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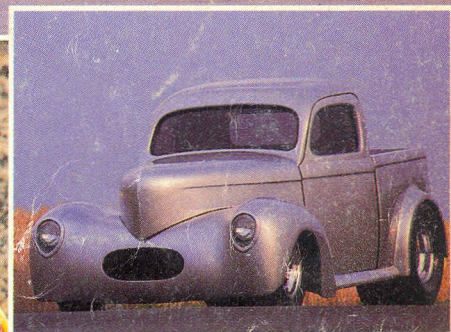
RODDER

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# RODDER

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No. 15



**NATIONALS '89  
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DRIVE-TESTING A '32 COUPE  
THE CHRISMAN DYNASTY  
PHANTOM TRUCKING

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ON THE STREET

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# 1940 WILLYS

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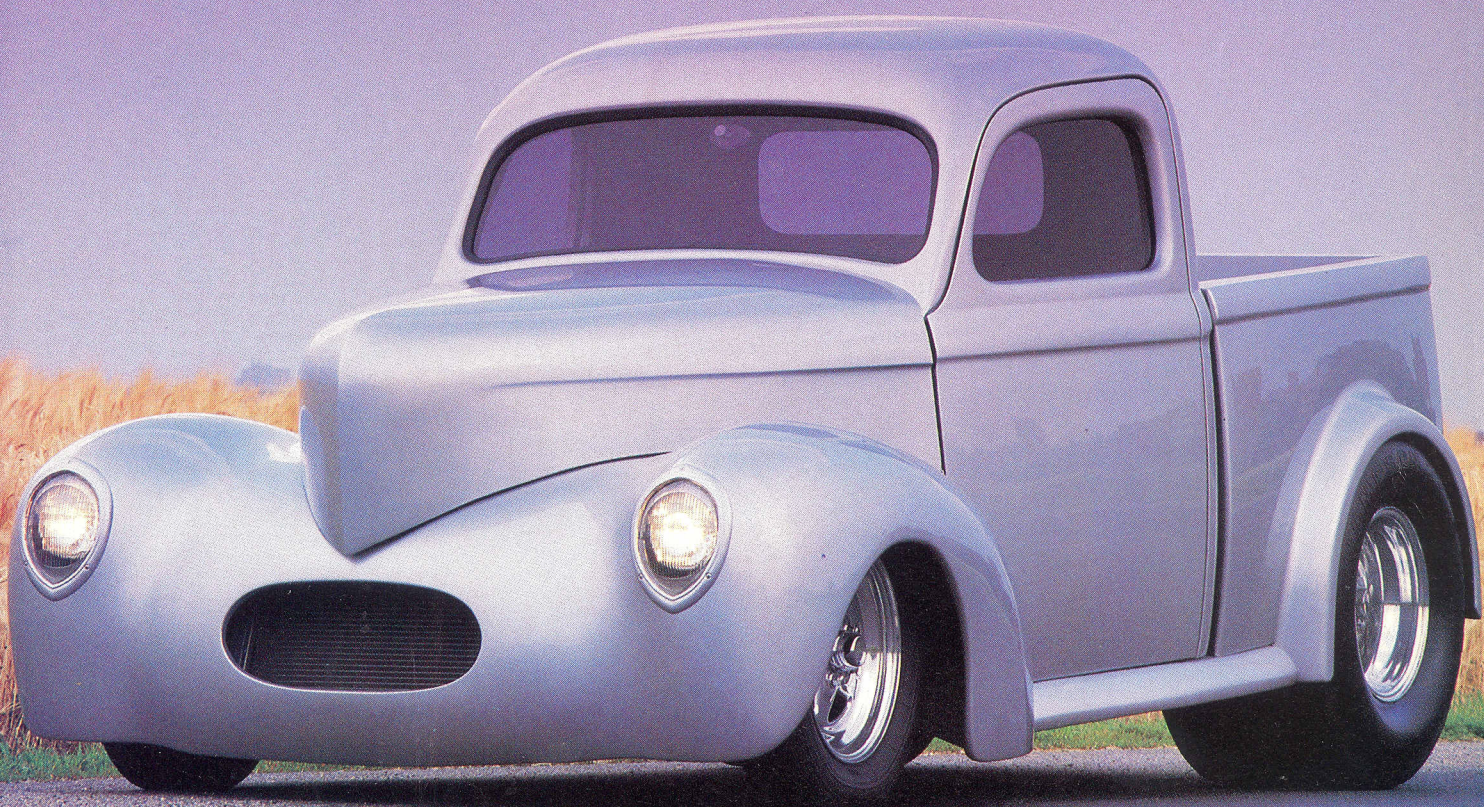
## P I C K U P

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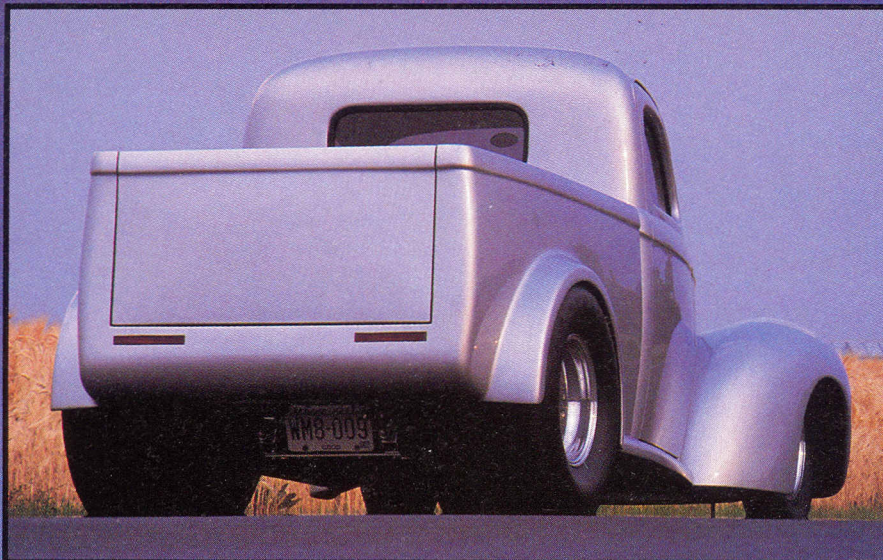
*A new look for an old hauler.*

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**M**ost pre-'50s pickup trucks are anomalies of design. In almost every case, the classic, rounded lines of the hood and cab stand in marked contrast to the square-cornered, slab-sided pickup bed. The result is a truck that looks half-complete; while the designers appeared to give the front section their undivided attention, the bed usually looks like an afterthought, something sketched on a napkin during lunch break.



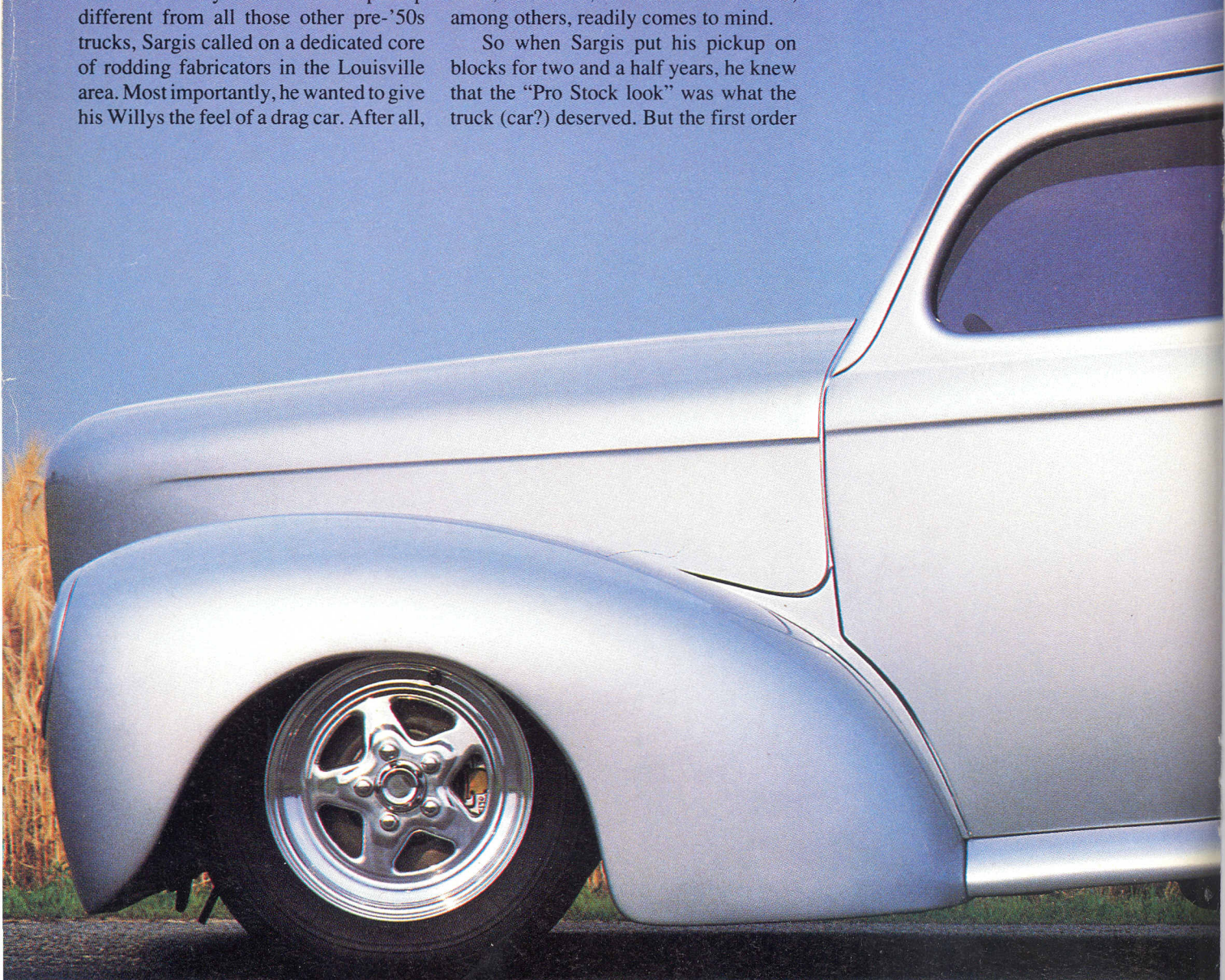
PHOTOGRAPHY BY STEVE COONAN

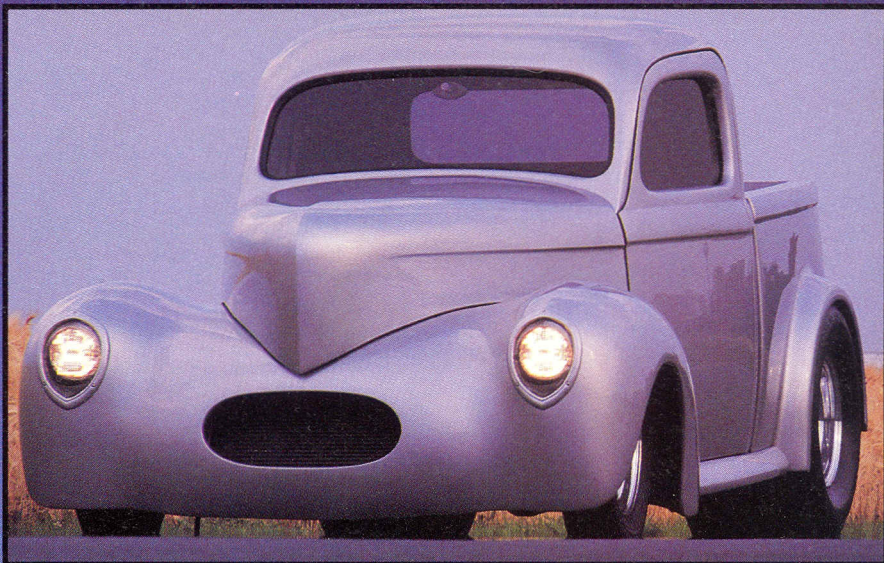


Bob Sargis, of Louisville, Kentucky, was bothered by that strange mix and set out to correct it with a complete rebuild on a 1940 Willys. To make this pickup different from all those other pre-'50s trucks, Sargis called on a dedicated core of rodding fabricators in the Louisville area. Most importantly, he wanted to give his Willys the feel of a drag car. After all,

the '40 Willys first found rodding acceptance when top drag teams of the early '60s used the pre-War coupes in the Gas-class; the Stone, Woods and Cook car, among others, readily comes to mind.

So when Sargis put his pickup on blocks for two and a half years, he knew that the "Pro Stock look" was what the truck (car?) deserved. But the first order



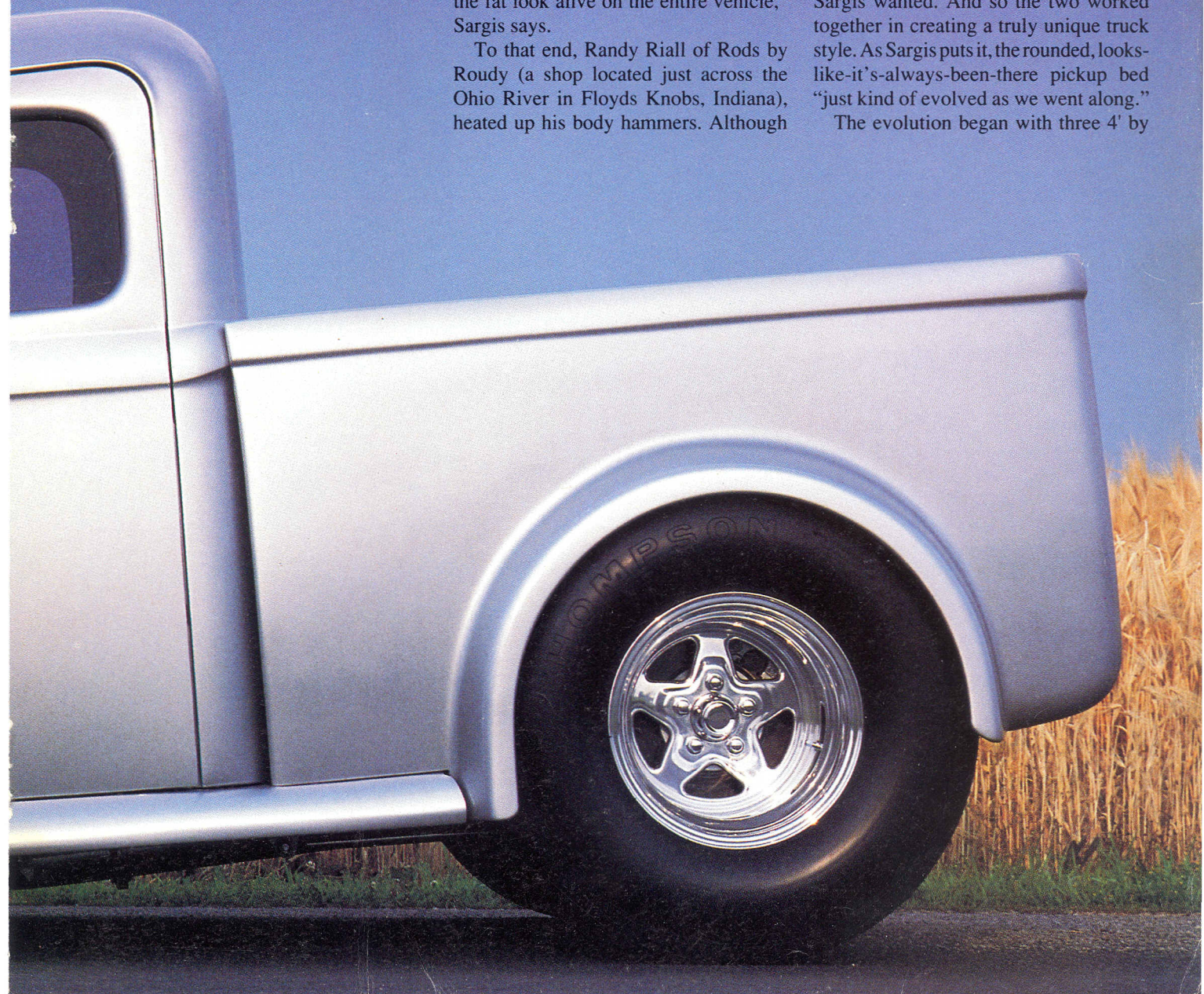


of business was to remove the Willys' brick-like bed, substituting something much more unique. "We wanted to keep the fat look alive on the entire vehicle," Sargis says.

To that end, Randy Riall of Rods by Roudy (a shop located just across the Ohio River in Floyds Knobs, Indiana), heated up his body hammers. Although

there were no drawings or sketches for Riall to work from, this talented metal bender had a pretty good idea of what Sargis wanted. And so the two worked together in creating a truly unique truck style. As Sargis puts it, the rounded, looks-like-it's-always-been-there pickup bed "just kind of evolved as we went along."

The evolution began with three 4' by



10' panels of 16-gauge sheetmetal. From there, Riall cut, heated, pounded, cooled, heated some more, and kept pounding, until the bed magically assumed its final configuration. Riall's talent with a body hammer is especially appreciated considering the contours that he formed: After the cab was channeled eight inches, the body bead was formed into the bed's sheetmetal; the bed side panels were contoured front to back, then top to bottom; and the pickup bed's sides and tailgate were rolled top and bottom. It's truly a work of art.

Riall did the fabrication work on the truck's front end, too. Again, all modifi-

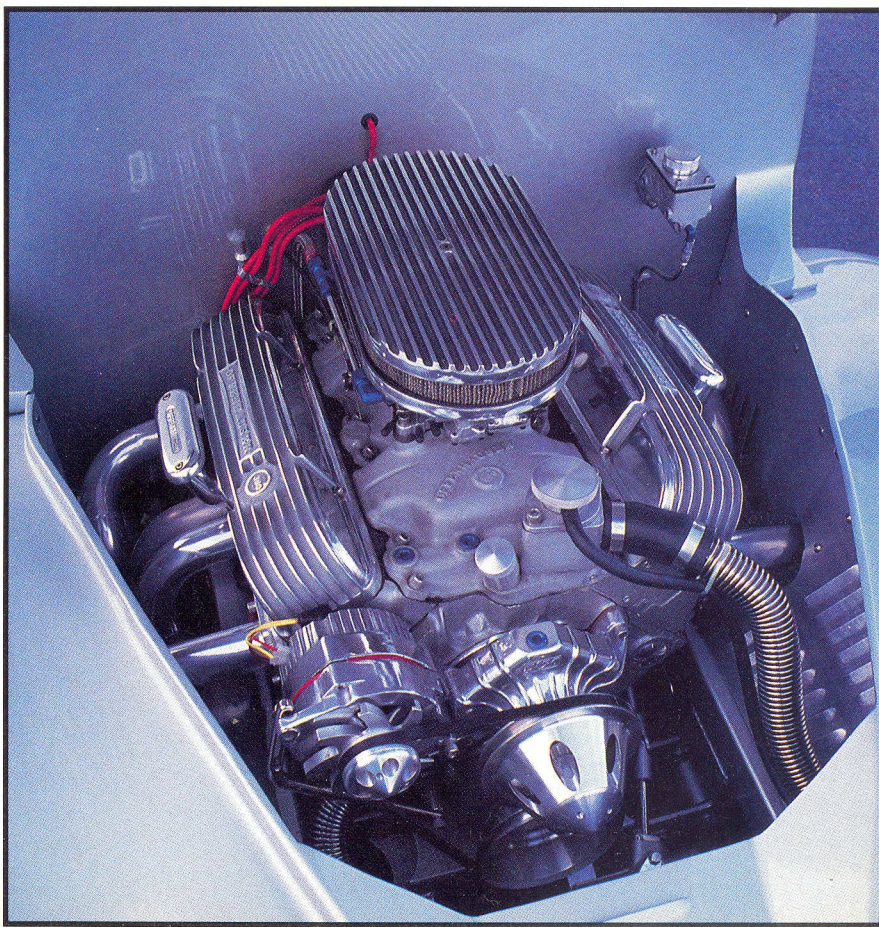


cations are with sheetmetal, the changes following Sargis' desire to give the Willys a "Cobra-style grille." Riall also mounted the hidden hinges to the doors and tailgate. After all this body magic, the truck was sent to Mark Mahoney of Middletown, Kentucky, for finish body work and paint. There, Mahoney applied coat after coat of Platinum Mist paint.

The undercarriage of the reskinned Willys is just as slick. In order to slip the Gary Martz frame under the Pro Stock body, the entire chassis was sent to Craig McCoy's Pro Cars (also in Louisville) for some additional modifications. Foremost was to fabricate the large wheel wells to accommodate the hefty Mickey Thompson meats at the rear.

McCoy also adapted in a TCI All-American rear suspension. This four-bar set up is matched to a Ford nine-inch rear end running 3.80 gears. Again, in order to squeeze the differential between the huge rear tires, McCoy narrowed the housing.

Sargis went to the boneyard for the brakes. His selection was a set of disc binders from a Cadillac El Dorado. All the plumbing, including the fuel lines, was done in stainless, installed by Dwight Hall of Plumbformance, yet another



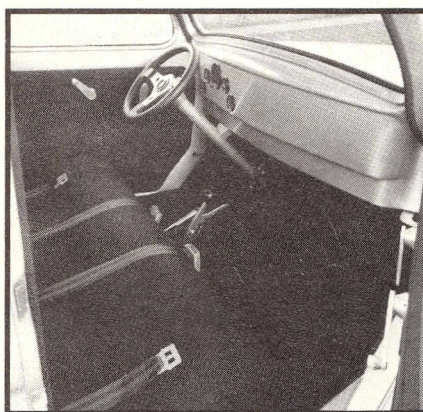
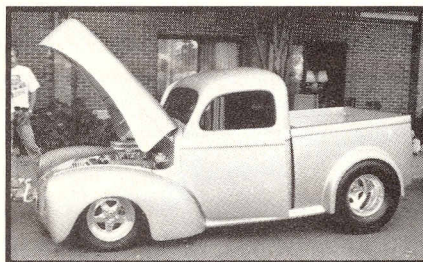
Louisville rod-builder. After choosing a set of 155 by 15 Michelin radials for the front, the Pro Stock imitator got its set of polished Weld wheels.

Under the hood, the engine compartment's layout is just as smooth and clean as anything else on the truck. Other than the engine itself and its pair of radiator hoses, the only other noticeable piece of hardware in here is the hand-crafted brake reservoir, perched alone on the one-piece firewall.

The truck's power comes from a Harold Russell (also of Louisville)-built smallblock Chevy. The 355-inch engine uses a 305-degree Competition Cam to play traffic cop between its 4010 Holley-fed Offenhauser intake manifold and the Craig McCoy custom-made headers. Sargis himself hand-crafted the alternator mounts and shortened the water pump. As a final touch, the engine compartment side panels were polished to a super-bright finish.

Behind the cab's tinted windows there's a plain and plenty functional interior. The handiwork of yet another Louisville craftsman (Larry Sneed this time), the cab includes a custom-made bench seat and raised panels on the doors and headliner. After Sneed extended the first and

second tiers of the Willys' dashboard four and two-and-a-half inches, respectively, he stitched the burgundy fabric in two-and-a-half inch wide pleats. Matching Mercedes Benz carpet was picked to cover the flooring, and VDO Cockpit Design gauges keep everyone informed



on engine compartment happenings. Missing is a stereo, but, as Sargis puts it, "I just want to hear the engine."

The final assembly took place in Bob Sargis' home garage. Two and a half years after the project was started, the new-style Willys made its maiden trip to the '89 Nationals at St. Paul. "Actually, I towed it there," confesses Sargis. "After all, it was the first time on the road, and I didn't want to drive 1600 miles only to find out I had teething problems with the car."

But considering that practically all of the specialty work was done within a 20 mile radius of Louisville, Sargis was probably correct in his decision; he never really had a chance to give his car a shake-down before the Nats. And it's the work of the "Louisville artists," as the car owner refers to all the fabricators who helped with the project, that make him proud to say that he didn't build this car all by himself. "I had some of the best people involved on this one. I don't feel at all guilty about hiring some of this work out." Adds Sargis "After all, I wouldn't attempt brain surgery."

But he would, and did, attempt a re-design on an old truck. And the operation was a complete success.—Dain Gingerelli

## SPECIFICATIONS

Bob Sargis  
Crestwood, Kentucky  
1940 Willys

### ENGINE

Type	Chevrolet
Displacement	355 cu. in.
Camshaft	Competition Cams 305
Ignition	Mallory Unilight
Induction	single 4-bbl.; Holley 4010
Exhaust	custom headers

### DRIVETRAIN

Transmission	Turbo 350
Rearend	9 in. Ford; 3.80:1

### CHASSIS

Frame	modified Gary Martz
Front Suspension	Independent; TCI coil overs

Rear Suspension TCI coil overs; 4-bar

Steering narrowed Mustang rack and pinion

Wheels, Front/Rear Weld

Tires, Front/Rear Michelin 155 by 15; Mickey Thompson 33/19.5 by 15

Brakes, Front/Rear disc

### BODY

Model pickup

Modification channeled 8 in.; custom bed; all seams removed

Paint, Type/Color Ditzler; Platinum Mist

Interior burgundy; raised panels

### FINALS

Time To Build 2.5 years

Annual Mileage brand new

