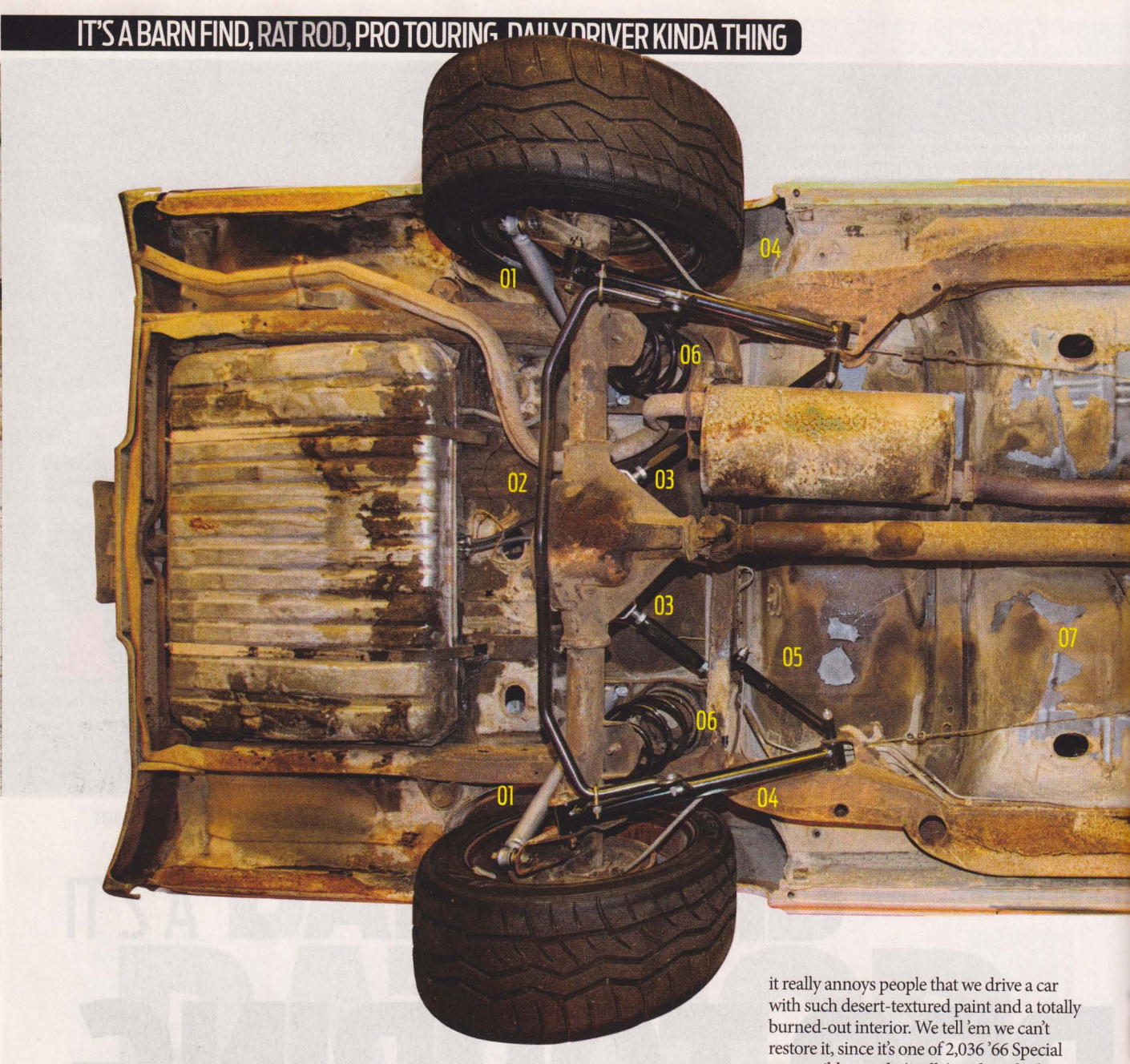
[Here's the Buick on the road trip home after we dragged it out of the desert, where it was buried rim-deep. After it arrived, we gave it a new radiator to solve the overheating problem—much more convenient than driving around with the hood in the back.

IT'S A BARN FIND RAT ROD DAILY KINDA THING

With entry-level CPP suspension upgrades and killer Falken Azenis RT-615K rubber, the '66 has become a competent if underpowered performer. The Special (like a Skylark) is a GM A-body just like a Chevelle, so nearly every chassis part made for the Chevelle fits.

PRO TOURING DRIVER

Revitalizing Our '66 Buick With CPP Suspension



01] CPP gas shocks

02] 1-inch sway bar

03] Adjustable, tubular upper control arms with pivots in the ends (rather than bushings) to proven binding during axle articulation

04] Tubular lower control arms

05] Triangulation brace to prevent deflection at the upper control arm mount

06] 2-inch drop coil springs with half a coil cut off

07] The surprisingly rust-free portion of the floorpans

08] The shiny, new stop sign and railroad crossing sign acting as front floors

09] Tubular upper and lower control arms

10] 2-inch-drop spindles and OE-style disc brakes

11] New tie rods with billet adjuster sleeves

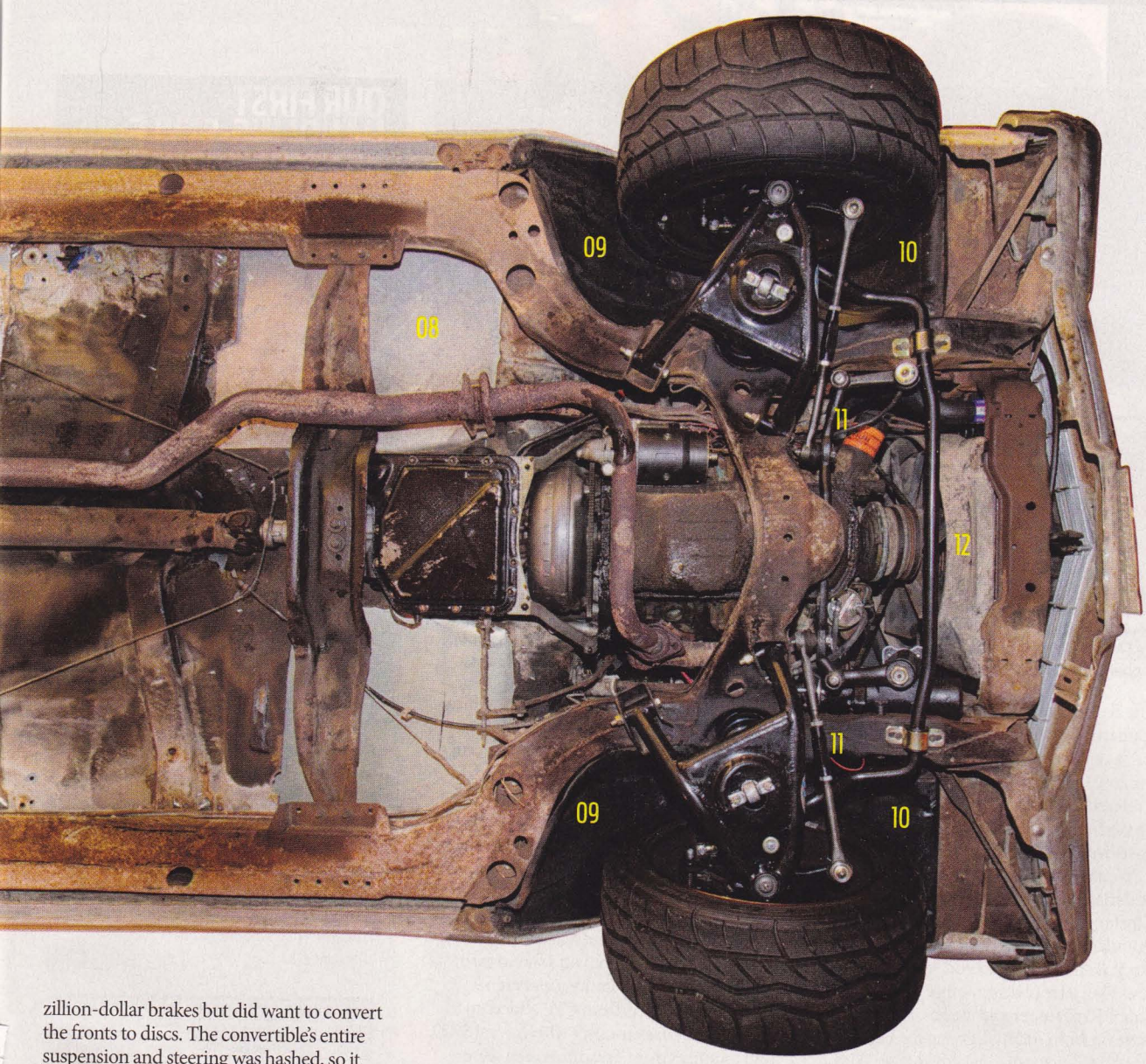
12] 1½-inch sway bar

›You remember this pile? Way back in the Sept. '11 issue ("Bring 'Em Back Alive"), we shared our adventure of unearthing this '66 Buick Special from an Arizona backyard where it had sat untouched for 33 years, then making it run and hitting the road for a 500-mile trip home to Los Angeles. It was fantastic—lifetime memory kind of stuff. You can see a bunch of videos about it by searching "HOT ROD Buick Rescue" on YouTube.

THE STORY

After we got home, the car sat for almost a year before we decided it was a keeper. It had so much style, such a great story, and the emotional connection of it having been bought when it was nearly new by the mother of our friend Rick Péwé (editor of *4-Wheel & Off-Road*). Perhaps best of all, it really annoys people that we drive a car with such desert-textured paint and a totally burned-out interior. We tell 'em we can't restore it, since it's one of 2,036 '66 Special convertibles made (really) and we don't want to lose the originality. Having been parked in 1978, it only has 64,000 miles on it, and it runs mint. Despite its appearance, it's really very solid with only the front floorpans rotted out of it, a problem handily solved with a couple old street signs.

All that was holding us back from driving the Buick every day was a jammed fuel line and a totally clapped-out, bumper-dragging suspension. Step one was to send the gas tank to be cleaned out. Step two was a call to Classic Performance Products (CPP). Many of the other magazine editors around here, as well as our Tech Center Manager Grant Peterson, had great things to say about CPP suspension and brake parts, though we'd never tried 'em. We told CPP we didn't want the double-throwdown package but just solid handling in a suspension we could drive every day. We'd never race, so we didn't need



zillion-dollar brakes but did want to convert the fronts to discs. The convertible's entire suspension and steering was hashed, so it also needed basic rebuild parts.

THE PARTS

What we ended up with was mostly parts from CPP's Stage 1 Pro Touring kit consisting of tubular upper and lower control arms for the front and rear, rear control-arm triangulation brackets, coil springs, antiroll-bar kits for both ends of the car, basic gas-charged shocks, and all the hardware. We also got the most basic front disc-brake kit (that comes with 2-inch dropped spindles, original-style disc brakes, a booster, stock-style metering valve and plumbing, and a master cylinder), all-new steering linkage, including the idler and pitman, and a new CPP power-steering box with a 14:1 ratio. Everything bolted up as promised, and we even reused the original power-steering hoses. The centerlink needed a little love so it didn't brush the crossmember, and the rearend sat a bit too high, so we cut one coil from each rear spring.

Rounding it out, we got Wheel Vintiques steel wheels with custom backspacwing: the fronts are 17x8 with 4¾-inch backspacing and the rears are 17x9 with 5¾ backspacing. Our friends at TreadSource.com wanted to make us look like shredders on the autocross and suggested Falken Azenis RT-615K tires, which have a 200-treadwear rating but seem more aggressive than that and have a very cool tread pattern. We have 245/45R17s in front and 275/40R17s in the back.

ROAD 'N' RACE TEST

It was a lot of fun to have the Buick truly roadworthy, and we've driven it a lot. The ride is performance-oriented but not jarring. We can drive it anywhere and it doesn't wear us out. The steering feel is much heavier than before; gone is the one-finger power steering that we like on a cruiser, but no one would want that much power assist on a real performance car.

When we first assembled everything, we thought it looked funny with the large wheelwell opening behind the somewhat short tires, but we've gotten used to it. What's cool, though, is how the rear tire width is maxed out. With the 17x9 and 5¾ backspacing, the tire is about ⅜ inch from the wheelwell lip, so another ¼-inch backspacing would be good. However, the most amazing thing is that, even with the outboard clearance that tight, the tires don't rub no matter how hard we pound on the car.

And we did pound. Our testing included a 420-foot slalom with cones 70 feet apart, where the Buick clocked 45.5 mph with *Camaro Performers* Editor Nick Licata driv-

[It was a stroke of genius to give the car a retro look combined with a slightly modern vibe by ordering 17-inch Wheel Vintiques steelies and by having Embee Performance color them in a transparent copper that matches the rust haze on the trunk and hood. We've since added bullet center caps.

ing. To put that in perspective, a brand-new Camaro SS runs 46 mph. The difference of half a mph is not as close as it would seem because the course is so short, but it gives you a reference. Nick says the Buick was power-limited, even in the slalom, and that it could have been faster with more Wheaties.

We also ran our new autocross test track and matched the convertible against an '05 Mustang GT owned by Chris Campbell of *Popular Hot Rodding*. The Mustang is stone-stock with a five-speed and its original Pirelli tires with a treadwear rating of 400, and with about 50 percent tread life left. So the meats were far from optimal, giving the Falkenshod '66 Buick a distinct advantage. With Licata in both cars, the Buick went 1:13:24 compared with the Mustang's 1:14:58. So the Special wins, even when it's gutless, and even with the stock right-rear brake locking up at unfortunate times, and even with an open diff that sometimes spun the tire. Even if we never worked on the engine, this turd could be quicker. Even as-is, the car is a total laugh riot to drive.

We also tested braking. From 60 to zero, we clocked 166 feet followed immediately by a 177. Perspective: A new Camaro SS does it in 108 feet, so that puts the Buick clear through the school bus. That rear-drum lockup didn't help. The stock-style disc brakes are far superior to the drums but can hardly match a big-brake setup with ABS.

CONCLUSIONS

Killer handling on a slow car might be more fun than big power in a sloppy chassis. Street machiners are prone to start their modifications under the hood, but this car presents so much fun that it's a life-changer. As cruisers go, it's one of the best we've ever had. It merges everything that's hot right now: It's a barn find (well, desert find) with distressed paint (OK, patina) and Pro Touring suspension. Plus, we're not afraid to drive it anywhere, any time, so it's a killer daily driver. In SoCal, who needs a top? Ever? Besides, one plastic trash bag over the seat, and this thing's ready for any rainstorm you want to throw at it. It's not like the floors are water-tight.

The chassis parts from CPP added up to $3,634. The custom-offset wheels were $720, and four tires from TreadPros.com were $663. Powdercoating the wheels at Embee, $320; four bullet-style center caps ($17.95 each); and 20 bullet-nose lug nuts ($8.95 each) from Summit make another $250. Add up the mounting and balancing, shipping, and a few small widgets needed for the installation, and you've whacked about $6,000. Why would we spend that on a $500 car? Because it's cheaper than doing it to a $10,000 car—and just as fun. That's what we do: Have fun with cars regardless of reason, and this one's off the scale. HOT ROD

Contacts

CPP; Anaheim, CA; 800.522.5004; ClassicPerform.com

OUR FIRST HANDLING-STYLE BEATER

Mary Pozzi

A few years ago, we bought this all-original, 283-powered '65 Chevelle four-door for $1,500 and threw a complete Ridetech Street Challenge suspension on it along with some of the old wheels from the Crusher Camaro. The handling-beater-stocker thing was a blast, and it paved the way to the Buick.

THE CPP STUFF WE USED

Here are the exact parts we used on our project, and you can use this to duplicate our performance on your '64–'67 GM A-body, with part numbers listed individually (rather than in packages) so you can pick just what you need. CPP offers similar stuff for newer Chevelles as well as Camaros, Novas, trucks, and more. The company also has more entry-level parts at lower cost, and more hardcore stuff at greater cost. Many parts are available in colors other than black.

PART NUMBER	DESCRIPTION	PRICE*
KY-1107	Rear shock	$39.00 each
KY-1001	Front shock	$39.00 each
CP883U-Black	Front swaybar kit	$149.00
FCS6200-S	Stock-height front coil springs	$105.00
RCS6197-D	2-inch-drop rear coil springs	$95.00
CPP6466CBK-D	Complete disc brake kit with dropped spindles	$799.00
6472SP-A	Steering arms for stock-type spindles	$40.00
CP50004	CPP 14:1, 500-series steering box	$379.00
RJC-730R	Steering column rag joint	$45.00
6467SLK	Steering linkage kit	$145.00
ES333R	Outer tie-rod end (2 required)	$39.00 each
ES681N	Inner tie-rod end (2 required)	$39.00 each
ES2032S	Tie-rod adjuster sleeve (2 required)	$9.00 each
DS740	Steering center link	$89.00
6467PA-P	Power-steering pitman arm	$49.00
6472RTCA-LB	Tubular rear lower control arms	$229.00
6467RTCA-UB	Adjustable rear upper control arms	$219.00
6467TAMB	Control arm mount brace set	$89.00
939-Black	Rear sway bar kit	$139.00
6472TCA-ULK-B	Tubular front control arm kit	$733.00
TOTAL		$3,634

*These are prices as of August '12 and are subject to change.