

Never too young

Then-11-year-old Venicio Caballero of Surprise knew he wanted this 1967 Chevrolet C-10 pickup—enough that he proceeded to earn the money to buy it, then, with help from Sun Devil Auto and lots of quality time with his dad, fully restored the truck to prime working condition.

Love for American classic cars and trucks has long been a passion for Venicio, as his dad well knows. He went to work mowing lawns and performing other tasks, and once he felt he had enough money saved up, he asked his dad Hugo, a locally stationed US Air Force Airman, if he could locate and purchase a classic truck.

After an extensive online search, Venicio and his dad eventually set their sights on a 1967 Chev-

rolet C10 short bed fleetside pickup in Clearlake Oaks, California (in Lake County, north of Napa and Sonoma). The truck had seen better days, if not decades, and was in dire need of a mechanical restoration.

Arriving here in June, the long-neglected vehicle was in immediate need of genuine loving attention under the hood, throughout the interior and bumper-to-bumper.

A truck owner himself, Hugo turned to Sun Devil Auto, who not only helped him source the year- and model-specific suspension and engine cooling parts, but took it upon themselves to perform those installations and servicing at no cost.

"We quickly noticed the passion that Venicio

had and understood how important this father-son project was going to be, so helping them in every possible way was an easy decision for us," said Mike Arana, who manages the new Sun Devil Auto location at 16820 North Civic Center Drive in Surprise. "It's essential that we support young enthusiasts who share our passion for restoring vehicles to their original beauty."

The engine is a Chevy 327-cu.in V8 with four-barrel carburetor. Venicio painted the engine bay and the manifolds, which really makes it pop, but it's the original, as is the transmission. Engine work has been limited to the HEI distributor, spark plugs and wires, cleaning the carb, and setting the timing. The engine runs well but will be rebuilt—Venicio is saving up money at the moment. It has leaks mainly from the crank and rear main seals. The first concern was taking care of all safety and comfort items, like the brakes and such.

Operations performed by Sun Devil Auto were not just drop-off-and-pick-up repairs—the folks at Sun Devil fully involved Venicio in those steps, too.

Work done so far includes:

- Converted front drum to disc brakes with 2.5-inch drop spindles
- Replaced rear drums
- Replaced front brake lines
- Installed a master brake cylinder with a brake booster
- Replaced the upper and lower ball joints
- New tie rods and sleeves
- New front shocks and springs
- New 4 inch rear drop springs and shocks (by Sun Devil Auto)
- New trac bar (by Sun Devil Auto)
- Alignment accomplished (by Sun Devil Auto)
- Installed three-point seatbelts
- New bench seat
- New door and window weather stripping
- New carpet
- New dash pad and retro style Bluetooth radio
- New front windshield and rear window gaskets
- New front wheels and tires 15X8 255/60/15
- New rear wheels and tires 15X10 275/60/15
- New hood bump stops all around
- New sun visors
- New HEI distributor
- Torched and sealed the wood for the bed.

Remaining projects include:

- Install the new wood bed
- Earn money and install power steering
- Earn money and rebuild engine with a mid-cam, headers, and all-around new seals and gaskets.

The original paint is pure white, which is still visible. Somewhere along the way it was painted blue as it became a work truck.

The patina you see here is the original as they received it. People love the finish, and nine out of ten have stated that they should not paint it. The patina is symbolic of the truck's name, Relic. So

far, they have only used mineral spirits and linseed oil to protect the metal, till Sun Devil Auto performs some body work and clearcoats the patina early this year. The overall intent is to have a rat rod appearance, rough and tough, and that is able to be driven at any given time.

Car shows have slowed down a bit this season. Venicio had his truck on proud display at the Oasis Classic Car Show in Westgate in late October, and at the massive 12-acre Dino's Git Down in November. He has support at the shows not only from his proud parents, but from friends at veteran-owned A&R Designs LLC of Surprise, who printed custom T-shirts and created show panels telling the story behind this special father-son restoration. Lately, they've been hitting a show at the Sam's Club parking lot off the Loop 303 freeway and Bell Road, most every Friday from 4pm until about 7pm, and they're keeping their eye out for more shows.

"Relic is part of our family and part of American history and is meant to be driven regularly. America!" says Venicio, who doesn't have his driver's license yet. "Dad is driving it for now. But I have driven it once in a field. Hopefully in the next few years, Dad can get a 1963 Chevy C10, so we can cruise together."

"Sun Devil Auto is dedicating a ton of hours and money as they conduct all body work and clearcoat Relic," said Hugo, a California native whose military career has included stateside and overseas assignments. "In a time in our history where humans are distant and uncertain of the future, Sun Devil Auto is building stronger relationships within the community to facilitate the dream of a young boy while nurturing life skills at an early age. As a father, it made me so happy to see my boy so excited and engaged."

"Not only did the folks at Sun Devil Auto spend days with us to get the C10 in improved working order, they helped Venicio gain valuable knowledge and experience. Special thanks to our mechanic, Edgar Mendez, who took the time to explain everything he had repaired and installed. We are so grateful because they genuinely care about customers, which is not easy to find these days."

Venicio looks forward to driving Relic into the car shows himself, and to "just cruise with a ton of other classic trucks on the road."

"The best part has been the time my dad and I have spent learning about working on trucks," he says. As always, the machine is the medium, but the people are the magic. ■

Launched in Phoenix in 1978, Sun Devil Auto is an independent auto repair and maintenance company, with 14 locations in greater Phoenix, also now with multiple shops in and around Las Vegas and Austin. All Sun Devil Auto services are guaranteed in writing. For info, visit www.sundevilauto.com.



US Air Force Airman Hugo Caballero, Venicio Caballero, Edgar Mendez (mechanic), Mike Arana (store manager), Sun Devil Auto, 16820 N Civic Center Drive, Surprise AZ 85374

