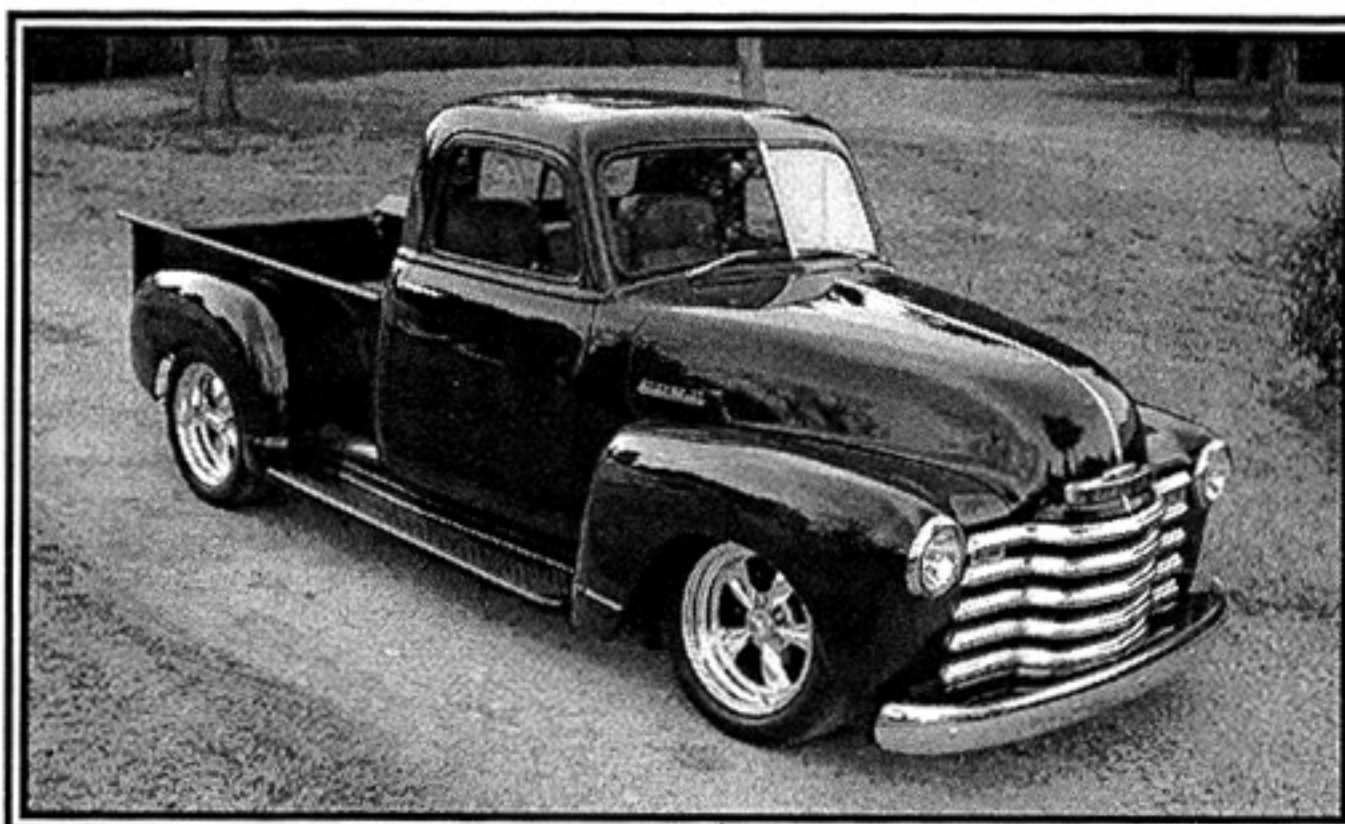


Roger Lee Randles



1953 Chevrolet pickup

tion, resembling a very tired old bag of bones rather than the proud work horse it had once been.

Having once been a farm truck, it came to Carter showing its past. "He brought this piece of s... over that, you know, looked like it had carried hay — and I'm sure it carried lots of hay 'cause when I looked in the bed there was a piece of plywood in there and all the other metal was gone," Carter explained.

And how did Swanson acquire the truck in the first place? "His wife bought it for him for his fortieth birthday," Carter says, as a big grin busts across his face. "He didn't even know what year it was; he said it was a '54 Chevy when I first met him."

Carter went on to say that Swanson had the vehicle for about eight years or so when he decided to make it brand new again. Turns out what he got back may just be slightly better than brand new. "He wanted me to restore it back to original, which I would have done, you know, but I asked him a bunch of questions. I asked him, 'what do you want? You say you want it restored. Well do you want to be able to get on the freeway and drive it? Do you want to be able to get off the freeway pretty quickly and stop it? Do you want it to go around corners well, or do you want it to be the way it is now?'"

Other probing questions the hot-rodder put to the old-truck owner were about things like sound systems, climate control, steering, braking, acceleration. "The whole time that he's been talking to me, he's been telling me he didn't want a hot rod. But, with all the questions that I asked him that he answered yes to, he was defining a hot rod."

Interestingly enough, Carter explained that after his answers pointed to a particular type of vehicle, a hot rod, "He still didn't want it." Carter then described Swanson as an entrepreneur and a conservative person who would "freak out" if pointed in the direction of external modifications to the truck once the project was underway. "It just scared him and he didn't want anything to do with it."

Carter did make subtle changes in the '53's outward appearance, but, from a

distance, the untrained eye would likely not notice. Golden ghost flames flicker in strategic locations over the deep, British Racing Green basecoat and beneath many layers of clearcoat.

Luckily for Carter, the owner gave him a freer hand on the truck's innards. "He didn't really inhibit me from expressing myself under the skin of the truck and engineering wise — making things more comfortable, making it go faster, making it stop better."

The Chevy, which now goes by the handle "XFRMTRK," certainly will go faster with the 355-horse ZZ4 350 crate motor now residing under the hood. Behind the powerplant sits a 700 R4 automatic/overdrive tranny and in the tail a 9" Ford posi with a 3.55 gear rounds out the drivetrain.

With all that forward thrust available, Carter included plenty of right-now deceleration potential with 11.5" rear discs and 11"-ers up front. Of course Carter's creation has an updated interior with modified after-market, butter-soft, leather-covered individual seats, a kick-a.. stereo, AC, power windows and locks, and hidden tricks galore! Did I mention the skull? Carter loves skulls,

SPECIFICATIONS

Wheelbase	116"
Length	195"
Width	75"
Engine	350 crate motor
Horsepower	355
Carburetor	Holly 750 cfm
Electrical	12 volt
Fuel Tank	15 gallon
Cooling	10 quart
Tires	3.55/50 x 18 Pirelli
Transmission	Automatic/700 R4 with overdrive
Final drive	3.55:1
Owner	Regg Swanson

ACCESSORIES/FEATURES

Air Conditioning
Leather seating
Custom paint
Custom wheels

and incorporates them into all of his creations, some times several, but in this case, just one — but you'd have to find it ... We did mention *hidden* tricks, didn't we? With all the shine, power and goodies on board, Carter describes his creation as "A Cadillac with a big trunk — that's what he wanted. It goes fast, yeah, and it'll stop good and everything, but, to me, it's more of a street rod than a hot rod." Carter points out that his own '65 Comet Calliente is more of a hot rod than the truck is. "A hot rod is a very basic ... the hot rod is my Comet. No air conditioning, no power brakes." The rod-builder then points back to the truck for a moment: "I call it a Lexo-rod — it's like a Lexus with the skin of a '53 Chevy." ■

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COLUMN BY ROGER LEE RANGLES

Two things of great significance to Chevrolet Motor Company happened in 1918. First, Chevrolet joined General Motors; additionally, Chevy got in the truck business. The first Chevy trucks were the 490 Light Delivery model, and they were basically a 490 roadster chassis and engine. Those early haulers came without a body, and owners would generally buy one or build one themselves out of wood — often without a cab — to suit their needs. The powerplant in all 490s from 1918 through 1928 was a 171-cubic-inch, overhead-valve, four-cylinder unit that cranked out a whopping 21.7 SAE horses. List price was \$595.

In 1929, Chevrolet set the standard by introducing the first overhead valve six-cylinder engines to replace the old four-banger models. Three years later, Chevrolet stopped using automobile engines in their trucks after designing an engine specifically for them.

In 1934, Chevy stopped sharing front-end auto sheetmetal with their truck models, giving trucks their own unique appearance.

The 1937 model year saw the beginning of what is referred to as the modern pickup era, and interestingly enough, trucks began taking on the styling characteristics of automobiles again. Now truck body choices included the pickup, stake and platform.

From 1941 to 1946 Art Deco styling dominated the Chevy truck's appearance. Lots of front-end chrome — from the massive-looking vertical bar style grill to the side louvers — made for impressive looks which stand up quite well even today.

The 1947 through 1954 trucks were a radical departure from their Art Deco predecessors earning them the designation of Advanced Design Pickups. These trucks were more curvaceous, larger — they were the first Chevy trucks to accommodate up to three men — and they featured a fresh-air heater/defroster system which circulated fresh air throughout the cab and expelled used air out through rear-cab vents. The Advanced Design Pickup cab was eight inches wider and seven inches longer giving these trucks a much larger appearance. These new cabs featured entirely welded construction rather than being partly bolted together like previous models.

These larger, more aerodynamic, Advanced Design models pointed to the trucks of the future, and the 1953 model pictured here is a classic example of this new-look pickup. The fact that this '53 looks as gorgeous as it does can be entirely attributed to Steven Carter of Carter Kustom in Brentwood, Tenn. When owner Regg Swanson brought the truck to Carter, it was in sad condi-