

# A Shopping Mall

Feature Story

Danny Gracia's '51 Chevy

✦ By Eric Geisert

**H**ave you ever been in a shopping mall and come across an old car used as an advertising prop in the window of the store—some old VW, a milk truck, or pickup? Ever wonder what it would take to get it out of the store and into your garage?

Danny Gracia, who lives in Chino, California, was able to do just that. One day he was talking old cars with a buddy of his who worked for Old Navy, the clothing department store. His friend mentioned the store had 15 or so trucks for sale that had been used as displays, but they were in Denver and was he interested? Danny was, and told his friend he'd buy

three of them, not knowing what he'd get. As it turned out, his newly acquired '51 Chevy 3100 was in pretty rough shape (the rusted-out display trucks used roofing tin for floors), and he needed the other two trucks just for parts and pieces to make one nice one, but a nice one is what he ended up with.

Throughout the 70-year-old's life, he's been into cars and, for almost the same amount of time, he has devoted himself to painting cars—both for fun and as a business. And though he owns a paint and body shop in Ontario, his regular day job is being the national tech director for the NHRA (attending 23 of their events around the country each year).

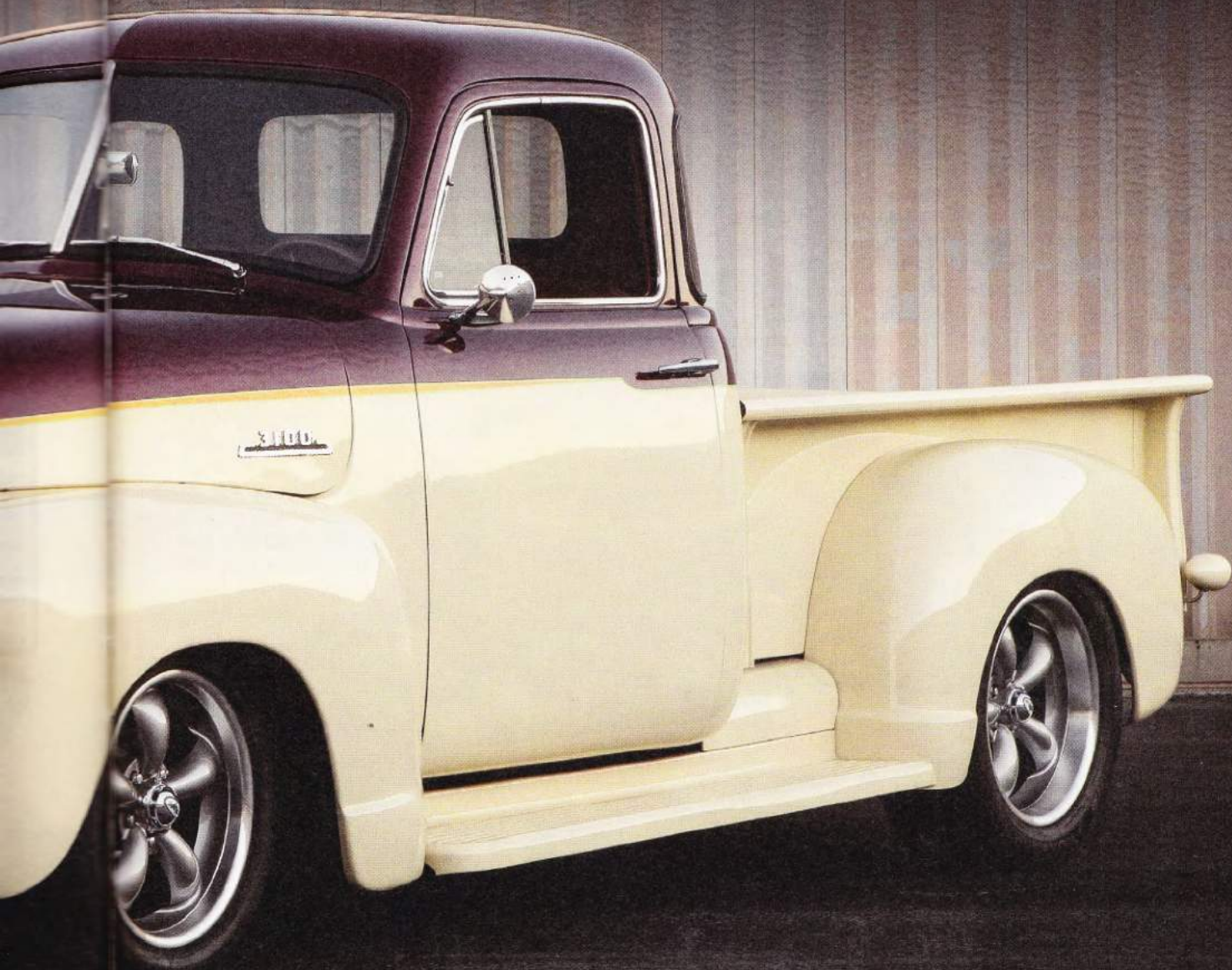
Danny owned a pickup 40 years ago and always wanted



# Mail Find

to do another one, but one of the advantages of building a 60-year-old truck nowadays is all the aftermarket parts and pieces available to build a stout driver. Danny started with a chassis from Total Cost Involved Engineering in Ontario, California, as a base for his project. It featured four-link suspension in the rear, a Ford 9-inch rearend (3.08:1), Mustang II IFS, front disc brakes from CPP (drum brakes out back), and a steering column from Southern Rods & Parts.

Getting it up on all fours with a set of 17x7 and 18x8 wheels from Coys, Danny wrapped the rollers with 255/50ZR17 and 255/50ZR18 rubber. An '84 Chevy 305, bored 0.030 over and fitted with CP pistons and a COMP



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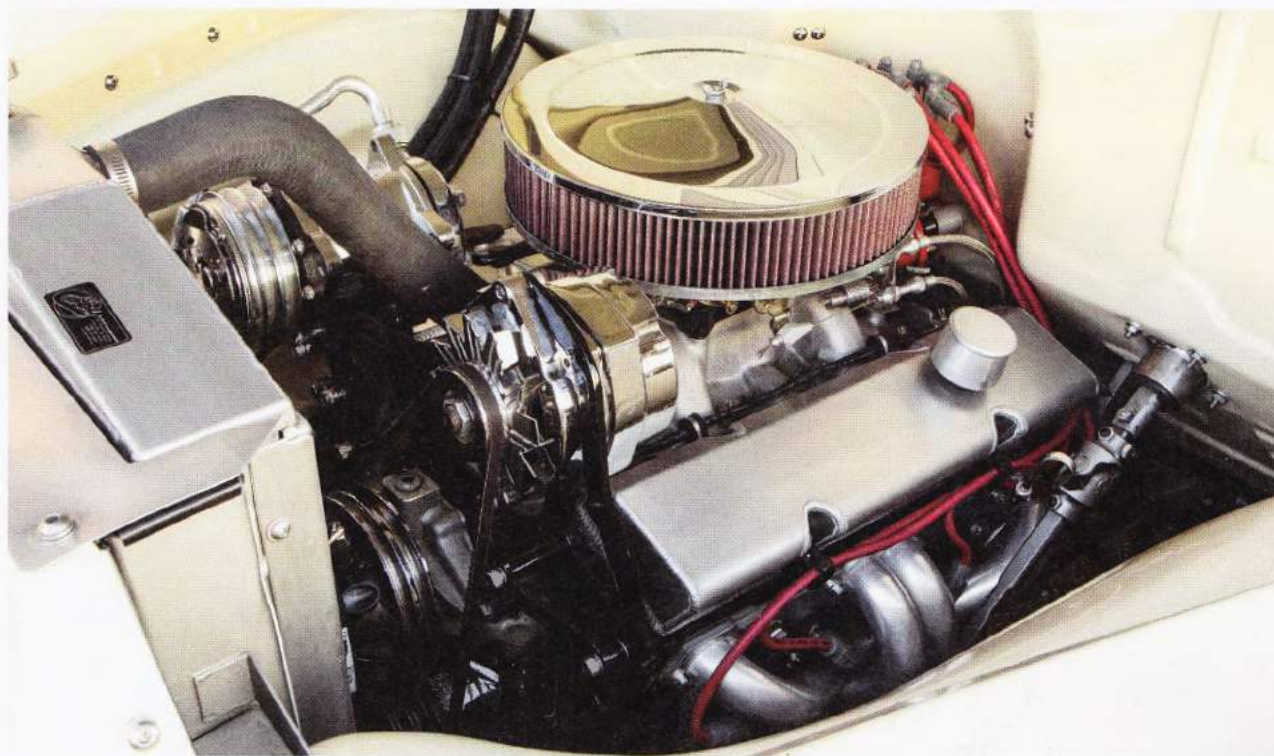


Cams camshaft, was topped with a set of stock heads (using COMP Cams springs, valves, and rockers) and dialed in with 8:1 compression.

A carb from Quick Fuel Technologies tops an Edelbrock RPM Performer manifold, and exhaust exits out a set of Hooker Block Hugger headers, a pair of Flowmaster mufflers, and out 3-inch stainless steel exhaust tubing. Ignition pieces, alternator, and wires came from MSD, and the radiator from Be Cool, but the fabricated brushed

aluminum valve covers are one-off by Dan Olson Racing in Fresno. Backing up the motor is a TH350 transmission, assembled by A-1 Transmission in Oregon, with gears selected by a Lokar shifter.

Owning a paint and body company comes in handy when wanting to choose colors, but Danny had been thinking about a black cherry and almond two-tone for his truck for some time, and mixed the PPG paint himself. Cane Duong (from Danny's Paint Shop) worked on making the





car straight before Danny laid down the paint and then followed it up with graphics separating the two dominant colors top and bottom with a fine line of lime as well as some gold color farther down the side of the truck.

The exterior was finished up by adding stock headlights and '37 Ford taillights, custom mirrors (with built-in turn blinkers), and a front bumper that was narrowed 8 inches to tighten up the nose area. Inside the cab the dash is stock, though it now holds Auto Meter gauges and a Sony-based stereo system, with a '78 Vega steering wheel to guide the owner down the road. Danny used an EZ Wiring kit to wire the truck, and the A/C system came from Southern Rods & Parts. Approaching the finish line with the build, Danny turned the truck over to Mark Lopez and Elegance Auto Interiors in Upland for its threads. Mark started with a '96 S-10 bench seat and covered it and everything else with dark buckskin leather, complemented by taupe square-weave carpet.

But even with his heavy work schedule, Danny has been able to get his truck out to some local cruises and shows and even picked up a few Best Truck awards along the way. And though nothing beats being able to drive your finished project down the road, just knowing it's in the garage and ready for its next road trip can also be pretty satisfying, too. 🚚

## 1951 CHEVY 3100

Danny & Helen Gracia  
CHINO, CA

### CHASSIS

- › **FRAME:** TOTAL COST INVOLVED ENGINEERING, ONTARIO, CA
- › **REAR END:** FORD 9-INCH 3.08:1
- › **AXLES:** STOCK
- › **FOUR-LINK:** TCI ENGINEERING
- › **SHOCKS:** TCI ENGINEERING
- › **FRONT BRAKES:** CPP DISC
- › **REAR BRAKES:** DRUM
- › **STEERING COLUMN:** SOUTHERN RODS & PARTS
- › **FUEL TANK:** MATERIAL, CAPACITY; ALUMINUM 18 GALLONS
- › **WHEELS**
- › **FRONT:** COYS 17X7
- › **REAR:** COYS 18X8
- › **FRONT TIRES:** 255/50ZR-17
- › **REAR TIRES:** 255/50ZR-18

### ENGINE

- › **DISPLACEMENT:** 305
- › **CRANKSHAFT:** STOCK
- › **RODS:** STOCK
- › **PISTONS:** CP
- › **BORED:** 0.030
- › **COMPRESSION RATIO:** 8.0:1
- › **CAMSHAFT:** COMP CAMS
- › **CYLINDER HEADS:** STOCK
- › **VALVE SPRINGS:** COMP CAMS
- › **ROCKERS:** COMP CAMS
- › **RADIATOR:** BE-COOL
- › **ALTERNATOR:** MSD
- › **VALVE COVERS:** DAN OLSON RACING
- › **INTAKE MANIFOLD:** EDELBROCK RPM PERFORMER
- › **CARBURETOR:** QUICK FUEL TECHNOLOGY
- › **AIR CLEANER:** K&N
- › **IGNITION:** MSD

- › **WIRES:** MSD
- › **HEADERS:** HOOKER BLOCK HUGGERS
- › **MUFFLERS:** FLOWMASTER
- › **EXHAUST SYSTEM:** 3-INCH SS

### DRIVETRAIN

- › **TRANSITIONS:** TH350
- › **TRANS ASSEMBLY BY:** A-1 TRANSMISSIONS
- › **TORQUE CONVERTER:** A-1
- › **SHIFTER:** LOKAR

### BODY

- › **BODYWORK:** CANE DUONG, DANNY'S PAINT SHOP
- › **PAINT:** PPG BLACK CHERRY AND ALMOND
- › **PAINTER:** BY OWNER AT DANNY'S PAINT SHOP
- › **GRAPHICS:** DANNY GRACIA AT DANNY'S PAINT SHOP
- › **HEADLIGHTS:** STOCK
- › **TAILLIGHTS:** '37 FORD
- › **OUTSIDE MIRRORS:** CUSTOM BY DANNY'S PAINT SHOP
- › **FRONT BUMPER:** NARROWED 8 INCHES

### INTERIOR

- › **DASH:** STOCK
- › **GAUGES:** AUTO METER
- › **STEREO:** SONY
- › **AMPLIFIERS:** SONY
- › **SPEAKERS:** SONY
- › **AIR CONDITIONING:** SOUTHERN RODS & PARTS
- › **WIRING:** EZ WIRING
- › **STEERING WHEEL:** '78 VEGA
- › **SEATS:** '96 S-10
- › **UPHOLSTERY:** DARK BUCKSKIN LEATHER
- › **CARPET:** SQUARE-WEAVE, TAUPE
- › **UPHOLSTERY:** MARK LOPEZ AT ELEGANCE AUTO INTERIORS, UPLAND, CA