

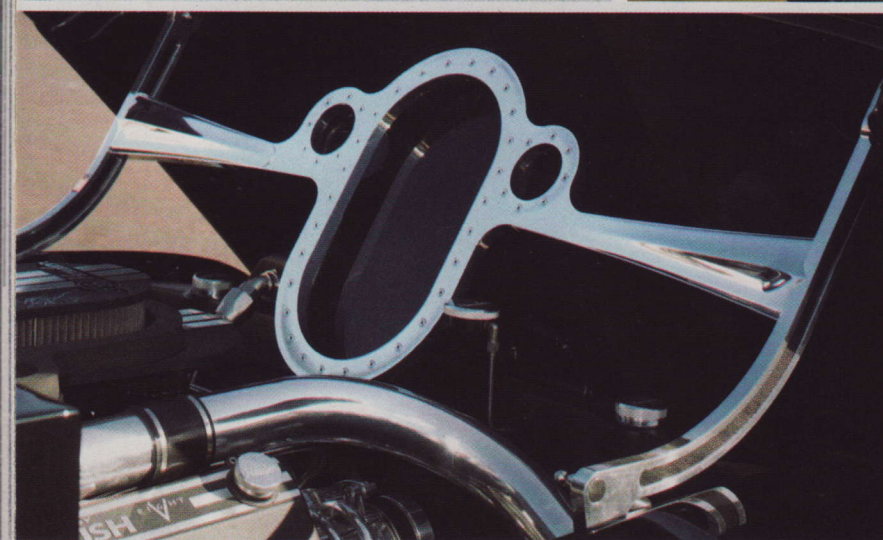
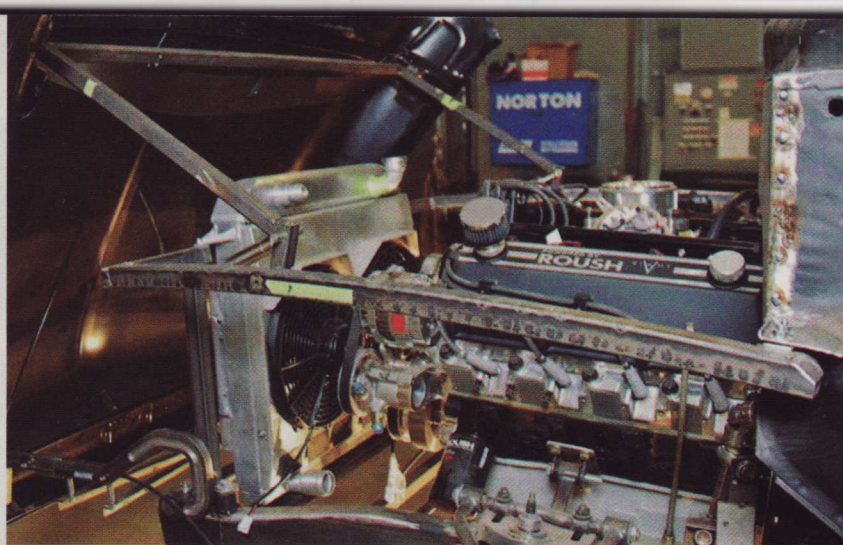
56 Hauler

Ron Caicco's 1956 F100 may look like a mild resto-mod build but the closer you look, the more you realize there is nothing mild about this Boothill Automotive-built Ford pickup

Photos by Rick Kowalczykowski/Story by Terry Denomme







Hauler's hood

The lead builder at Boothill Automotive Resurrection (Erin, ON) on the '56 Hauler project was Greg Vanleeuwen. (He's since opened his own shop Driven Performance). When Caicco came to Vanleeuwen with a vision for a hood that would not only have front hinges but incorporate the grille into the opening mechanism he spent six months and developed four prototypes before it worked. As you can see from the surrounding photos it is a mechanical piece of art and one of the most unique aspects of the '56 Hauler. Caicco admits it was a ton of time and money to develop but "I didn't care to tell the truth," he says. The hood was off and on probably a 100 times and in the end there is about 300 pounds forward including the billet, hood and headlights. Aaron Polastky is responsible for all the billet work under the hood.

Great builds often have humble beginnings and very long evolutions. Ron Caicco's '56 Hauler Ford F100 is the genesis of a seed that was planted five decades ago when he was working in the bodyshop at Evans Lincoln Mercury in Etobicoke, ON.

"I was 16 and knew the daughter of the owner and through her I got a job in the bodyshop," says Caicco. "The bodyshop foreman had a stock 1956 Ford F100 and one of the bodyman, Terry Hawirko, had a chopped '56 Ford pickup with a 430-ci Lincoln motor. One day I asked if Terry would take me for a ride....we went down Kipling Avenue pretty well sideways and I was hooked."

Years went by and life and business always seemed to get in the way of pursuing a 1956 Ford pickup build but about six years ago Caicco decided it was time to do it. It started off as a frustrating process. "Everything I looked at was good from afar but far from good," says Caicco. He didn't want to buy a finished project that he knew he would just dismantle anyways or even a partial project that would need a lot of changes before he could begin his vision.

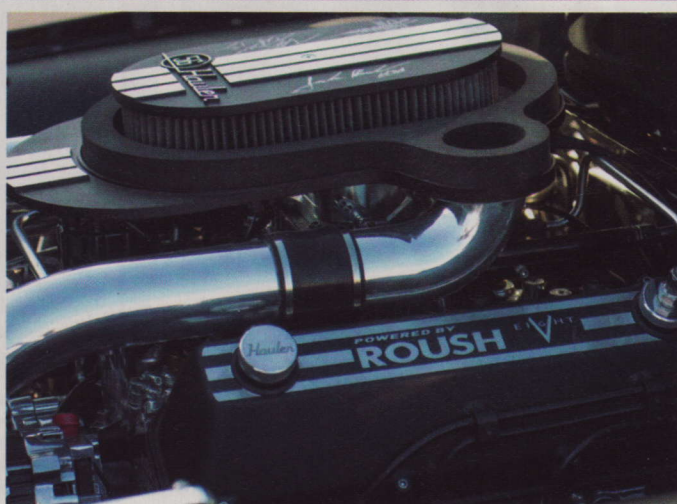
The search for raw material ended in 2009 at Bob's F100s in Riverside, CA. Caicco and a buddy drove to California with high hopes. "When we got there it was like going back in time," said Caicco. "There was about a 12 or 14-foot high fence surrounding the entire property and Bob had been collecting for 50s years. There were F100 engines, doors, fenders, springs...it was a Ford pickup paradise. I was walking around and spotted this lonely, lonely '56 cab and it was the only one left with a big back win-

dow." (The big back window was an option in 1956 and not too many people chose to pay the extra \$16 to upgrade...so they are rare and prized among F100 enthusiasts). "My friend Skip looked at me and asked if I was nuts," says Caicco. "I just told him he didn't see what I did." Once the cab was procured, four fenders, a hood, a box and a chassis were also acquired to keep the cab company on its journey back to Ontario.

In 2009 Caicco took the pickup to Boothill Automotive Resurrection in Erin, ON with the idea he was going to build a very nice driver that could also win some shows. "I talked to Greg Vanleeuwen about maybe chasing the Mega Speed (Ontario's biggest indoor car show) Grand Champion trophy so we initially set our sites for that. Half way through the build Greg and I talked and decided we might as well shoot for contending for The Ridler Award at Detroit Autorama. This started a three-year odyssey that saw Caicco spending two to three days of every week overseeing the project at Boothill and the rest of his time constantly dreaming about what was being done to the F100 and what could be done.

"I only had two rules: Be true to the pickup's original lines and the second rule was there were no other rules."

The 1953-56 Ford F100 has always been a hot rod favourite but its design could be improved on. The cab was bulbous and had some clunky angles at the doors and the pickup box was designed as a tool....not a part of the vehicle's flowing lines. Caicco and the Boothill crew decided to do something about it. Not only did they narrow the rear of the cab to tone down the bulbous proportions



but they chopped the top 1.75", sectioned it an equal amount, custom built an integral windshield visor, removed the drip rails and flush fit and recontoured both the front and rear window glass openings. The purpose was to create smooth, flowing lines from every angle and to further the concept the custom aluminum running boards were contoured to the chassis and recessed into the fenders.

As you would expect with a build of this quality, both Caicco and Vanleeuwen were obsessed with the details. Take for instance the custom rear valance. "If you look at the rear valance where the exhaust comes out....that's 11 pieces of metal and it's beautiful. It's like artwork and brings so much class to that farm truck," says Caicco. "I wouldn't have been happy with a store-bought roll pan but coming up with a piece I was happy with was a lot of hit and miss. We were cutting up pieces of cardboard and putting them in place and seeing if we liked it....it was hours to get it right." The same attention to detail in-

cluded the fasteners that hold the fenders from inside the box. "If you look at the stock trucks and many other built pickups...the metal behind the fasteners is often dimpled from tightening....there are no dimples in my truck."

The original pickup's box was discarded in favour of a custom unit built by Pro's Pick out of Arthur, ON. This could have been a fairly straightforward piece, but of course it isn't thanks mostly to the difficulty involved in stamping the words Hauler into the tailgate. "It took three tailgates to get it right. We had to keep changing metals until we found one that behaved itself in the press," says Caicco. Pro's Pick made the die for the press.

Every great build has to have a signature element entirely unique to it and for the '56 Hauler that's the tilt front hood setup. To incorporate the hood with the grille and then to incorporate the hinge mechanisms with the BBF Roush Performance motor's airbox cover was a stroke of mechanical genius that certainly turns heads at car shows. (See the box previous page for more on it.)



After performing thousands of hours of meticulous custom metal work on the Hauler of course the exterior colour had to be black — but not just any black. “I originally thought I was going to paint it red,” says Caicco. “I wanted bling but during the build we went away from that. With all the subtle body mods, Greg convinced me to look at blacks.” Six pieces of metal were painted with six different colours of black and Vanleeuwen recommended Caicco look at all six without flipping over the panels to see what colour they were. “I looked at all of them in the sunlight, under fluorescent lights and picked Ford Raven Black because I thought it was the deepest black. The others had purples and you could see other colours. I knew then it wasn’t going to be easy because there is nowhere to hide (bad) bodywork with black.”

Turns out it was a perfect pick and when the car debuted at the 2013 Detroit Autorama it won Best in Class Radical Pickup, Best Pickup and Best Display but didn’t garner a Great 8 nod to put it in Ridler contention. It followed up a couple weeks later by winning the Mega Speed Grand Champion trophy at the Toronto Convention Centre. The rest of the summer of 2013 was spent taking the Hauler to shows throughout the US. At the F100 Supernautals (Pigeon Forge, TN) the Hauler won 2013 Truck of the Year, Editor’s Choice, Best in Class and Outstanding Pickup Bed. At the Goodguys Nationals (Columbus, OH)

Hauler picked up some more impressive hardware when it scored a coveted Builder’s Choice honour (from more than 7,000 entries) as well as the *Custom Classic Truck* Editor’s Pick. The final significant honour Caicco’s ’56 Ford picked up came at the NSRA Nationals in Louisville, KY. Among the 11,000+ registered cars, Hauler was chosen as one of the Top 40 vehicles in the show.

But it wasn’t all just parking at shows. At the Goodguys All American Nationals in Indianapolis, IN Caicco was able to take the Hauler out on the Indianapolis Motor Speedway. He quickly discovered that the Roush Performance 588-ci BBF under the hood is not a poser. “When I hit 5th gear...it was liking hitting 2nd gear...the torque was unfreakingbelievable,” says Caicco. “I have a Viper and a bunch of other fast cars but Hauler really surprised me.” Caicco is proud to note that his Roush Performance 588-ci BBF was the first one with Fast EFI which came about thanks to a business partner’s ties with the famed Ford-engine builder.

Caicco says he’s proud of the trophy haul but most proud of the build process itself. “I’m proud I was able to take it from humble beginnings to where it ended up. It really pulled a lot out of me and it tested everybody’s talents over and over. It drew out everything they had to put that truck together and it was just nice to see the final product get so much validation.” **MORE ON PG 92**

PARTS LIST

Owner: Ron Caicco, Mississauga, ON
Year/Make/Model: 1956 Ford F100
Builders: Boothill Automotive Restorations

BODY & PAINT

Fold down hood and grille assembly. Fully welded, seamless hood. Custom removable backer for grille. Handspun spherical covers on back side of headlights molded into back of grille. 7" glass H4 headlamps with LED internal signals and park lamps. Front signal bases removed from lower portion of grille. Custom expanding front hood arms with stainless slide covers and internally routed cable system. Billet, forced air, rear arms and crossbar assembly with carbon fibre inserts. Carbon fibre air cleaner lid in billet crossbar assembly. Chopped roof (1.5"). Drip rail delete above doors. Smoothed front air inlet in front of windshield and passengers air inlet in front of door. Narrowed rear of cab left to right approx 1.5". Seamless fully welded cab. Transitional A pillar extensions for windshield. Custom front and back glass frame area. Custom cut and polished front and back glass. "Smoothed" rear wall of cab. Chopped doors. Vent window delete, custom one piece side glass and re-angled window tracks. Rearranged door striker and bear claws from door to cab to provide for new angle of glass vane inside door handles in centre console. Shaved door handles. Seamless full welded fenders. "Smoothed" under hood, removal of factory bracing while incorporating hood arms for strength. Recessed front fenders to running boards. 2 1/4" widened all steel rear fenders. Lengthened rear fenders at front by 1 1/2". Custom rear fender area to roll pan. Recessed rear fenders to running boards. All aluminum running boards contoured to chassis and recessed to fenders. Completely custom made box raised 1 1/2" from factory height. 1/2" thick carbon fibre/honeycomb bed boards. Custom extruded aluminum board rails. Contoured front of box to cab, vertically and horizontally. Custom contoured side stake pockets with outside door buttons in front and tail lights in rear. Custom made teardrop taillamps with 28 LED's stainless steel housing and hand shaped lenses. Custom stamped "Hauler" tailgate with custom hidden hinges and stainless limit straps. Hand formed rear valance with custom made exhaust tips. Custom rear bumper formed from a 1972 Mustang. Custom split chromed front bumpers (started with '69 Camaro bumpers) with hidden air gap to body. "Smoothy" front valance with licence plate recess. Flush mount front and rear glass. Custom firewall with recess to match engine assembly (valve cover angles). Custom bear claw assemblies and surrounds protrude firewall to draw down rear hood arms as hood recesses into fender openings. Custom floor pans and trans tunnel with stamping to match chassis design. Custom inner fenders with pockets for aluminum crossbar and shock assemblies. One piece fender to inner fender bolt plate for countersunk fasteners. Custom inner wheel well shields in front wheel openings with battery shut off and charge ports. Rear wheel opening shields to match chassis contour. Custom square tubing front rad and fender skeleton cradle. Custom front rad enclosures including aluminum radiator and fan shroud assemblies. Billet aluminum mirrors. Flush mount fuel cap in factory location, opposite side. Custom fuel neck system through cab to simulate behind seat tank in factory application. Ford Raven Black (circa 1956). Glasurit 90 line base coat. Glasurit 923-450 clear coat. Glasurit 285-60 high build primer.

CHASSIS & SUSPENSION

Custom frame rails with 2" kick for rear suspension drop. Mustang II front suspension. Polished stainless steel front and rear control arms. Polished stainless steel panhard rod. Parallel 4 link rear suspension. Ride Tech air ride suspension with internal level sensors. Baer 6 piston brakes with 13" cross drilled rotors. Currie polished 9" aluminum differential housing with

Strange polished aluminum centre section. Off-set pinion location for visually centred differential housing. Quick ratio power steering rack. Mandrel bent chromoly tubular X-member. Stamped flush-mounted end caps for rear frame rail. Custom front battery rack assembly for inside front nose. Incorporated synchronizing shaft assembly for front hood arms. Custom aluminum twin fuel cells, 17 gallons total. Custom stainless steel fuel pump housing insert. All custom bent seamless polished stainless steel fuel, brake and air lines and clamps top mounted on frame rails for reduced visibility. Tubular removable fishmouth cut transmission cross member. Custom emergency brake cables and Delrin roller assembly. 3" mandrel bent brushed stainless steel exhaust system with stainless V-band clamps. Ceramic coated Flowmaster mufflers. Hand-formed aluminum heat shield on mufflers and rear tail pipes. Hand formed stainless steel exhaust tips to match rear balance openings. Custom designed and fabricated cab mount with integrated brake and clutch pedal assembly. Smoothed and ceramic coated Corvette clutch slave cylinder with custom remote reservoir port. Ceramic coated brake booster with aluminum SSBC master cylinder. Delrin rad cradle, cab and box mounts. Sidehung VI-Air air compressors with KN filter air inlet assemblies which draw air through front frame horns of chassis. Polished aluminum twin air storage tanks for air ride, 8 gallons total. Boyd Coddington ULTIMATE 5 wheels 20" all around. Custom designed and machined wheel centres with self leveling "56" logo made to fit in 3/4" depth of rim to not contact rotor bearing caps. Polished stainless steel lift plates under chassis for hoist placement. Carbon fiber inserts in rear diff and rear brake backing plates. Upper control arm covers.

ENGINE & TRANSMISSION

Rough Performance 588-ci FAST XFI fuel injected BBF (540hp/675ft/lb torque). Fully deburred and detailed T56 Magnum, Tranzilla, carbon fibre synchro transmission. Recessed coolant overflow, power steering, and brake/clutch combo aluminum reservoirs. Custom machined, fully clocked, "Hauler" reservoir lids, radiator cap and valve cover fill ports. Custom integrated distributor cover machined to match Roush detail. Billet aluminum air cleaner base to accept forced air aluminum crossbar. Underhung coil and map sensor. Custom rerouting of spark plug wires to rear of engine. Custom PCV valve and all stainless PCV tubes. Custom bent fuel lines from tank to engine fuel rails. Custom bent stainless, nickel coated A/C and heater lines from engine to firewall. Custom mandrel bent large radius, forced air tube from air cleaner base to inner fenders. Custom headers, ceramic coated. Spun aluminum cooling fan motor covers with air movement vents. MSD ignition.

INTERIOR

Custom kick panels with subs, mids and tweets in carbon fibre/fiberglass housing. Custom back wall. Left and right speaker housing contoured to match seat rolls. Carbon fibre, leather wrapped centre section contoured to match seats and allow for Amplifier and fuel filler neck. Hand formed and wrapped speaker grille covers. Custom seat bases and lower surrounds. Leather wrapped seats with vintage patterning. Custom carpet and "56 Hauler" floor mats. Custom designed and machined stainless steel carpet sill plates with carbon fiber inserts and badging. Custom centre console. Aluminum side panels. Fiberglass, flocked tray. Incorporated inner door handles, cable operating release mechanisms. Custom made shift boot, handle and billet "56" shift knob. Stainless steel dash insert panel fully wrapped with carbon fibre, 3/4" stretch to fit navigational system/stereo in dash. Billet aluminum knobs with black hard anodizing. Carbon fibre centre console handmade on stainless backer. Carbon fibre back wall

accent panel contoured to match seat side profile. Custom leather door panels. Handmade stainless steel carbon fibre wrapped dash extensions on doors. Pulse wipers. Power windows. Vintage Air, AC/heat system. Ride Tech E3 air ride control. Completely custom wire harness with fuse and relay centres under dash and under centre console buckets for ease of service. Custom finished door accent, spear end on steel portion of door below door glass. Carbon fibre inserts on lower portion of doors. Metal extensions formed into upper dash and around windshield for flush mount urethane in windshield, this includes customized defrost vent ports. Flaming River steering column with seamless mount system and relocated wire exit points. Billet steering wheel with custom "56" centre. Glove box delete in dash for smoother styling and additional space for air conditioning. Custom gauges with added tachometer, all electronic instrumentation, halo hi-beam and over-rev indicators LED back lighting, completely designed with factory fonts and sizing, increased to 120 mph speed indication. Triple chrome plated factory gauge surround. Carbon Fibre "Hauler" logo in gauge face. GPS input speed sensor for speedometer. Custom throttle pedal assembly. Custom pedal surround carpet hold down. Matching pistol grip emergency brake and hood release actuator handles mounted under dash. Custom bear claw and front hood arm cable actuation system under dash. One piece custom fiberglass headliner, snap fit, no fastener system, trims rear glass for flush mount glass. Custom visors with air ride controller and impression in headliner. Fully sound protected interior with both Wirez sound deadener and 1/2" jute from floor to ceiling. Custom 3-point seat belts. Custom leather wrapped steel seatbelt retractor covers. Completely internally wired box for rear section of truck GPS skydrive speedometer. Electric door handles in box stake pockets. Keyless entry with dome lamp supervision. HID headlamps.

SOUND SYSTEM

Complete Kenwood Excelon system. Head unit, KDC-DNX9960. iPod connectivity, KCA-iP301v. Amp, Kenwood XR-5S 5 channel digital power amp. Fronts KFC-X1730P. Rears KFC-X1730Pv. Subs (4X) KFC-XW800F. CMOS 200 rear view camera.



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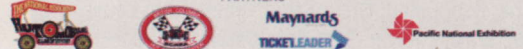
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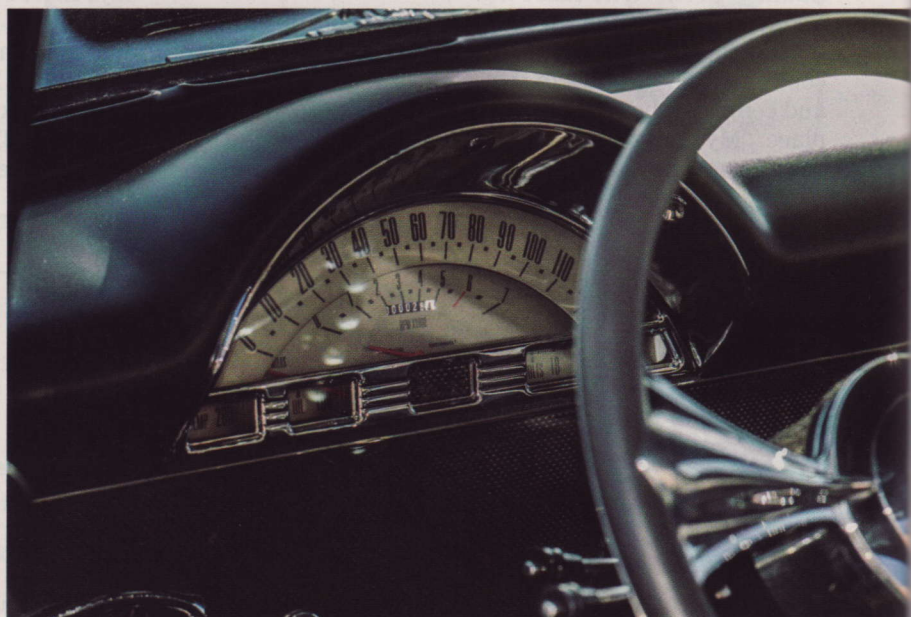
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Despite all the awards Caicco says he isn't likely to undertake such an intense project again.

"It stole my heart and my soul...that's what that truck did," says Caicco. "It really pulled a lot out of me and it was a challenge and a lot of work to not just take it to all the shows but to set it up and get it ready for the judges. I didn't realize how much work it was."

With its life in show business settling down, Caicco plans to drive Hauler to the Dairy Queen and local cruise nights. He already knows it's a blast to drive and always looks forward to getting behind the wheel but he also often thinks of the Hauler's legacy. "I would like to see it go to the Henry Ford Museum," he says. Only time will tell, but thanks to Vanleeuwen and the Boothill crew of craftsman it's a vehicle that won't ever be forgotten.

When Caicco was 16 years old a ride in a custom '56 Ford pickup built by Ontario custom car icon Terry Hawirko lit a flame that burns bright to this day. It's very likely Caicco's '56 Hauler has inspired someone to search for the right project and put their twist on a 1956 Ford. That's a pretty good legacy right there.