

THE MID-ATLANTIC STYLE

Two highboy coupes triple-distilled to the very essence of hot-rod cool



by Joe Kress

Hot rodding can be as much about geography as it can be about cars. There was a time in the story of this hobby when it appeared that *all* the good cars, the really cool ones, were built, driven, and raced in California. Exclusively. That quickly became a myth, of course, but with stacks of Los Angeles-based rod magazines saying so, and filling the nation's newsstands with gushing descriptions and photos of all the stripped-down, high-powered, and beautifully finished coupes and roadsters of the Golden State, it was a myth

tough to disprove.

Times change. While there's no disputing the original inspirational role the West Coast played in hot rodding's earlier days, noting all that pre-War racing action on the dry lakes, the emergence of the speed equipment industry to heat things up even more, the formation of drag strips in the early 1950s, and even the birth of the hot-rod mail-order business two decades later, none of this took place in a vacuum. Thanks to those California magazines word spread fast, and before long lots of those really cool cars, the ones everyone now calls "traditional," were being built all across

the country. The lure and the love of a basic, beam axle and buggy spring hot rod took hold coast-to-coast and held on tight. Tighter in some parts of the country than others.

And today, what started in the west could be getting its completion in the east. Decades after those L.A. magazines began preaching the gospel of less is more, simple is best, and real hot rods have horsepower, the current suppliers of all that basic rodware, the companies making and selling dropped axles and hairpin radius rods and quickchange rear ends, now report that a lion's share of their business is done by sending those parts to addresses east of the Mississippi

River. While the descendants of the original rodders went on to tricky suspension systems and stylized bodies, and only recently have turned back to the roots, elsewhere that "roots" rodding was being refined and triple-distilled to its essence, manifested in bare-bones hot rods that look the look, talk the talk, and walk the walk. Nowhere is this more true than in the Mid-Atlantic states, and no more proof of that is needed than even the quickest of looks at the two coupes we're seeing here, Jack Troup's highboy '32 from Maryland and Larry Rhodes' Delaware-based '33. Cars like these might have got their start on the West Coast, but it's easterners like Larry and Jack who are putting on the finishing touches.

Larry Rhodes is quick to admit where the influence for his car came from. It was California, Temple City in the 1970s to be exact. "Jake's coupe just about drove me nuts!" he says. Ten years in the business at the helm of Rhodes Custom Auto Works, Inc., he was able to do something about it too, although not right away. Asked how long he's wanted to build himself a coupe like the orange '33 he now drives, he answers, "It's been 20 years." A completely original car, at least as far as its hardware mix goes, you might think those two decades were spent collecting parts. Not so. "I've built plenty of cars over the years," Larry says, "but this one has to be the easiest one I've ever done." The original 1933 Ford parts that come together here just seemed to fall into his lap. Running a hot-rod, race car, and muscle car performance shop helped, of course; Larry was there to catch everything as it fell. One customer would come in wanting a new three-

piece hood for his project '33, and he'd leave his stock four-piece hood behind. The original door handles on Larry's car came off another customer's coupe, this one in for the shave treatment. And so it went, frame to roof. At the final tally, everything on Larry's car is original 1933 Ford with the exception of the radiator cap, windshield frame, and trunk handle. An impressive collection of rare bits, without question.

More impressive, though, is the way Larry combined all those old, original parts, massaging them into hot rod perfection. The body he had found wasn't anything near "pristine," although it is now. It had come out of Arkansas, through George Poteet in Mississippi. Larry was able to get the bare body, a pair of doors, the dash, all the garnish moldings, and even a title from Poteet. The first thing he had to do was install a completely new floor; someone had half-fit one in the past, but working without benefit of a frame to match the repair to it wasn't anywhere near where it was supposed to be. Likewise, Larry remembers that the patch panels already in place were "kind of clobbered up," and, while he had hoped to retain the '33's original fabric roof insert, he ended up metal-filling the top because the formed gutter to receive that original-style insert was gone. The top chop Larry completed didn't involve any slits or pie cuts, either; instead the severed roof was dropped straight back down into place after 3 inches had been removed from the front posts and 2 inches from the rear. It had to be lengthened just slightly to accomplish all this, but that way Larry was able to keep the lines of the doors and the hood and the windshield posts in harmony.

"It would have been lots easier to start with a fresh, fiberglass body," Larry says, looking back on the job. "But then I really wouldn't have a 1933 Ford, would I?"



It's hard to beat a Halibrand quickchange framed by the graceful arc of a Model A rear spring. We like the smaller V-8 quickchange rear ends in Model A's and Deuces, but the larger Champ quickchange looks equally at home in a '33-'34 Ford



Larry Rhodes is a life-long hot rodder and for more than a decade has operated Rhodes Custom Auto Works in Townsend, Delaware. Although his past personal efforts have been Chevys, the coupe has been in his mind's eye for more than twenty years. Larry cites "Jake" Jacobs' yellow truck-nosed '34 highboy as his major influence, but it is our guess that he's got a soft spot for Bill Vinther's fenderless three-window as well.

He wouldn't have a '33 Ford if he hadn't based his coupe on a real 1933 Ford frame either, and for this part of the big puzzle he made a deal with yet another noted rod builder, this time swapping Bobby Alloway a brand-new set of American Metal Stamping rails for these genuine '33 Ford counterparts, still assembled and intact with the original X-member. "And I had to have it that way," he says. The reason, of course, was that Larry wanted this car to look like it might

have been built years, even decades ago, and in that he succeeded wonderfully. Front to back, top to bottom, and everywhere in between, this coupe is the real deal. From the spindle-mount front wheels to the Halibrand quick-change rear end hanging off a Model A spring, it's all pure hot rodding, the classic kind. Even the Auburn dash panel inside is genuine.

"And it's a fun car to drive," Larry says. It should be. Another standard component of the Mid-Atlantic take on hot rodding is horsepower, lots of it. Larry's son, Ron, builds all the engines at Rhodes Custom Auto Works and he put together a beauty for his dad. It's an 11.5:1 compression ratio 406-inch small-block Chevy, and for good measure it's packed with things like Dart heads, MSD ignition, a Crower mechanical roller cam, and a Carb Shop 932 CFM Holley carburetor.

The engine is a piece-by-piece duplicate of one Ron used to run in his race-only Camaro, a car that consistently turned 11.00-second ETs. Larry set this engine an extra few inches back into the '33's firewall especially to accommodate a correctly sized radiator, fan, and shroud. It was worth the work, because he says he can be stuck in traffic and leave the air conditioner running (with Mid-Atlantic humidity even stripped-down hot rods get A/C), yet, even with that 11.5:1 compression engine rattling the windows, never see the temperature gauge climb much higher than 175 degrees. Between this big/little smallblock and the Halibrand quick-change Larry chose to mount a Richmond five-speed manual transmission, operating its clutch with the pedals from a 1939 Ford, the clutch side activating a hydraulic release bearing "that works beautifully."

After waiting 20 years for this car, "and always wanting one like it," now that's it's done Larry simply won't sell it. Ever. "It can't be bought!" he says, and he's not kidding.

Larry Rhodes contends that the secret to keeping the engine cool is to move lots of air through a good quality radiator. He relies on a Walker Cobra Z-series radiator and an electric fan a shroud combo from Cooling Components. Both companies are located in Memphis, TN. The fan pulls 2750 cfm and the ABS plastic shroud ensures that all of the fan's capacity is used to pull air directly through the radiator.

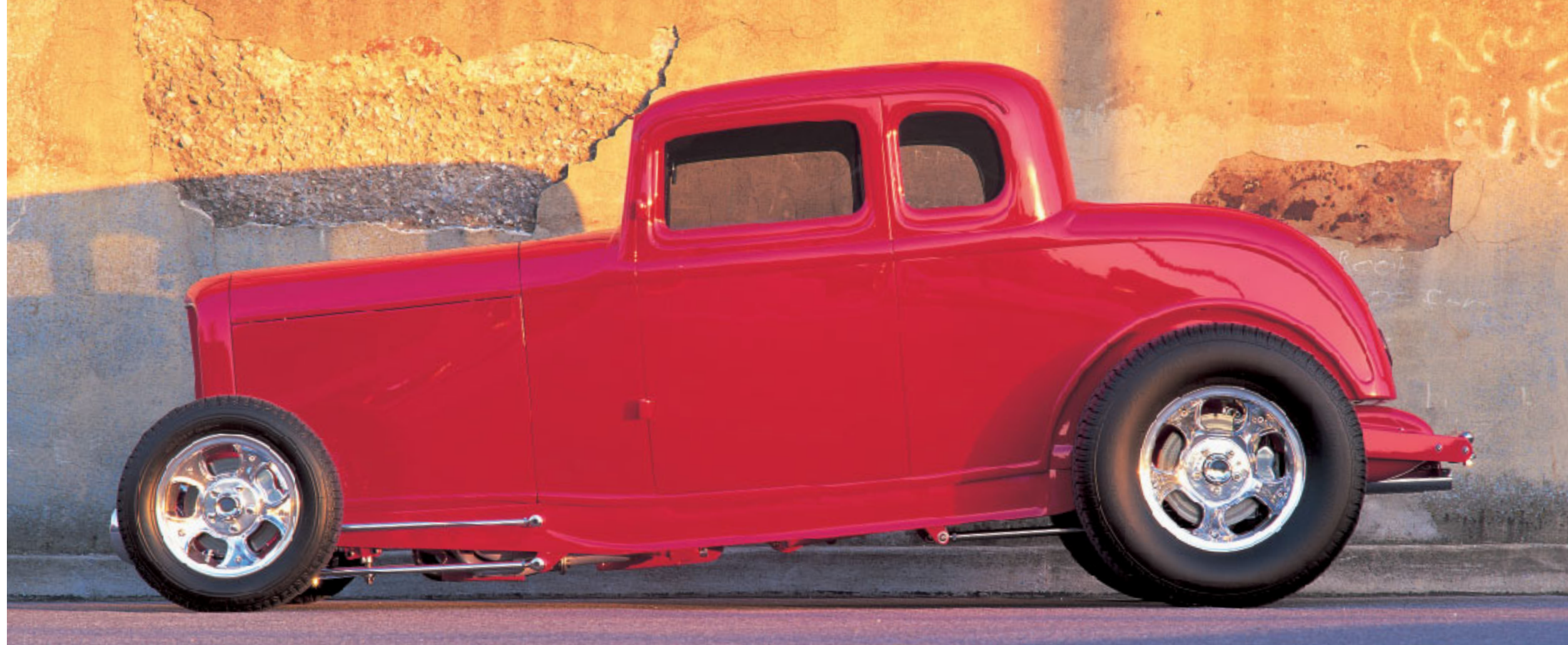


Rhodes' coupe screams traditional hot rod in stance, silhouette, detailing and componentry. Wheels are 16 x 10 ET 11s in the rear and spindle-mount Halibrands in the front. Black pleated upholstery is nicely accentuated by a Bell 4-spoke wheel and a Stewart Warner equipped Auburn gauge panel. Note that the early Ford side bells bolt to the Champ quickchange with polished aluminum step-down adapters.





The '32 and '33 made it out to the mock-up stage at the same time, but Larry took an extra year to finish his up. The customer comes first and a persistent Troup got his '32 five-window done first.



The coupes' profiles are right on the money. Both tops were chopped by lengthening the roofs rather than leaning the posts back. Rhodes' '33 was cut 3 inches in the front and 2 inches in the back. While Troup's '32 has had 2 inches removed all the way around.

Now let's take a look at Jack Troup's Maryland-based '32 coupe, another rod in the Mid-Atlantic style. It's no surprise that this Standard-model highboy bears a striking similarity, in both thought and execution, to Larry Rhodes' '33; Jack's car was built at Rhodes Custom Auto Works, too. In fact, it pushed Larry's project onto the back burner for about a year, the time it took to complete. No novice to rodding, Jack bought the beginnings to his coupe almost 10 years ago. He followed up on an ad he found posted around the Exhibit Hall at the NSRA's Nationals, an ad leading him to the body, an original steel survivor, and a bit more. What he actually got was the five-window coupe perched on top of a half-completed California Street Rods chassis. But knowing that he wouldn't start building this car right away, and seeing as how there were a few things the first owner had installed that he flat didn't like or want, Jack lifted the body onto a pair of sawhorses so he could finish the chassis and sell it. "In hindsight," he says now, "I probably should have kept that chassis, though." He'd previously owned a Deuce roadster with the same CSR package under it, "and it was a great riding car." Nevertheless, the completed chassis was sold and the coupe body, now minus its frame, sat on those sawhorses for the next 10 years.

In 1996, after having gone through a small fleet of hot rods in the decade that had passed, Jack finally got the bug to do something about the '32. At the York event that year he struck up a casual conversation with Barry Lobeck, and, long story short, they arrived at a price and a package and Jack put in the frame order. From there the body and its new underpinnings went straight to Larry's shop in Delaware, "and I stayed on him pretty hard," Jack says with a laugh. Friends since the '70s, Jack admits to pushing his buddy without mercy to get the coupe finished, "even making his own car, that '33, take a back seat!"

Both Jack and Larry knew exactly what this '32 was supposed to look like and what it was supposed to be, and they started the work right at the bottom, on that new Lobeck frame. "I wanted this coupe to be really low," Jack explains, "so we modified Barry's chassis even more to get the coupe down on the ground." That's saying something, because if nothing else Barry Lobeck generally turns out a down-to-the-ground hot rod. This one, however, wasn't "down" enough to satisfy Jack Troup. By the time he and Larry had reset the car to their tastes and everything was re-shuffled and back in place, they had raised the front suspension bars to match the frame they'd just lowered, raised the engine and transmission mounts to keep those big parts from scraping the pavement, replaced the front spring, and re-configured the steering arms to get the geometry back in line.

Of course Jack's '32 has a pretty stout little motor in it too, this one also put together by Ron Rhodes. Jack's version of the smallblock Chevy is a 383-inch, 11.7:1 compression ratio piece that demands a jolt of octane booster in the tank when pure racing gas isn't around. Ron assembled this little



The interior takes an up-to-date look with black and grey cloth upholstery covering Cirello buckets and sculptured door panels. The Vintage Air unit is next to invisible in a dash dominated by Auto Meter white-face gauges. Black leather is also used to cover the four spoke Bell-styled steering wheel. The front-mounted Moon tank is strictly ornamental, the spreader bar passes right through.

From the outset Troup's goal was to build a no-nonsense highboy coupe along the traditional lines, but with a slightly contemporary twist to some of the hardware. Jack seems to take a good deal of pleasure pointing out that he started with a standard traditional Lobeck chassis and then modified the crossmembers to get it as low as he wanted it. ET III wheels are used at all four corners, with the fronts measuring 14 x 4 1/2-inches and 16 x 10-inch rears.



monster using parts that Jack spec'ed and supplied, beginning with a smoothed and polished block. In what might be classic understatement, Jack says the coupe is a joy to drive. That kick-butt Chevy is lots of fun to play with, he says, but more than that it's stone-reliable, and aside from its appetite for premium-plus fuel, absolutely trouble free. And just like Larry's '33 motor, it's a cool customer, too. "I can run it down the highway all day long, or I can idle it through a crowded fairground, and either way it'll stay in the 160- to 185-degree range," Jack says. He attributes this to just good, basic, car-building technique. "You see these guys overheating all the time, yet a blind man could tell 'em what's wrong! You have to move the air through the radiator," he says. "All of it. And for that you need a good fan and a good shroud. Simple." Mid-Atlantic hot rods, it seems, are built to work as well as they look. The transmission Jack picked is a full-competition Turbo 400, an auto-box he had left over from a previous project. For the '32 he stripped it bare, had the case polished, and re-assembled it with fresh internals.

A police officer in Montgomery County, Maryland, Jack's been a rodder forever. Back in the 1960s he raced Super Stock drag cars, and since the 1970s he's always had a hot rod in the garage. "But this '32 is the best of the bunch," he says. Others agree. Since its completion Jack's been fending off offers to buy it, all unsolicited too, because he's never advertised the coupe for sale, never so much as mentioned to anyone that he might be open to the right offer. Still, some of those offers are tempting. But Jack, who's getting ready to retire, is realistic. "Honestly," he says, "I don't think I'd be able to replace this car with something as nice, not for what I'd be able to sell it for. I've never been torn up over selling a car, but I am now. I really like this '32."

Even so, would he do anything differently if he had it to do over again? "Of course!" comes the quick answer. "This is hot rodding we're talking about." Specifically, he says he'd like to have a quick-change rear-end, "and maybe channel the body a little over the frame, just an inch or so and only at the front. I think that'd help the 'wedge' look a lot." And while already chopped 2 inches, he'd like to see another inch out of that roof. And how about all that extra lowering work? "Yeah, I'd do that differently, too." Given the option, he'd reposition the front crossmember flush with the top of the frame rails, "and instead of that 5-inch-drop tube axle, run a 4-inch beam." But those are all just details really, the kind of things a guy thinks about as he looks at his finished car in the garage, or muses over as he's driving it down the road. Jack Troup knows full well that he already has one hell of a hot rod, just as it is.

The same can be said for Larry Rhodes and his '33. From its hand-scalloped inner fender panels (look how they mount to the frame) to its 1937 Ford taillights to its big ET III wheels, Larry's coupe is pure nasty, and a hot rod at its purest. Just like Jack's. Look over these two carefully. Hot rods don't come much simpler, and they don't come much better. And these days they don't all come from California, either. Not anymore, and in fact, they haven't for quite some time.



Troup has owned quite a few street rods since he gave up racing Super Stocks at the drags decades ago. His past early iron has ranged from a pair of Deuce highboy roadsters to blown smallblock-powered '46 Chevy panel truck, but none had the gut-level appeal of this '32 coupe. To get this low to the ground the front crossmember was flattened and the rear crossmember was raised. This necessitated raising the motor and transmission for ground clearance. Jack is a detail fanatic as is evidenced by all of the little touches like the way the exhaust tips are frenched into the gas tank. Rhodes Custom Auto gets credit for the fabrication, however.

1932 Ford Standard Coupe

Jack Troup
Mt. Airy, Maryland

Body

- 1932 five-window coupe, original steel
- Top chopped 2 inches
- Filled cowl vent
- Cowl bead and grille shell bead removed
- Filled grille shell
- Door handles removed
- Top insert filled
- Frenched license plate
- Three-piece hood
- Stainless steel hood hinges
- Original King Bee headlights
- 1939 Ford taillights
- Bitchin' Products firewall

Bodywork by Rhodes Custom Auto Works, Townsend, DE
"Rhodes Red" Sikkens paint by Rhodes Custom Auto Works, Townsend, DE

Interior

- Custom Cirello seats
- Black leather/gray fabric upholstery by Bell's Trim & Design, Gaithersburg, MD
- Black wool carpeting
- Leather headliner
- Filled dashboard
- Autometer instruments
- Four-spoke steering wheel, leather wrapped
- Hurst shifter
- Coddington pedals, black anodized
- Vintage Air heating/air conditioning
- Eclipse 12-disc CD system

Chassis

- Lobeck's 1932 Ford frame, boxed
- Raised rear crossmember
- Flat front crossmember
- Raised engine/transmission mounts



A 383-inch solid lifter cam and Brodix-head-equipped smallblock powers Jack Troup's '32 Ford Coupe.

Front Suspension

- Magnum 5-inch drop tube axle
- Magnum spindles
- Deuce Factory radius rods
- Durant "Super Low" spring
- Monroe shock absorbers
- T.C.I. anti-roll bar
- Mullins/Vega steering box, polished

Rear Suspension

- Ford 9-inch rear axle
- Strange Engineering polished aluminum center section
- 4.11:1 LSD gear set
- Ford axles
- Pete & Jake coil overs
- Deuce Factory stainless steel radius rods, panhard bar
- T.C.I. anti-roll bar

Front Brakes

- Wilwood disc
- Wilwood four-piston calipers, polished

Rear Brakes

- Wilwood disc
- Wilwood four-piston calipers, polished
- Corvette master cylinder

Front Wheels and Tires

- ET III, 14 x 4.5-inch
- Michelin, 155-14

Rear Wheels and Tires

- ET III, 16 x 10
- BFGoodrich Sport Truck T/A, 345/55R-16

Drivetrain

- 1994 Chevrolet smallblock
- 383 cubic-inch displacement
- Block polished and smoothed
- Lunati "Pro-Series" crankshaft
- Lunati pistons, 11.7:1 compression ratio
- Eagle 6-inch connecting rods
- Crower mechanical-lifter camshaft, .544-inch lift, 292 degrees duration
- Crower mechanical lifters
- Crower valve springs
- Crane roller rocker arms

- Brodix Track 1 aluminum cylinder heads, ported
- Brodix SP-1 intake manifold
- Holley/Carb Shop 4150 carburetor, 926 CFM
- MSD 6 AL ignition, Taylor wires
- Canton 8-quart oil pan, high-pressure pump
- S&S full-length headers, H.P.C. coated
- Flowmaster two-chamber mufflers

Engine assembly by Ron Rhodes, Townsend, DE

Transmission

- Turbo 400, polished case
- Full competition rebuild
- 3,500 rpm Fairbanks converter
- Trans Tech flex plate

Incidentals

- Walker radiator
 - Ron Francis wiring kit
- Chroming/polishing by K.B. Custom Polishing and Dan's Chrome

1933 Ford Deluxe Coupe

Larry Rhodes
Bear, Delaware

Body

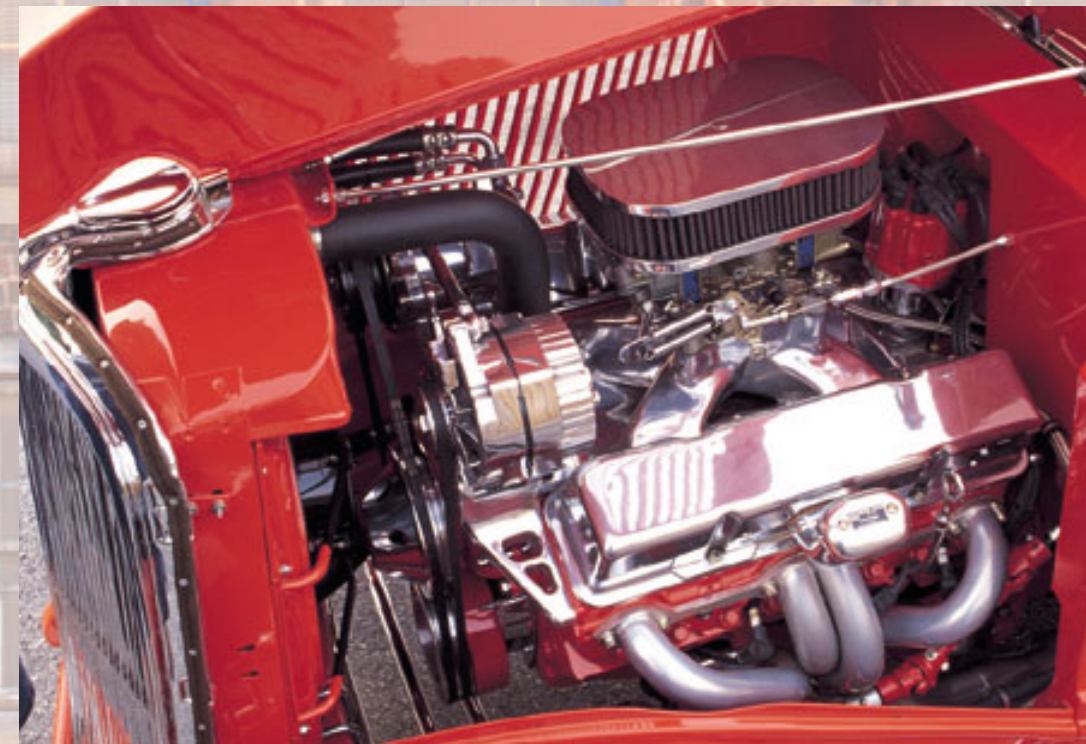
- 1933 three-window coupe, original steel
 - Top chopped 3 inches in front, 2 inches in rear
 - Scalloped inner-front fender panels
 - All door hinges retained
 - Custom firewall
 - Original grille, replated
 - Original hood w/Dzus fasteners
 - King Bee headlights
 - 1937 Ford taillights
- Bodywork by Rhodes Custom Auto Works, Townsend, DE
- Sikkens Bright Orange single-stage

Interior

- Original bench-type seat
- Black vinyl upholstery, by Bell's, Gaithersburg MD
- Black wool carpeting
- Dash modified to accept original Auburn panel
- Stewart-Warner instruments
- Bell-type steering wheel
- 1949 Ford dash knobs
- Long shifter
- Modified 1939 Ford pedals
- Vintage Air heating/air conditioning
- Eclipse remote 12-CD stereo

Chassis

- Original 1933 frame, boxed
- Front crossmember raised/moved forward
- Model A Ford rear crossmember
- Front frame horns modified
- Rear frame horns removed



Larry Rhodes son Ron built both of the engines in the coupes. Larry's uses a 406-incher.

Front Suspension

- Magnum 4-inch dropped axle
- Original Ford spindles
- Magnum hairpin radius rods
- Monoleaf spring
- Pete & Jake shock absorbers
- Magnum panhard bar
- Flaming River steering box

Rear Suspension

- Halibrand Champ quick-change rear axle
- 1940 Ford axle tubes
- Summers Brothers axles
- Pete & Jake shock absorbers
- Model A Ford spring
- Pete & Jake ladder bars
- Pete & Jake panhard bar

Front Brakes

- Wilwood disc and calipers

Rear Brakes

- Ford drum

Front Wheels and Tires

- Halibrand spindle-mount, 15 x 3.5-inch
- Kleiber, 145-15

Rear Wheels and Tires

- ET III, 16 x 10-inch
- BFGoodrich Sport Truck T/A, 345/55R-16

Drivetrain

- Chevrolet smallblock
- 406-cubic-inch displacement
- 11.5:1 forged pistons
- Crower mechanical-lifter camshaft, .543-inch lift
- Comp Cams roller rocker arms
- Dart Sportsman cylinder heads, ported and polished
- Weiand intake manifold, port matched
- Holley/Carb Shop 4150 carburetor, 932 CFM
- MSD 6 AL ignition

- Canton deep sump oil pan
 - S&S headers
 - Flowmaster two-chamber mufflers
- Engine assembly by Ron Rhodes

Transmission

- Richmond 5-speed manual
- Hayes clutch and flywheel
- Lakewood bell housing/scattershield

Incidentals

- Walker radiator
 - Ron Francis wiring kit
- Chroming/polishing by Dan's Polishing and KB Custom Plating