

Feature Story

# Built from Battle

Tony Scalici's one-man wounded-warrior program

✦ By Chris Shelton

**T**he project as therapy isn't exactly a foreign thing. All of us—at least those who build—treat shop time as a meditative experience, a period where we can focus our attention on one thing as a means to purge the din of the day that preceded it. We usually call it blowing off steam.

"I don't want to go too far into it but my whole purpose for building this was for therapy from the military," Tony Scalici says. "When I got out I needed something to keep my mind busy." How busy? He built his '68—the first project of this scope for him—in a year. Impressive? Wait 'til you hear about what he started with.







He found his C10 locally but had a buddy check it out since he was undergoing training out of state. "He didn't really know much about cars so he's like, 'Yeah man it's got this really nice yellow paintjob.' So I bought it—it wasn't a lot of money

anyway. And he was right; it looked really nice.

"But as soon as I tore it apart I saw it for what it really was," he continues. For starters, it was rusty. Really rusty. "They literally never touched the rust; they welded some sheetmetal

over it and body-filled it." It had a tonneau cover on it. "I never thought to ask him to look under the tonneau," Tony says. "Well they had the tonneau on it because there was no bed! Seriously, there was about 2 square feet of bed left! There was other





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stuff, like a fender with a dent in it. If you looked from the inside you could see the dent. They didn't even bother pulling it out; they just filled it in. It's amazing that it stayed on! People put so much effort into hiding something when they could've just fixed it right. They easily had into the paint what I bought the whole truck for."

He tore down the pickup to the bare

frame and sent the cab and all the front sheetmetal to Metal Works Classics Auto Restoration in Eugene, Oregon, for dipping. "All I got back that was usable were the cab and the hood," he laments. "Even the tailgate was shot." So he did what he was trained to do: he embraced the adversity.

"I built the frame first," he continues. He boxed and supported

it then made a C-notch from scratch. The suspension, it's the whole Full Porterbuilt Pro Touring package with rack-and-pinion steering but with AccuAir bags instead of coils. Scribner Welding built the rear axle around the 12-bolt components. It has 3.73 gears on a limited-slip carrier. One of Denny's aluminum driveshafts feeds it power.

What spins that driveshaft came







from a late-'90s Escalade. It consists of a 4L80E and an LQ9, basically the de-tuned, iron-block version of the venerable LS2 that came in the Corvette and GTO. Eric's Automotive in Enumclaw built the version in the truck now. It has CNC-ported rectangular-port heads, Eagle forged pistons, crank, and H-beam rods, and a COMP LSR-series 273RLrHR12 cam. With a Holley plenum and 95mm throttle body and 1<sup>7</sup>/<sub>8</sub>-inch Hedman headers, the updated nine produced 540 hp at the crank. "We originally built it to go turbo," Tony says. "But the thing is, it made so much horsepower that I figured I'd spend

that extra \$7,000 on another project." The engine couples to a 4L80E. A1 Transmissions in Tacoma built it with a 3,200-stall converter and the clutches and various other components to make it handle the power.

"From the windshield up is original but pretty much everything else is brand new," Tony admits. He rebuilt everything with sheetmetal from LMC. The laundry list included doors, floors, cab corners, rockers, fenders, bed sides, bed header, tailgate, and countless other pieces. "The bill alone was \$6,600."

He rebuilt the cab and bed basically

to stock. "I wanted to go the whole Pro Touring route and body mods really aren't necessary," he notes. "The rear wheelwells, you can't tell but they've been widened an inch," he says, explaining how it was the result of a little accident. "I fit the wheels and tires without them in place and I didn't realize that the 'wells didn't go all the way to the frame." The wheels came from Boze (Pro Touring), and the tires from Michelin (Pilot Super Sport). They measure 20x10 and 20x11 and 285/30ZR20 and 315/30ZR20, respectively. You can see a set of Behr 14-inch rotors and six-piston calipers







# 1969 CHEVROLET C10

Tony Scalici

## CHASSIS

- › **MODIFICATIONS:** BOXED, CUSTOM TUBULAR CROSSMEMBERS
- › **CHASSIS PLUMBING:** JIC/AN LINES THROUGHOUT
- › **REAR END / RATIO:** GM 12-BOLT / 3.73:1 ON LIMITED-SLIP CARRIER
- › **SUSPENSION:** PORTERBUILT STAGE II DELUXE WITH ACCU-AIR AIR SPRINGS
- › **BRAKES:** BAER 14-INCH-DIAMETER ROTORS AND FOUR-PISTON CALIPERS
- › **MASTER CYLINDER:** CLASSIC PERFORMANCE PRODUCTS
- › **WHEEL MAKE, SIZE:** BOZE PRO TOURING, 20X10 AND 20X11
- › **TIRE MAKE, SIZE:** MICHELIN PILOT SUPER SPORT, 285- AND 315/30ZR20

## ENGINE

- › **MAKE:** GM L09
- › **DISPLACEMENT:** 6.0-LITER / 364 CI
- › **ROTATING ASSEMBLY:** EAGLE 4130 CRANK H-BEAM RODS
- › **ASSEMBLY:** ERIC'S AUTOMOTIVE, ENUMCLAW, WA
- › **CAMSHAFT:** COMP LSR-SERIES 273RL HR12
- › **RADIATOR:** ENTROPY
- › **HEADS:** CNC RECTANGULAR PORTS
- › **MANIFOLD / INDUCTION:** HOLLEY MID-RISE CERAMIC-COATED PLENUM AND 95MM THROTTLE BODY
- › **IGNITION:** MSD WIRES AND COILS; KATECH COIL-RELOCATION KIT
- › **HEADERS:** HEDMAN 1 1/2 INCH
- › **EXHAUST / MUFFLERS:** 3-INCH STAINLESS / BORLA
- › **FUEL TANK:** NO LIMIT WITH AUROMOTIVE IN-TANK PUMP
- › **TRANSMISSION:** 4L65E BY A1 TRANSMISSIONS IN TACOMA

## BODY

- › **BODYWORK:** OWNER
  - › **PAINT COLOR:** LAMBORGHINI GRIGIO TELESTO
  - › **PAINTER:** KELLY HILLIARD, HILLIARD'S AUTOBODY, CHEHALIS, WA
  - › **HEADLIGHTS / TAILLIGHTS:** HID CONVERSION / FESLER BUILT
  - › **OTHER BODY ITEMS:** DOUBLE-WALLED ALUMINUM EXHAUST OUTLETS
- ## INTERIOR
- › **GAUGES:** DAKOTA DIGITAL VHX
  - › **AUDIO:** ALPINE
  - › **WIRING:** AMERICAN AUTOWIRE HARNESS WITH IDIDIT INC. PUSH-BUTTON START
  - › **STEERING WHEEL:** BUDNIK GTV
  - › **STEERING COLUMN:** IDIDIT INC.
  - › **SHIFTER:** LOKAR
  - › **SEATS:** SCAT PRO CAR MODIFIED FOR CUSTOM FLOOR
  - › **UPHOLSTERER:** ULTRA CUSTOM UPHOLSTERY, PUYALLUP
  - › **OTHER INTERIOR ITEMS:** OWNER-BUILT INTERIOR PANELS AND CENTER CONSOLE WITH TAHOE CENTER-CONSOLE DOORS

through their spokes.

A rolled pan replaces the rear bumper. The most noticeable external modifications are the exhaust outlets ahead of the rear wheels. And they're largely for function's sake; tucking a 3-inch exhaust system in a low chassis is hard enough without having to snake it over the rear axle. He built this one from stainless tubing and Borla mufflers. The flanges lead to aluminum cones that the pipes pass through to protect the paint from burning. Kelly Hilliard at Hilliard's Autobody in Chehalis applied that paint, Grigio Telecto, a Lamborghini Gallardo color. Tony ripped the oak slats from boards that he bought from a local hardwood dealer. Ariend ran a dado bit along the edges of the steel retaining strips and he stained and sealed them.

What energy Tony saved by leaving the body alone he invested in the interior. He built the center console, subwoofer enclosures, door panels, and amplifier boards entirely from scratch. In a break with truck convention, Tony mounted the parking brake in the console. It's a Lokar, as is the shifter. The lidded enclosure came from a Tahoe or Yukon.

The Scat Procar seats don't fit the way these do right out of the box. Tony sectioned them and modified the mounting brackets to lower them. Ultra Custom Upholstery in Puyallup modified the covers and trimmed

everything else in matching black material.

A set of Dakota Digital VHX-series gauges replace the analog dials. A Budnik GTV steering wheel replaced the massive stock tiller. It mounts on an ididit Inc. column. Ididit also made the touch-and-go starter-button kit although it mounts in the original dash location rather than the column. He wired the car with a combination of American Autowire and Speartech (for the engine) harnesses. The audio gear (6.5 component sets, 12-inch subs, double-DIN head unit) came from Alpine. The "George" script on the dash, "That's my dad," Tony reveals. "I grew up in a family who always did stuff with cars—my dad built engines for people like Connie Kalitta."

Now, we're not saying that building an intensive project from scratch is a responsible alternative to formal therapy for complex mental and emotional matters. In fact, some of us need help after finishing one that started the way this one did.

What Tony Scalici got out of what he started with is a great metaphor for his own restoration. To many what he bought probably looked like a lost cause. And to some returning from battle, life itself can look just as bleak.

But in a way his pickup is a manifestation of his own journey back; they sort of owe their existence to each other. Talk about the ultimate project!