

# FROM RUST TO REVERIE: The Rebirth of a 1953 Chevy and a Family's Legacy

*Seventy years after it first rolled through the fields of Slater, Missouri, a once-forgotten pickup has found new life. What began as a workhorse in America's heartland now stands as a rolling memory, carrying generations forward while keeping the past close.*

WRITTEN BY STEVE SCHLOSSER - PHOTOGRAPHY BY WM PHOTOS BY TOM

The year was 1953. The Korean War ended in July, establishing the Republic of Korea (South) and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (North). Joseph Stalin died, and the late Queen Elizabeth II was coronated. World War II Supreme Commander, Allied Expeditionary Forces, Europe, Dwight D. Eisenhower was sworn in as the 34th President of the United States.

Back home in Slater, Missouri — population 2,836 — things were getting back to normal. Seven years after the end of the deadliest conflict in history, it was a peaceful time. Mr. Giger, a cattle farmer, would put his jet-black 1953 Chevy 3100 into granny gear (1st) and jump into the bed while the truck lurched slowly ahead to feed the cows. Powered by a 216-cubic-inch (metric system need not apply) inline six-cylinder engine and a 4-on-the-floor manual producing 92 horsepower, the cattle were happy to oblige, offering customary dents as they bumped the fenders, edging in for the next bite.

In the early 1960s, Mr. Flynn (Bill's father) was on his rural mail route and stopped to deliver the mail and chew the fat with Mr. Giger. It turned out Mr. Giger wanted a truck with a few fewer dents and sold the truck for a measly \$200 — only 14% of its original MSRP of \$1,407.

Moving to Erie some 14 years ago to be closer to his family, Bill happily recalls the memories of growing up in small-town Missouri. Having grown up, moved out, and graduated college, the years were not kind to the Chevy, which was never christened with a name. It was used sparingly to haul or dump things and was slowly being consumed by rust. When Bill's parents resolved to sell it, Bill stepped in and hauled it back to Virginia to have a project with his kids. Unfortunately, another



20 or so years passed, and not much improvement was made. Multiple moves and decisions down the line, the pieces finally fell into place, and Bill found a shop in northeast Iowa owned by Steve Lyon, who fully restored the truck to its stunning condition today.

Today it sits as a restomod — a glimpse into that simpler and peaceful time — now powered by a four-barrel carbureted 350-cubic-inch Chevrolet V8 with an automatic transmission. Painted light blue and modernized with power brakes, power steering, and air-conditioning, the bed presents a beautifully classic wood-panel floor finished by Bill's brother-in-law. The exterior lights have a tasteful mix of LED and original influence. It even retains the original dimmer switch on the floor for the lights.

Hearing this truck is poetic. It rumbles smoother than modern fuel injection and emanates that timeless auto smell. The Chevy presents a grit befitting the melting pot of the United States. Its stamped double-wall, plain-carbon-steel, body-on-frame construction has no care for the modern alloyed metals used in vehicles like the Tesla Cybertruck. The interior is simple yet effective, donned with beautiful knobs and modern leather. A modern radio pipes in the weather channel, and the heater blows hot; there's even a USB port to charge your phone. The horn screams like a wild goose.

Bill loves sharing this relic with his wife, children, and grandchildren. You can find them occasionally parked at Erie's Farmers Market, where it's commonly associated with "Blue," the little blue truck from the famous children's book by Alice Schertle. Bill hopes this truck will stay with his family and be passed down for generations to come, always a reminder of their roots.

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