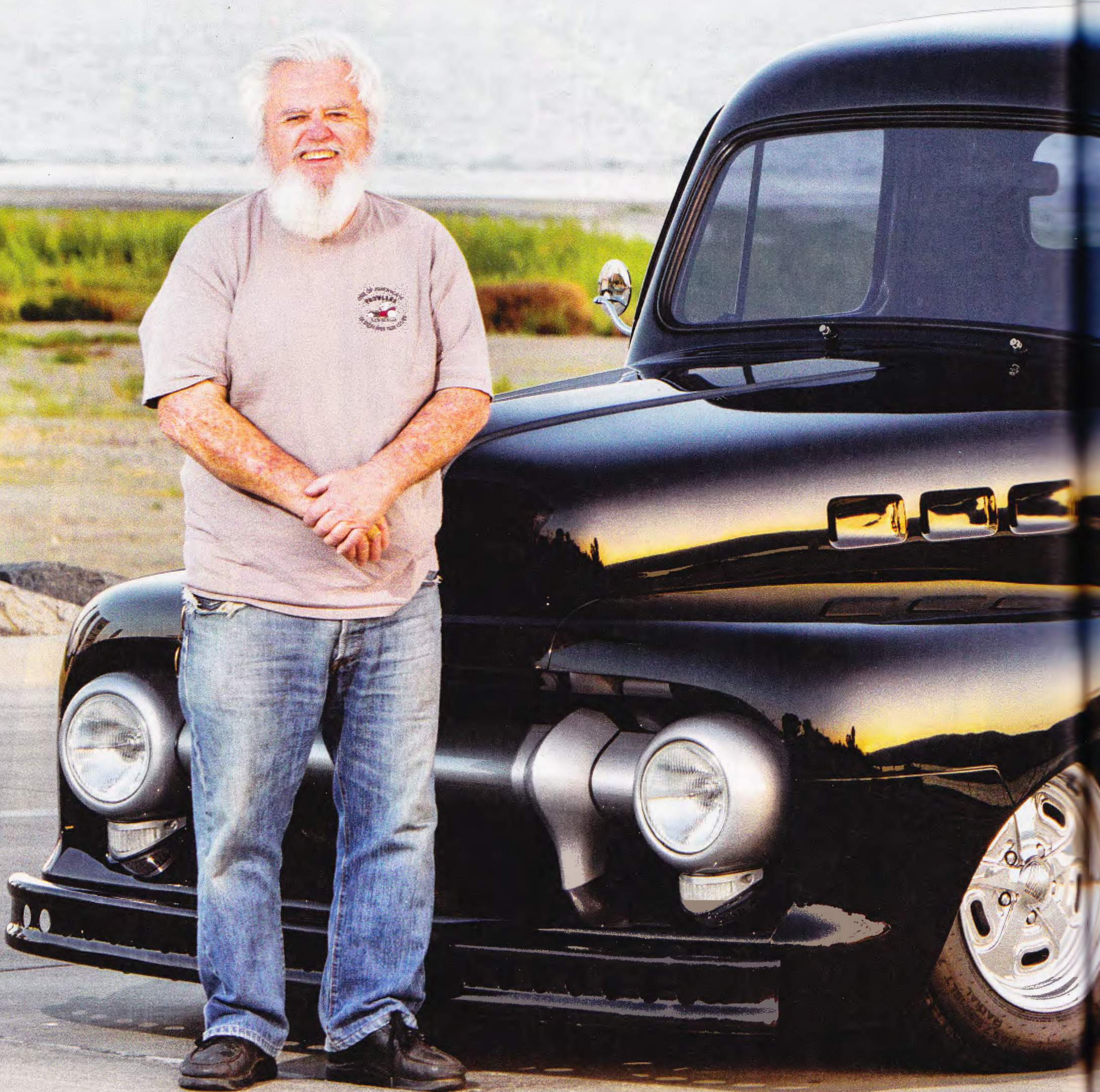


FAT JACK'S "TOO LOW TOO FAST" 1951 F1 FORD



The Art and Science of **Building Low**

✍ Thom Taylor

📷 Wes Allison

["Too low and too fast" is how you would generally describe Fat Jack's builds, as evident in this image. Too low and too fat is how you describe Fat Jack. Everything but chrome, engine machining, and the interior was handled at Jack's shop in Wildomar, California.



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[To get this low, everything has to be raised up into the chassis, with nothing dangling as you can see in this shot. The 12½-inch wide 15-inch Hoosiers look substantial and required relief panels in the inner bedsides.



[With the plumbing and breathers, it's hard to tell this is a 1967 430 Buick punched out to 444 ci, built by Jack's son, John. Firewall, fender panels, and core support were all fabbed at Fat Jack's.

It's hard to describe Fat Jack, but it's easy to tell when he's built a car. Actually, it's easy to describe Jack: short, fat, foul, with a wicked wit and an eye for building cars that doesn't come from following what other builders are doing. And for 40 years his cars have a reputation for being low, fast, and smooth.

You may remember seeing him on the cover of HOT ROD's July 1985 "Fat Attack" issue along with his 1946 Ford coupe that ran 9 seconds in the quarter-mile at 150 mph. He still builds cars, mainly for customers, but was able to put this one together for himself.

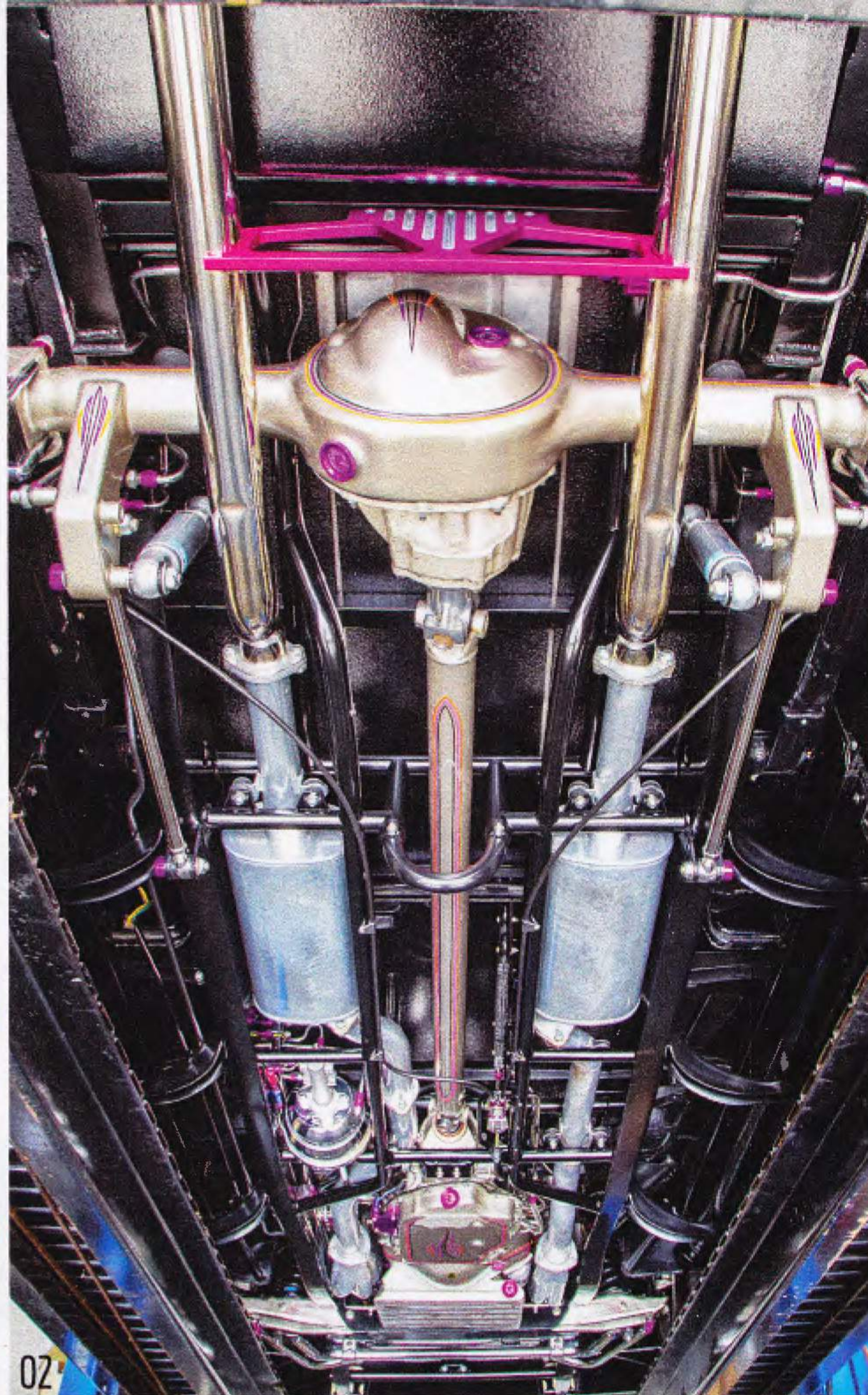
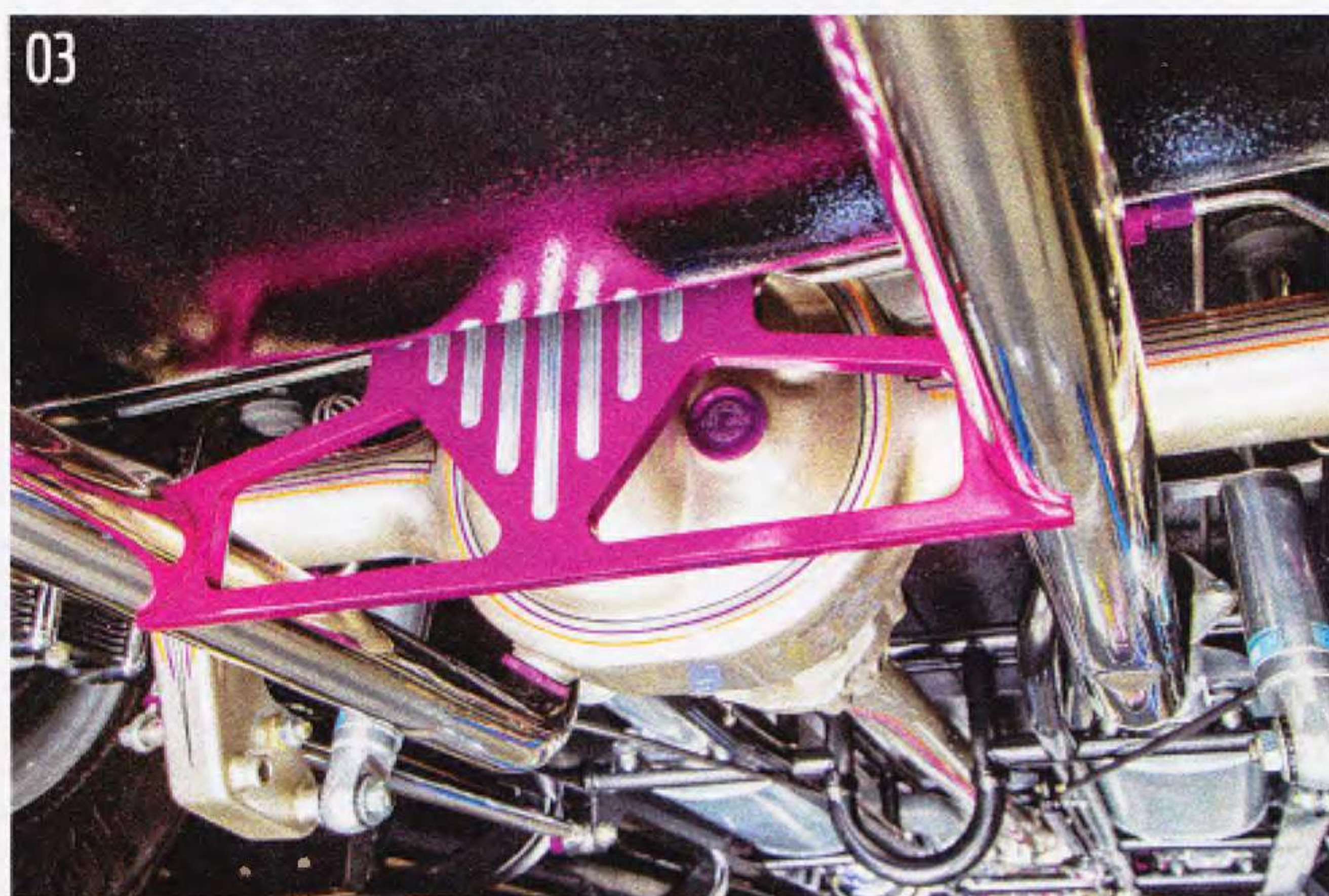
When you look at his 1951 Ford F1 that has taken more than 25 years to complete—fitting in between customer cars at his shop in Wildomar, California—it doesn't feature a million body mods, sculpted interior, or twin-turbo two-tone trigasm over-reach. Instead it exhibits authentic kick-ass construction with subtlety, detail, lots of horsepower, and riding so low it looks like it's bagged—but it's not. Ever. The rule of low hot rodding to guys like Jack is that bags are for babies, while driving a slammed old car means you build a smooth, fast heap, and take your bumps as they come. They don't come any lower than Jack's builds.

He's a builder and a scrounger, but his scrounging gets out of hand sometimes, and that was the basis for this build. He had a lot of parts lying around—"good parts," he says—but still a lot of stuff he decided to

[The wood floor was created, tinted purple, and cleared at Fat Jack's, while Jack himself fabbed the stainless bed strips, which were then milled by Mike Curtis. Stake pockets were filled, and Jacks made the inner fender reliefs and third member cover. The cap is for gas.



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01 The F1 hoods had trim and secondary openings for the radiator, which were filled for a cleaner look. The massive grille is stock, but the headlights have been frenched into it. The chin was also sliced for extra ground clearance.

02 We see little evidence of the scraping the truck is said to have encountered from being so low. The tube crossmembers, billet exhaust supports, and all the fabrication you can see was performed at Fat Jack's. 9-inch Ford rear end has been narrowed, while everything features Dennis Ricklefs' pinstriping.

03 Offsetting finishes and coatings make for a highly detailed undercarriage that is also functional. Everything from the emergency brakes to the Vintage Air air conditioning has been integrated into the truck to make it a real hot rod, as opposed to a showpiece, though it's finished like a show car.

04 The CPP brake kit includes S-10 calipers and Granada discs. The Mustang II front suspension utilizes the stock stamped control arms with fabbed tube upper A-arms. Bilstein shocks smooth out the bumps.

turn into a truck. This F1 had been sitting in his backyard for years, and so the parts and truck came together. The Ford hauler itself was a "s**t box" when he got it, but everything has potential if you labor over it enough, and that is what Jack, his crew, and son John did over time.

Starting with a 430 Buick engine from a cast-off Blair's Speed Shop project, Jack had George Striegel at Clay Smith Engineering do the machine work, keeping the stock crank but boring the block out to 444 ci. Jack's son, John, a builder in the vein of his father, then assembled the engine with a Clay Smith cam, H-beam rods, and JE forged pistons and oil pump—all assembled with ARP fasteners. The iron heads run TA Performance stock rockers, have been ported and massaged, and are covered with stock Buick valve covers modified by Jack with breathers. The intake is a TA Performance aluminum medium-rise manifold crowned with a 750 Holley and one of Jack's purple anodized billet air cleaners. It also has a TA aluminum water

pump featuring more vanes for more flow. Pulleys are stock Buick dipped in the chrome vat.

The aluminum radiator is by Ron Davis. Ignition comes from a standalone MSD, with the exhaust running through an old pair of Blair's Speed Shop headers reworked by Jack. He also built the stainless-steel exhaust that includes Magnaflow mufflers and machined both the billet exhaust supports and the tailpipes, too.

Randy's Transmission in Anaheim, California, rebuilt the Turbo 400 transmission, mating it to the Buick with an adapter. Power is sent to the narrowed late-1960s 9-inch Ford rear with 3.25 gears and stock brakes.

Jack built a new tube X-member and raised an aftermarket Mustang II crossmember into the stock frame running stock Mustang II stamped lower A-arms, tubular uppers, stock spindles, CPP S-10 calipers with Granada disc brakes, and stock Mustang rack-and-pinion steering.

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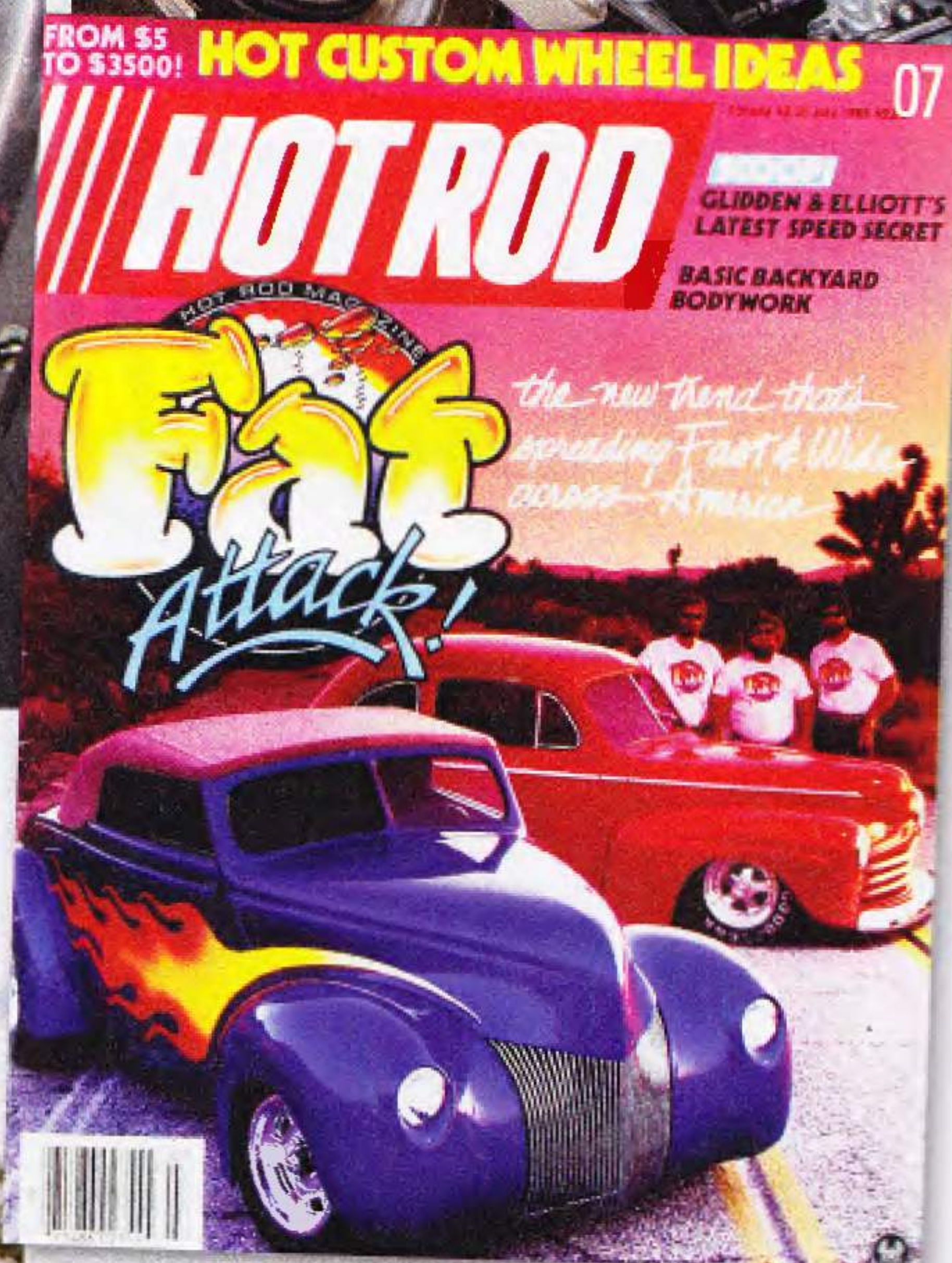
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01] Jack created the custom dash featuring a carbon-fiber insert, Vintage Air billet outlets, Auto Meter gauges, upholstery by "James," and charcoal gray metallic that offsets the black exterior nicely. Steering column is a GM van unit.

02] Other than the custom dash and sculptured bench, Jack chose to stick to the stock-painted hard surfaces, including the door panels. We see a lot of trucks with elaborate interiors, but this approach might be the best because it retains some of the vintage goodness and is actually a lot cheaper to do. Sometimes the simplest choices are the best.



03 These 1948–1952 Ford F1 trucks stand pretty tall, so you get the idea with Jack for scale just how low this sucker sits. Other than the grayer hair, Jack is looking much like he did on our July 1985 cover.

04 An old set of 15-inch Boyds billet wheels look good, though we are used to seeing Jack's trademark orange steelies and F1 caps with his black car builds. The 50-series Hoosier tires wrap wheels front and rear.

05 The MSD standalone distributor gives ample spark, confusing onlookers with its location that it's a Ford engine. Paint, polish, chrome, as-cast, anodized—it's all under the hood and undercarriage.

06 Jack's into old-school detail, as evidenced here with polished everything, contrasting paint, and then the finishing touch of Dennis Ricklefs pinstriping. The good part is that even with this level of detail, this truck will get driven.

07 July 1985 "Fat Attack" cover with Pete Chapouris and Jake Jacobs, along with Jack's 1946 Ford coupe. The car was later totaled at Baylands dragstrip in the late-1980s.

08 These old F1s have a good look and are relatively abundant. And Jack's build proves you don't need a bunch of mods or trickery for a killer build; instead, good stance, tire and wheel selection, and tried-and-true building practices make for one fine, low ride.

The body was basically left alone, but required some modifications to smooth it out and also tweak it for clearance with its low stance. The hood vents up front were filled, with the stock pockets on the sides left alone after removal of the F1 trim. The door handles have been shaved, and the stake pockets in the bed have been filled. The chin and tails of the front fenders have been trimmed about 1½ inches, and the rear fender tails have been trimmed 2 inches. This was done to give more clearance for the low ride height. The rear wheel openings have also been raised about 1 inch to match the front openings.

The stock grille is painted silver and features frenched headlights. The bed has inner wheel reliefs, with purple tinted wood slats and stainless machined runners made by Jack, with reliefs machined into them by Mike Curtis. A relief panel for the third member was also fabbed at Jack's.

After all of the bodywork was finished, Jack laid on a basecoat of black followed by clearcoat, finished off with Dennis Ricklefs pinstriping and lettering on the tailgate. Ricklefs also pinstriped the rear axlehousing, lower control arms, oil and trans pans, and other undercarriage components.

Inside, James in San Jacinto, California, created the leather interior that features a Jack-modified dash with carbon-fiber insert, bear-claw door latches, Vintage Air air conditioning, Specialty power windows, a GM van tilt steering column, and aluminum panels covered in leather also by James. American Auto Wire supplied the wiring kit.

Wheels are a set of old Boyds billet wheels, 15x8 in front and 15x10 in the back, covered in Hoosier rubber.

Jack has passed down his building ethic and aesthetics to his sons, John, Gary, and Eddie. Gary told us, "My dad always instilled on us that stance, wheel and tire choice, fit, and finish is essential. It's no more than that." Jack adds, "Building cars is not easy, and it's not cheap, but I build them to hammer hard on them."

Gary said the front fenders of his dad's truck have been repaired at least twice that he knows of from crowning because it's so low. "With all of the scrapes on the undercarriage, it makes you wonder why he details them so much." He also added, "My dad refuses to raise the truck or go with taller tires." That's why Jack is known for building cars "too low and too fast." We hope he never changes.