

Short Notice

From Daily Driver to Show Car in 45 Days

By Bob Mehlhoff

PHOTOGRAPHY: JOHN FAULKNER

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Mike McGaughy's LT1-powered '57 Chevy drop-top



Mike McGaughy and his son Steve thrive on '55-'57 Chevys. So much so that they make their living developing and manufacturing street-rod products for these cars at their shop, McGaughy's Classic Chevys in Madera, California. It only seems reasonable, then, that when they were looking for their next family project, they would search out a shoebox. They found a '57 convertible owned by a lady in the San Francisco Bay area. The Bow-Tie convertible had spent the last 24 years as her daily driver and was a perfect candidate for the McGaughys' restification.

The family plan from the start was to incorporate the street-rod theme into this '57. As with any good plan, Mike and son Steve developed a timeline to undertake their project. Although others might have planned a renovation of this magnitude measured in years, the McGaughys' strategy called for completion in just 45 days. This commitment involved working long hours on their '57, before and after business hours.

Starting with the original convertible, their first task included stripping the car down to its frame and removing the tired 283. With such an ambitious timetable, many of the tasks had to be accomplished simultaneously. Painter Brian Dunn prepped and painted the car in a glistening PPC pearl

white coat. Local interior guru Jess Cortez covered the interior and trunk area in light cream leather with the carpeting in Mercedes velour, while the power convertible top was covered in Mercedes white canvas. To make cruising even more comfortable, the ragtop was outfitted with a custom air-conditioning unit, cruise-control, and tilt wheel.

After the frame was cleaned and powdercoated, the '57's chassis was completely renovated with dropped-suspension components, power steering, disc brakes, tubular A-arms, and one of McGaughy's 605 power-steering conversion boxes. Where the vintage 283 once resided, the McGaughys added a '96 Corvette LFI motor and accented it with polished and plated components. Since this is a cruiser, the '57 demanded an overdrive, so the McGaughys added a 4L60E to transfer the torque to a 9-inch with 3.50 Posi-traction. To hold the '57 to the ground, the McGaughys chose a set of Center Line wheels wrapped with Bridgestone tires.

Mike, his wife Susan, and son Steve enjoy cruising their pristine '57 ragtop throughout California's Central Valley. Many of their trips have been to car shows where the '57 has accumulated many First Place trophies. The McGaughys '57 convertible is not only a showplace for their products, but also of time management. **CHP**

