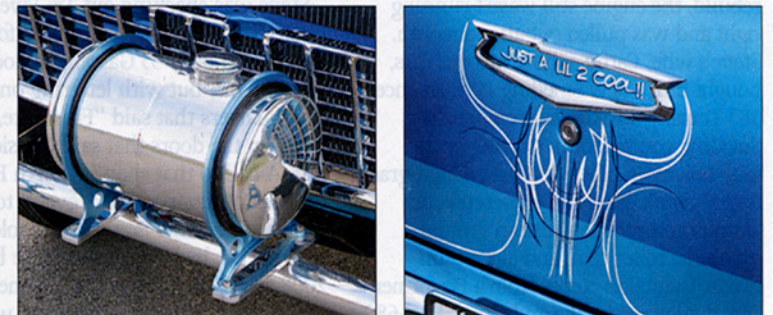
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LEGEND OF LAW MAN

The Story of a Classic '55 Chevy Street Gasser With a New Identity

There's no drag racing at the Chennault Airbase anymore, but the people in Lake Charles, Louisiana, can still watch one of the nicest Gassers run just by being around when Steve Vickers is driving his '55 Chevy on the street. Steve has been working on engines since he was 8, and built his first hot rod when he was 14. "I put a 290 V-8 with a three-speed automatic into my hand-me-down '65 Rambler," he told us. "That car would burn rubber for a block."



Once that tire smoke smell gets into your system, it's there forever. "I've had lots of cars through the years," he says. "I build them, and sell them when I'm finished so I can build another one."

In 2011, Steve was attending a car show in New Orleans. Dennis Gage was there too, filming his *My Classic Car* TV show. Gage was profiling a '60s-style '55 Chevy Gasser named "Law Man." "I thought it was the nicest '55 I have ever seen," Steve said. He came home from the show with a few snapshots, which he hung on the wall in his garage. After a couple years of looking at those photos, Steve decided to locate the owner. He discovered that "Law Man" belonged to a deputy—and that the nicest '55 he'd ever seen had been out of sight in a warehouse for two years.

Steve persuaded the deputy to sell the car, and upon getting it home discovered that the LT1 under the hood was almost too tired to move the old Gasser off the trailer. After four months of work, including a teardown and

By TIM BERNSAU | Photography by ROBERT MCGAFFIN





“YOU ARE WHO YOU ARE FOR A REASON, AND TAKING CARE OF A '55 GASSER IS NOT A BAD THING TO HAVE TO DO.”



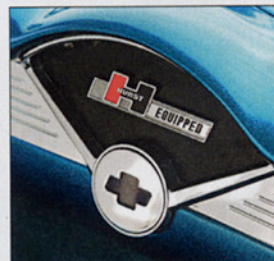
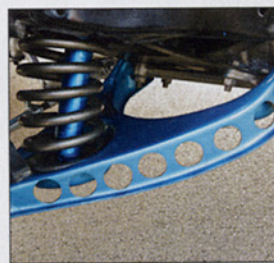
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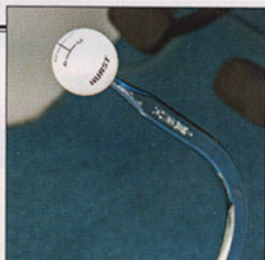
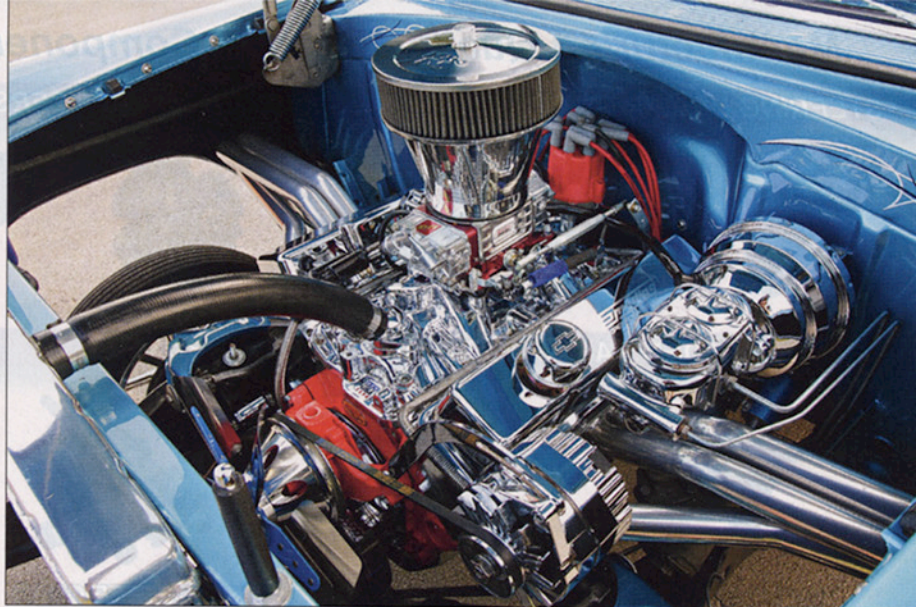
rebuild, the engine still wasn't running right and was pulled out after a month. Steve's wife, Cathy, who also loves cars, bought him a new Smeding Performance 383 Touring stroker crate engine. The Smeding combination, starting with a four-bolt main block, features a high-grade forged crank and rods, hypereutectic aluminum pistons, a custom ground hydraulic roller cam, and aluminum heads. Induction comes from a Performer EPS dual plane intake and Quick Fuel 680 carb with a K&N 8-inch velocity stack. An abundance of plating and polishing adds show car style to the stout engine. The ceramic-coated fenderwell headers are from Doug's Headers. The rest of the exhaust system includes Jet-Hot-coated 3-inch pipes and Flowmaster Super 10 Series mufflers. Keeping things cool are a four-row aluminum radiator and dual fans: an engine-driven flex fan and an electric pull fan. Smeding's dyno tests showed performance peaks of 409 hp and 446 lb-ft of torque. The Hurst-shifted Muncie M20 four-speed with a Centerforce clutch was assembled by Classic Parts Ltd.

Steve was checking out Tri-Five Chevy photos on the Internet when he found photos of a blue '55 Gasser that looked just like his, but with lettering on the rear quarters that said "Frost Bite," and more on the doors that said Classics Plus Ltd. A call to that shop in North Fond du Lac, Wisconsin, put Steve in touch with owner Mike Freund who told him that the car had been built there between 2008 and 2010. "Frost Bite," named in honor of its Wisconsin heritage, was rechristened "Law Man" when it was sold to the Louisiana deputy.

Freund provided Steve with more information on the build history of the car. The 210 sedan bodywork had been done by Freund, including the radiused rear wheelwells and smoothed firewall. In true Gasser style, the front bumper was replaced by framehorns with a spreader bar supporting a Moon tank and nerf bars. The headlights were treated with blue translucent paint, and the glass is tinted blue.

Freund handled the painting duties as well, fading the panels of Nassau Blue Poly (a '60s Chevy color) with Lapis





LEGEND OF LAW MAN

Blue. The top is finished with House of Kolor Royal Blue Metallflake. Barber Graphix in Fond du Lac added the lettering and pinstriping.

The Gasser retains the stock GM frame, and the front end uses the traditional control arm/coil spring front end in lieu of a straight axle. This setup is a practical choice for trips longer than 1,320 feet—and “Law Man” sees a lot of highway miles.

In the front, the '55 runs 2-1/2-inch upper ball joint spacers, Monroe heavy-duty gas shocks, and 11-turn coils from a third-generation Camaro. Stock leafs and Monroe Gas-Magnum shocks provide plenty of rear suspension for the stock GM 3.55 Posi-traction rear,

located by 48-inch ladder bars.

Front Raybestos discs and stock GM rear drums make sure braking is never a problem. Classic Gasser rolling stock includes polished 10 spokes in front. The E-T Gasser wheels from Team III wear 5.60-15 Pro Trac tires. In the rear, 15x10 Ansen Sprints from American Racing are wrapped in DOT certified 28/12.5-15LT M&H Racemaster Cheater Slicks.

Freund had some of that blue metallflake in his paint gun just for the Chevy's interior. The dash and steering column were finished in 'flake. The dash top also received some additional 'striping, along with a squad of Auto Meter gauges. The dash insert is from Pete's Fabrications (now Back Roads Fabrications) and the California Metal Flake steering wheel is from Mooneys. Freund covered the stock seats and door panels in white vinyl. A JVC CD receiver under the seat provides tunes via Fusion speakers.

At the 2015 Danchuk Tri-Five Nats in Bowling Green, Kentucky, Steve's '55 was one of the Top 25 award winners, an honor he deserves but didn't expect. He and Cathy drive their street Gasser to shows around the South as much as they can, and “Law Man” may have broken him of his habit of selling his hot rods. Getting a little philosophical, Steve told us, “You are who you are for a reason, and taking care of a '55 Gasser is not a bad thing to have to do.” **SM**







RANDY & CHERI NELSON | FOND DU LAC, WI | 1955 CHEVY GASSER

Street going gassers are just so cool. This silver and red sedan runs radius wheelwells, ET III wheels, and Wilwood brakes. That wild paint is from PPG and the tinted windows add to the look. A 671 blower is topped with two Holley carbs feeding the 327 and Tremec combo, and yes, this car was driven to the event.