



From the June, 2010 issue of Custom Classic Trucks

1965 Ford F100 - One of The Family

Rob McKeown's '65 Ford F-100

By Tim Bernsau



We'll indulge in a gourmet meal once in a while, but, like a lot of you, we're more of the meat-and-potatoes-type. You could say the same thing about our taste in hot rod and custom shows. The Grand National Roadster Show is an annual treat, but after a couple of hours of taking in the elite level show vehicles propped up on stanchions behind ropes or rails, we're ready for some real-world, street-driven [trucks](#) we can identify without reading a display sign. Lucky for us, that's part of the event too.

One of the trucks we included in last month's GNRS coverage was this '65 Ford F-100, parked on the pavement in the outdoor part of the show. That's where we met owner Rob McKeown. And as soon as Rob lifted the hood to show us the supercharged Ford SVT Lightning SOHC engine underneath, that's when we started talking about shooting some feature photos.



Rob and the '65 have been together for almost 40 years—since May 10, 1971, to be precise. He found it advertised in the local paper in those pre-eBay days, but by the time he got over to look at it, it had already been sold for \$1,000. But not paid for; the buyer had neglected to leave a deposit. Although he was still a high school kid at the time, Rob knew enough to come with cash, offered \$1,050, and drove the [truck](#) home.

The transformation into the truck you see here didn't start for several decades. In the meantime came a wife and kids, but the '65 was always part of the family. "My wife, Lisa, drove it for about two years. Our son Kelly learned how to drive in it and he drove it for a couple of years too," Rob told us. "When our daughter Kimberly turned 16, it was her turn to drive Dad's daily driver, but she didn't like the way it steered. I had installed disc brakes and [power steering](#) off of a '77 F-150, which made the steering a little sensitive. I really wanted her to feel comfortable driving it, so I convinced my wife that we should spend a little time and money to keep the '65 alive."

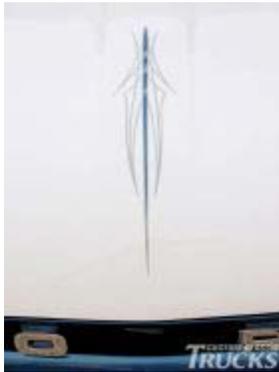
Rob, a Snap-On Tools salesman by trade, started looking for a hot rod shop "to help with some of the big stuff," and connected with Todd Walton Fabrication in Upland, California. The original plan, Rob says, was to "get closer to mother earth, keep the 302, keep the original factory color of Marlin Blue, and be on the road in three months!"



We all know how original plans go, and Rob started rethinking his when one of his customers offered the 5.4L Ford SVT Lightning engine for sale. The engine, built by Jim Grubbs Motorsports in Valencia, California, was kept mostly stock, and inhales through an Eaton supercharger. Exhaling is accomplished by a set of custom headers and exhaust built by Steve Watt and Maxell Industries in Ventura, feeding Spin Tech mufflers. A custom Ron Davis aluminum radiator with Walton Fabrication stainless lines keeps the engine cool, helped by a Magnuson heat exchanger for the blower. An '02 Ford 4R100 transmission backs up the engine, with 3.73:1 gears spinning in the super heavy-duty Currie 9-inch rearend.

Underneath, the frame was boxed front and rear and C-notched in back before getting powdercoated. An IFS frontend, including the spindles and antisway bar, came from TCI. Walton Fabrication built the four-link rear suspension with a Panhard bar. Springs are Bilstein coilovers. The brakes are Wilwood discs—13-inch rotors and six-piston Superlite calipers in front and four-pistons in the rear. The 19-gallon stainless fuel tank is from Rick's Hot Rods. John Meadows of Deuces Wild Hot Rod Shop in Fillmore, California, filled and detailed 192 holes in the rails.

Rolling stock is a combination of Toyo Proxes radials, measuring P295/45R18 and P225/55R17, rolling on 18x10 and 17x7.5 Ice wheels from Budnik's X Series. Rob had the rims clearcoated. "I'm not big on polishing," he admitted.



The interior was upgraded and contemporized, but kept clean. The '92 Ford F-150 seats were shortened 11/2 inches; Jesse's Upholstery in Saticoy, California, covered them in two-tone gray leather and suede. The carpet is square weave wool and the headliner is suede. [Auto Meter](#) gauges fill the perforated aluminum dashpanel. The Budnik Stiletto wheel is mounted on an ididit tilt column. Controls for the Vintage Air system are hidden underneath the dash. Ellery Engel Restorations in Piru, California, filled the glovebox, ashtray, and radio, and speaker.



Ellery Engel did a lot of sheetmetal work on the exterior as well, soda-blasting the cab and bed and replacing the rusted cab floors. Emblems were removed, and the cowl vent and stake pockets and seams were filled. Both bumpers were narrowed and pulled in closer to the body. All moldings and the '66 grille were refinished by DMP Enterprises in Chatsworth. The steel bed floor was replaced by a custom oak floor with polished stainless strips, supported by a structure fabricated at Walton Fabrication, and a '67 tailgate was added. The original Marlin Blue was replaced with a silver, white, and blue combination shot by Saticoy Auto Body & Paint in Saticoy, California, using DuPont Chroma base and clear. Mike Venditto from Chatsworth performed the pinstriping.

The 3-month freshen-up ended up stretching into a 31/2-year project, but the result is an updated classic that's winning awards all over the place without losing its identity as the kind of real-world, street-driven [truck](#) we like. The only downside to the whole thing is that Rob says his wife and daughter don't want to drive the truck now, "for fear of a rock chip or a door ding!"





Rob's F-100 before the transformation.



Rob did the wiring himself. This panel behind the seat contains the Ron Francis Express kit, along with the Telorvek/Detail Zone engine and transmission harness and ECM. Ron figures he's got approximately 100 hours in the wiring.



Illustrator Mike Miernik from Miernik Design helped Rob envision the new look for his old 1/2-ton. Mike's concept rendering used Honda Atomic Blue Effect, Taffeta White, and Alabaster Silver.