

By Mike Magda

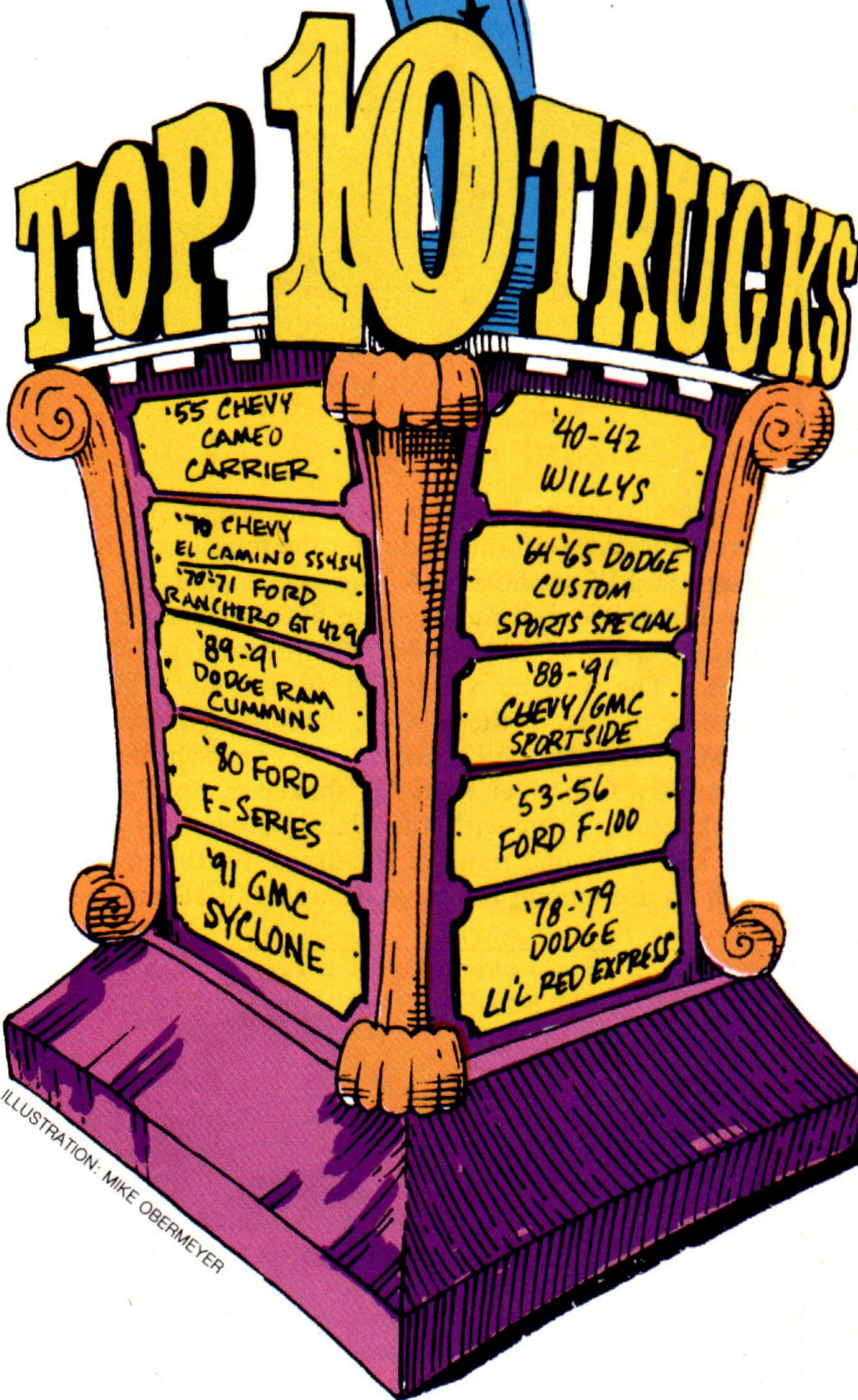
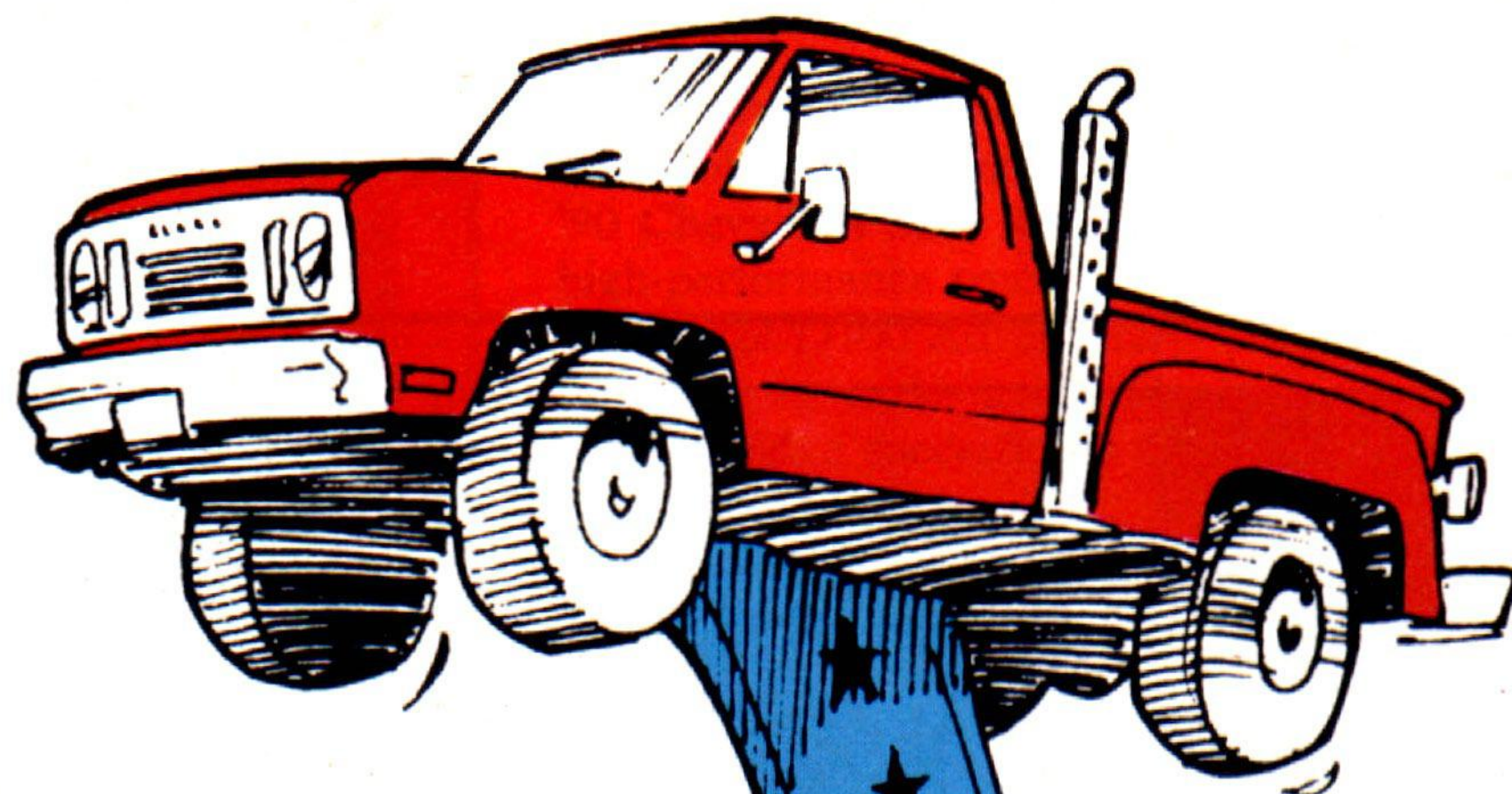
A few months ago, the readers of *Hot Truck* were asked to select their 10 favorite trucks. The editors of *Hot Truck*, and later *Sport Truck*, also solicited similar opinions from experts who have written extensively about trucks. With dozens of diversified sources to call upon, we had the foundation for a Top 10 roundup in which we could recognize the best trucks of all time. We set only one guideline: pickups only. No sport/utility vehicles,

Experts, Readers And Sport Truck Pick The 10 Best Trucks Of All Time

vans or sedan delivery-types would be considered, although some were mentioned by the readers and experts.

Since this project was developed at *Hot Truck* before the merger with *Sport Truck*, there is a distinct performance thread tying all of our Top 10 trucks together. There are sure to be disagreements, especially among import owners and longtime *Sport Truck* readers. But spirited debate is

what makes any Top 10 list so fun. That's why we hope you'll relay your feelings to us in a letter. If there's enough response, we'll do this again and possibly open up the judging criteria. For now, here are our Top 10 trucks of all time.

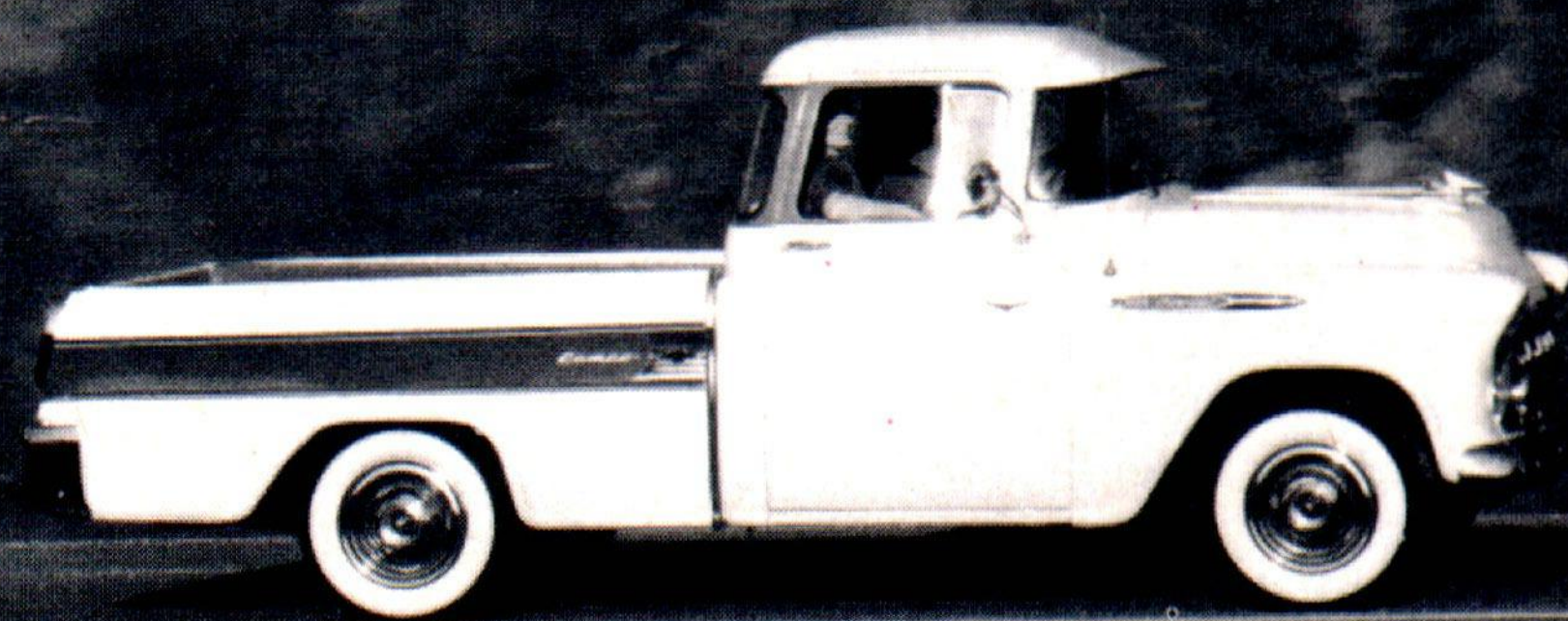


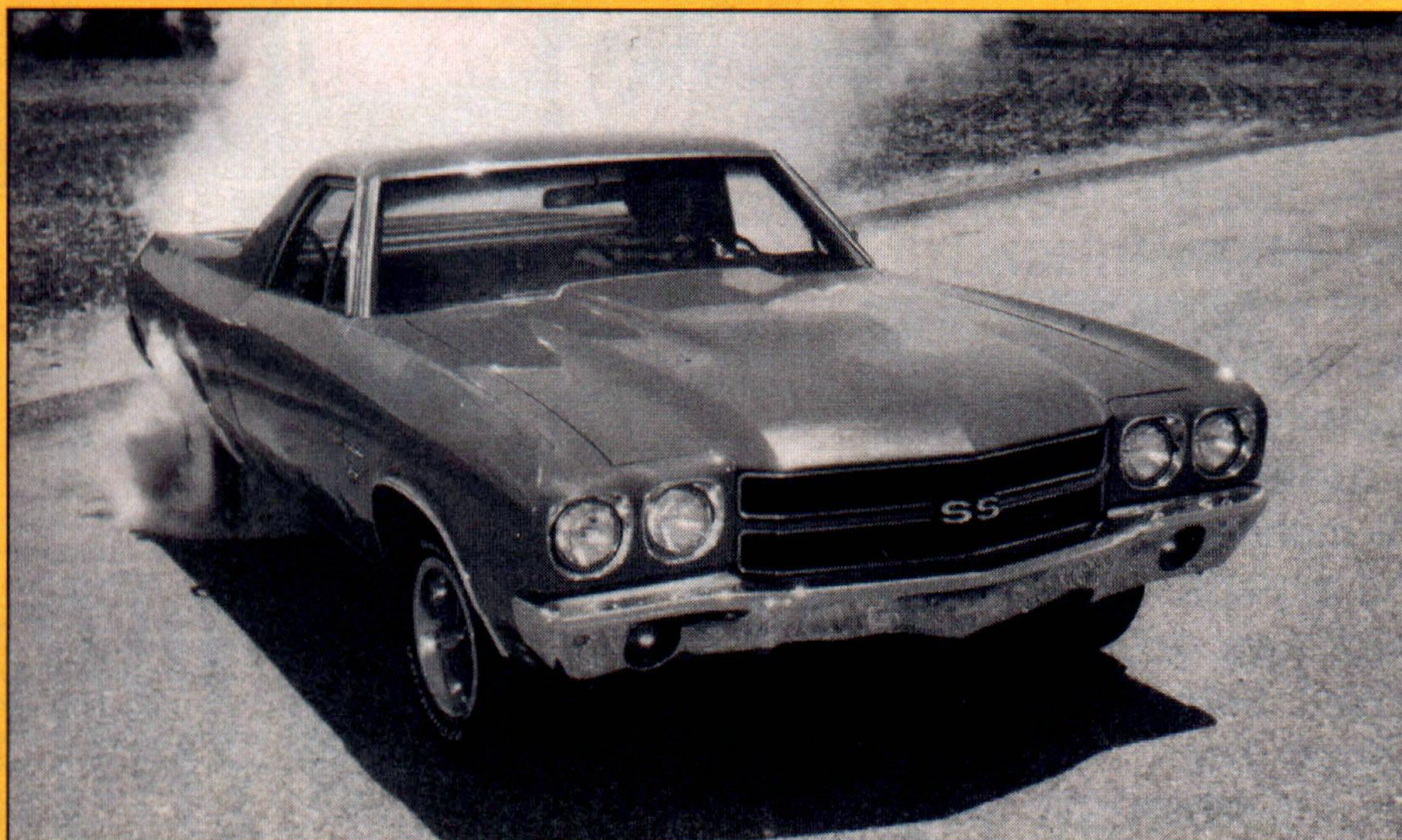
'55 Chevy Cameo Carrier

The '55 Cameo was the first pickup to revolutionize the design, purpose and future of the modern American truck. Not just a work truck, the Cameo established car-like styling trends for pickups. Within a year, the other manufacturers had deluxe personal trucks on their drawing boards.

The Cameo was the queen bee of the Task Force lineup that replaced the '48-'54 Advance Design series. All Task Force trucks featured an aggressive, load-pulling look that was created by the forward slant of the cab and the wheel openings. The designers gave the Cameo an even sleeker appearance with fiberglass skins over the rear fenders and tailgate. This wide-box look was the inspiration for the Fleetside body that debuted in 1958. Other stylish Cameo tricks include a Bombay Ivory/Commercial Red paint scheme, full wheel covers, a wraparound rear window and enough chrome to blind a hawk.

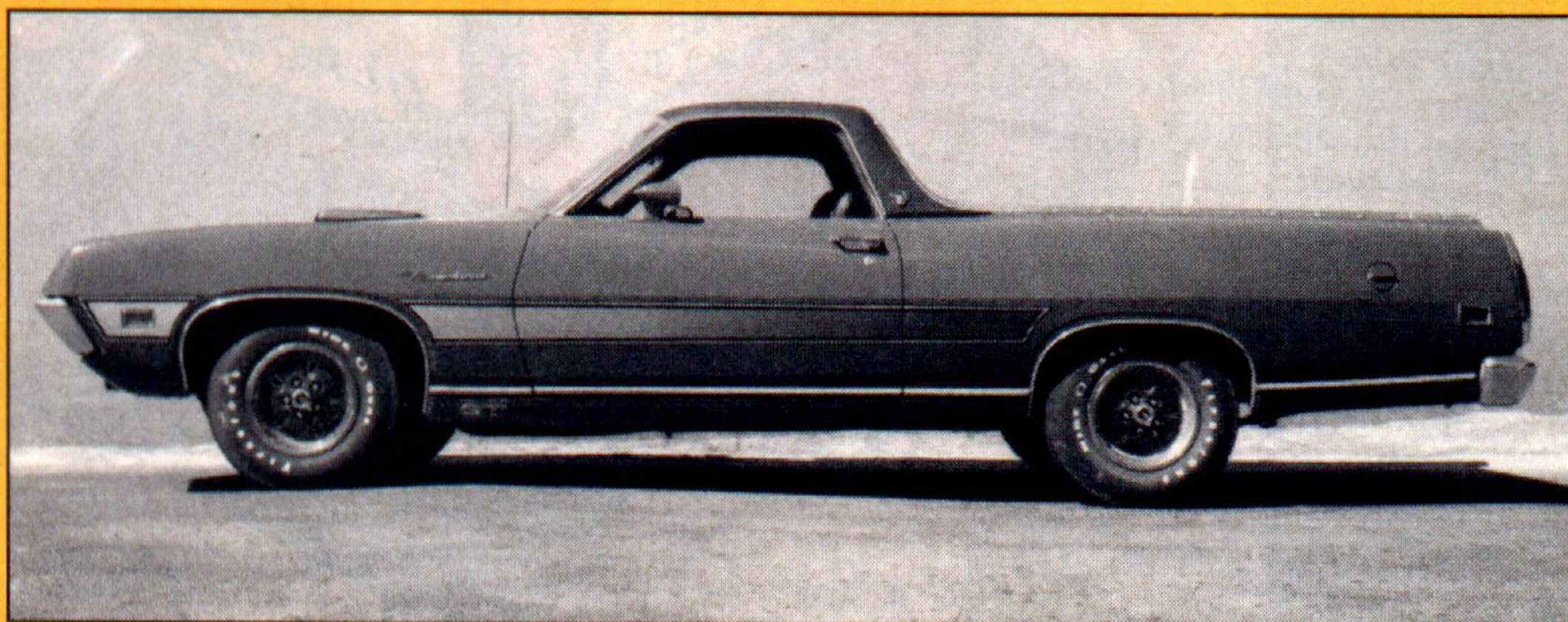
The 265-ci Taskmaster V-8 proved to be another revolution, as it was the genesis for all high-performance, Bow-Tie small-block engines. GMC Truck had a Cameo cousin called the Suburban, but it was a limited-edition, promotional truck (it is much rarer and more valuable with fewer than 350 units manufactured) and it relied on a 287-ci Pontiac motor. Chevy produced just over 10,000 Cameos from 1955 through early 1958. The 5219 trucks made in 1955 represent the first significant change in direction for American trucks toward a dual-purpose use. Our group of experts took notice of the Cameo's place in history as it was named on more lists than any other truck. But which is the best truck of all time? Read on.





'70 Chevy El Camino SS454
'70-'71 Ford Ranchero GT 429CJR

These car/truck hybrids form the last of the big-cubed, mondo horsepower street thrashers produced during the muscle-car era. The loudest thunder came from the El Camino SS454. The base engine was a 365-hp LS5, but the venerable LS6 with a ground-shaking 450 horsepower is still found in a few units. Check out the highlights: 11.5 compression, a Holley 850, 4:11 gears and a four-speed. The Ranchero GT had an optional 428 Cobra Jet engine in the '69 version; then came the 429CJR the following two years. It dished out 370 horsepower and could be backed with a Hurst-shifted four-speed. The GT 429CJR featured a Cobra Jet Ram-Air shaker scoop, 11:1 pistons and 3.91:1 Traction-Lock gears. Even with the chariot-style tires of the Seventies, these trucks clocked 13-second times at the drags. Neither marque built too many of them, so both are among the most desirable of all muscle trucks.



'57 Dodge Power Wagon
 '88-'91 Chevy S-10 w/V-6
 '91 Dodge V-8 Dakota
 Ford XLT Ranger 4x4

Chris Bostick, Ponder, TX

'56 Ford F-100
 '65 Ford F-100
 '90 Chevy C1500 Sportside
 '90 Ford F-150 longbed
 '68 Chevy Stepside
 '66 Chevy longbed
 '71 Chevy longbed
 '76 Ford SuperCab
 '56 Chevy Stepside
 '90 Isuzu

Justin LaForge, Dover-Foxcroft, ME

'78-'79 Dodge Li'l Red Express
 '90-'91 Chevy 454 SS
 '72-'76 Datsun
 '91 Dodge V-8 Dakota
 '67-'72 Ford F-100
 '67 Chevy Stepside
 '57 Chevy
 '48-'52 Ford F-1
 '89-'91 Dodge Cummins Diesel
 Chevy/GMC Crew Cab

Jeremy Lyles, Ramer, TN

'53 Ford F-100
 '55 Chevy
 '90-'91 Chevy 454 SS
 '72 Chevy
 '77 Chevy
 '78-'79 Dodge Li'l Red Express
 '65 Chevy
 '40 Willys
 '61 El Camino
 Chevy S-10

Thomas Smith, Bradford, AR

'56 Ford F-100
 '57 Chevy
 '72 Ford Ranger XLT
 '66 Chevy
 '78 Dodge Li'l Red Express
 '72 Chevy w/454
 '79 Ford w/460
 '91 Nissan
 '90 Chevy S-10
 '91 Chevy

Jeff Daniels, St. Charles, IA

'91 GMC Syclone
 '90-'91 Chevy 454 SS
 Choo-Choo SS El Camino
 '55 Chevy Cameo
 '68-'72 Chevy
 '78-'79 Dodge Li'l Red Express
 Shelby Dakota
 '91 Dodge V-8 Dakota
 Mercury trucks
 Willys

Tracy Morrison, Provo, UT

'56 Ford F-100
 '60-'65 Chevy C-20
 '67 Dodge Power Wagon
 '70-'72 Chevy K-20

The Readers Speak

John Robinette, Maple Grove, MN

'55-'57 Chevy Cameo
 '91 GMC Syclone
 '64-'67 Chevy El Camino
 '68-'71 Chevy El Camino SS396
 '39 Hudson Model 98
 '37-'40 Studebaker Coupe-express
 '39-'40 Willys
 '30-'32 Ford Model A open cab
 '53-'56 Ford F-100
 '57-'59 Ford Ranchero

Fred Deardorff, Williamsport, MD

'53 Studebaker

'36 Chevy
 '52 Chevy
 '53 Ford F-100
 '57 Ford Ranchero
 '40 Willys
 '71 Chevy
 '68 Chevy El Camino
 '78-'79 Dodge Li'l Red Express
 '90-'91 Chevy 454 SS

George Nay, Provo, UT

Dodge Ram W350 Cummins
 '53 Ford F-100
 '78-'79 Dodge Li'l Red Express
 Mid-'70s Chevy 1/2-ton w/454
 '58 Chevy Cameo
 '53 Chevy/GMC



'89-'91 Dodge Ram Cummins

The diesel-powered Dodge Ram pickup is arguably the least pretentious and hardest-working truck on the market today. There's nothing fancy here, just rock-solid durability, generous cargo dimensions and unbelievable pulling power. The 5.9-liter turbocharged Cummins inline-six delivers more than 400 lb-ft of torque to the rear wheels. Backed with a Getrag granny five-speed overdrive manual transmission, this truck can pull stumps or tow an eight-stall horse trailer over the Rockies without breaking a sweat. With a special, seven-year/100,000-mile powertrain warranty, the diesel Rams are built for long hauls. Now available in a Club Cab, the Dodge Ram Cummins is even more suited to working-class needs. The two-wheel-drive, one-ton model has a peak GVWR of 10,100 pounds and a top towing capacity of 11,000 pounds. Make no mistake, the Dodge Ram Cummins is not a street truck, it's a road truck.

'89 Dodge Dakota convertible
'55 Dodge
'58 Dodge Power Wagon
'57 Chevy Stepside
'90-'91 Chevy 454 SS
'58 Chevy Cameo

Lynn Keller, Stuttgart, AR

'91 GMC Syclone
'55 GMC Suburban
'59 Chevy El Camino
'53-'56 Ford F-100
'89 Dodge Dakota convertible
'67-'72 Chevy/GMC shortbed
'70 Chevy El Camino w/454
'91 Dodge W250 Cummins Diesel
'90 Chevy 454 SS
'88-'91 Chevy/GMC

Steve Doucette, Stockholm, ME

'91 Dodge Dakota
'53 Ford F-100
'78-'79 Dodge Li'l Red Express
'91 GMC Syclone
'90-'91 Chevy 454 SS
'40 Willys
'88-'91 Z71-equipped Chevy
Chevy El Camino
'89-'91 Dodge Cummins Diesel
'89 Ford F-150

Expert Opinions

John Gunnell—publisher of *Old Cars and Truck Prices* and editor of the *Standard Catalog of American Light Duty Trucks*.

'55 Chevy Cameo—Introduced the Fleet-side look and the luxury truck concept.

'90 Chevy 454 SS— Revived the idea of a high-performance truck.

'68 Dodge D100 Adventurer— After years of trying to make a good-looking, fancy truck, Dodge succeeded with the '68 Adventurer.

'78-'79 Dodge W150 Li'l Red Express Truck— Added to the Dodge Adult Toys lineup.

'33 Ford V-8 Roadster pickup— The '32 V-8 gave the common man a way to keep up with the Duesenbergs on the road.

'57 Ford Ranchero— This truck brought the "ute" to America with style and changed the history of trucking.

'37-'38 GMC ½-ton— Classic good looks set them apart as something special.

'21 IHC "Red Baby" ¾-ton Express— Downsizing plus bright-red factory paint explains the nickname that farmers gave these early "cornbinders."

'61 IHC Scout ¼-ton utility pickup— The inline-four was half of a V-8 and exclusive to the Scout line.

'36-'38 Mack Jr. ½-ton Cab Express— Reo made these rareties, so you wonder if they're really "built like a Mack truck." Collectors love them.

Len Frank—host of the nationally syndicated radio program "The Car Show" and a contributor to national publications such as *Playboy*.

"First, a couple of years ago, a friend wanted me to run a Boston-San Diego Cannonball with him. I suggested a swb C/K (maybe it was an extended cab) with an L-98 Corvette engine, three extra fuel cells, a little Gulstrand magic in the suspension, tires, 700R4, some seats and all the anticop measures in the Western world. The event was called off due to too much publicity, but I still think Chevy ought to build it (the truck) as a production piece instead of the 454 SS, which I never liked."

'46-'47 Hudson— Great lines, long hood, pre-chopped cab. How about one with a 324-ci/200-plus hp six-cylinder?

'49-'55 Studebaker— Designed by Bob Bourke, who also did the '53 Stude coupes. Better looking than the F-100s.

'62 Studebaker Lark-based pickup— Brooks Stevens' group did this one, and I used to have one. Never got the Avanti R-3

'80 Ford F-Series

In 1980, Ford restyled its full-size trucks and debuted a new platform that's still in use today. It also introduced the revolutionary Twin Traction Beam on 4x4 trucks and offered a one-ton dualie for the first time. Ford trucks have been a gem of consistency since the new platform came out, and have set sales records every year. To recognize that achievement, we selected our favorite '80 model—the F-150 Custom Flareside—for the Top 10 list. It boasted such street-influenced options as a blacked-out grille, aluminum wheels and a handling package. An anemic 351-ci engine was its only handicap, but power has never been the forte of the F-series. This lineup earned a solid reputation and devoted owner loyalty with a wide range of models, trim levels, func-

tional interiors, reliability and recognizable styling. The Eighties' Ford F-series is definitely Top 10 material on any truck list; the only problem is picking a specific model.



'91 GMC Syclone

We made our Top 10 selections before it debuted in GMC showrooms, but the Syclone was the easiest pick. We can honestly state—even with limited time in a few prototypes—that the Syclone is the ultimate street truck. It's the most dramatic development of the same marketing principle introduced with the '55 Chevy Cameo: making trucks more car-like. GMC took a bolder step by designing its Sonoma truck to drive more like a *sports* car. The Syclone is an all-wheel-drive, turbocharged pickup with *gran turismo* body styling and interior comfort. Acceleration is equal to, if not quicker than, a ZR-1 Corvette, and in our opinion, the Syclone is the best handling pickup ever manufactured. With GMC Truck taking more chances than its big sister Chevy, we expect even more performance out of the Syclone in the future to uphold its Top 10 ranking.



blown engine that I wanted for it, though. White— These were heavy-duty (like ¾-ton) pickups built in the late-Thirties. They were designed by Alexis de Sakhnoffski, who also did the Bantam pickup. The Whites have raked windshields and grilles, factory rear fender skirts, long hoods and art-deco trim. They were neat. '49 GMC— I like the grille better than the Chevy's. I'll take mine with a Wayne-head 302 with sidedraft Webers. Corvair Rampside— This was probably the best, most practical van/pickup ever built. '48 Jeepster pickup— A Brooks Stevens design. '63 Jeep Gladiator— I like the body, but the original sohc Hemi 230 inline-six is the real reason I put this on the list. Yet another Brooks Stevens design. Peugeot 202/402— A late-Thirties pickup. It looks like a mini-Chrysler Airflow with the headlights behind the grille.

Jim Knight—editor of *Pickups 'n' Panels* in *Print* magazine, official publication of the National Chevy/GMC Truck Association.

'71-'72 Chevy Cheyenne Super

'66-'72 El Camino (396/454)
'55-'59 Chevy/GMC ½-ton
'55-'58 Chevy Cameo/GMC Suburban Carrier
'72 K5 Blazer
'47-'55 Chevy/GMC Advance Design cab-over tractors
'59-'60 El Camino
'61-'64 Corvair Rampside
Chevy/GMC Vans
Chevy Sedan Deliverys

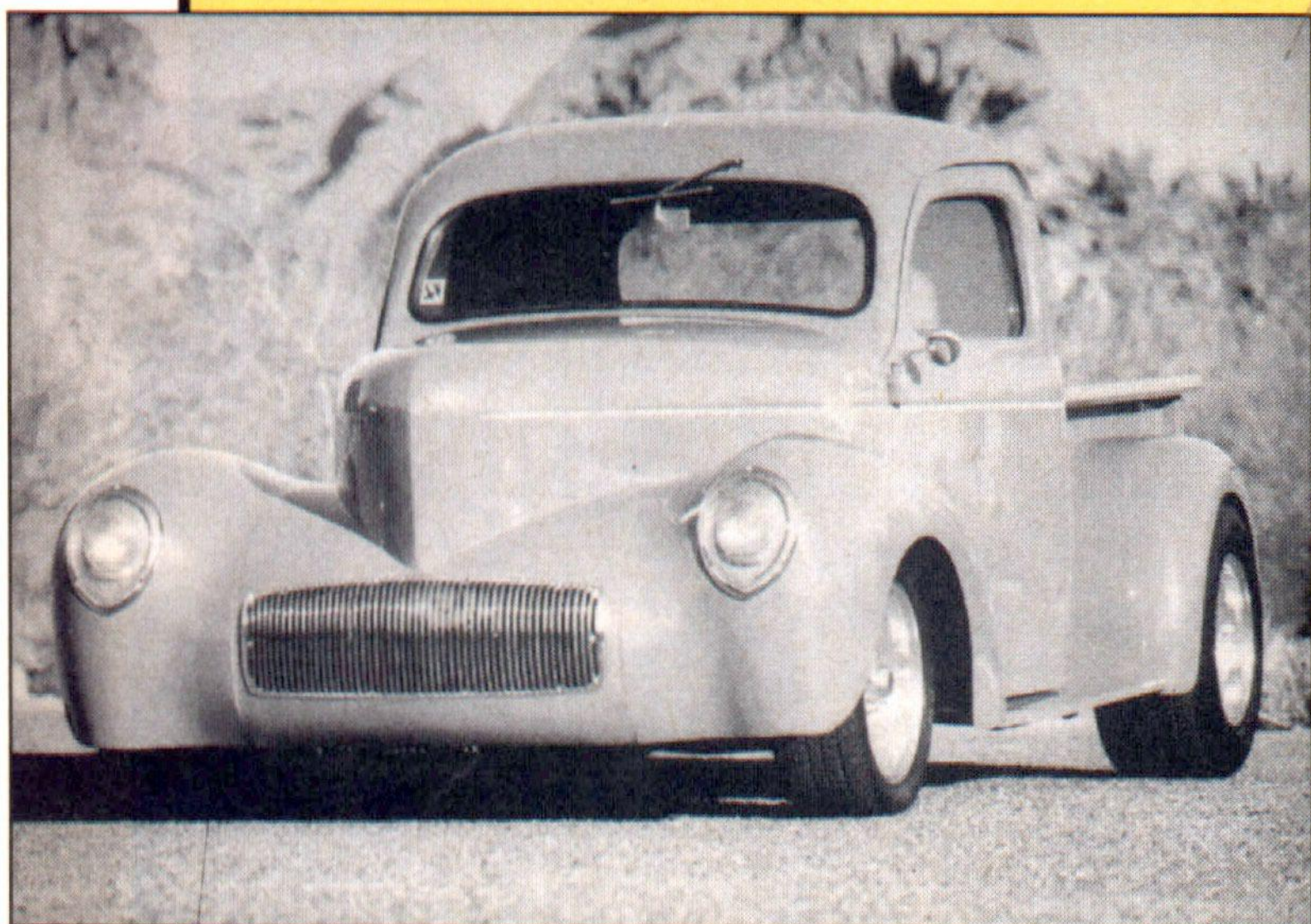
Tom Brownell—chairman of the Light Commercial Vehicle Association. Co-author of *The Heavyweight Book of American Light Trucks and Dodge Pickups History and Restoration Guide: 1914 to 1971*.

'47- early-'55 Chevy— Chevy's Advance Design series are to collectors of the Nineties what the Model A Fords were to the Sixties.
'57-'59 Studebaker Transtar— Bob Bourke's design seemed dated compared to others of the era, but looking back, the Studebaker had the cleanest lines.
'37-'39 International D-series— Styled heavily in the art-deco motif, this is one of

the most handsome trucks of all time.
'67-'72 Chevy— To many, this series captured what a truck should look like.
Dodge Power Wagon— Unquestionably the toughest truck ever built. A classic in its own time.
'55-'57 Chevy Cameo— The first modern-looking wide-box pickup, the Cameo wore a full complement of Fifties' doo-dads.
'78-'79 Dodge Li'l Red Express— Easy to spot. The first muscle truck.
Corvair Rampside— America's most innovative pickup: The loading door is on the side of the pickup.
Hudson pickup— With a car nose and the pickup box, it can be thought of as a forerunner to the Ranchero and the El Camino.
'40-'41 Ford— Probably the most beautiful pickup. It shared Ford's car styling that reflected Edsel Ford's design talent.

Bob Lichty—director of marketing for the Carlisle swap meet. He has written for numerous automotive publications, including *Old Cars Weekly* and *The Standard Catalog of American Light Duty Trucks*.

'55-'56 Chevy Cameo— Best-looking and



'40-'42 Willys

This generation of Willys pickup wasn't chosen for our Top 10 list as the result of a revolutionary platform or mechanical innovations from the factory. It's on the list because it's the foundation for some of the most outrageous street-rod creations. The Willys pickup is fortunate to have a fraternal twin sister, the Willys coupe. With its lightweight construction, the coupe was favored at the drag strip in the Sixties. Memorable A/GS battles between Stone, Woods & Cook, K.S. Pittman and Big John Mazmanian gave birth to a loyal following of Willys fans. That devotion is now manifested in the colorful and highly competitive street-rod scene. In our opinion, there's no better looking pre-'48, street-rod pickup than the '40-'42 Willys. The boat-prow hood, fat fenders and moustache grille are unmistakable signatures. The Willys was an economical workhorse born with stylish lines, but rodders developed it into a classic Top 10 pick.

had the pioneer styling of a U.S.-built pickup.

'48-'53 Chevy 3100— It's still great-looking, especially when it's modified.

'83-'91 Chevy S-10— Most innovative U.S.-built mini-pickup.

'57-'59 Dodge D100 Sweptline— Biggest fins ever put on a pickup.

'09-'27 Ford Model T— Best all-around farm truck that put motorized trucks within reach of the American farmer.

'53-'56 Ford F-100— Just the best classic styling, stock or modified.

'91 GMC Syclone— The fastest, best performance truck ever built.

'40½-'49 International Harvester K-Series— Good-looking, durable and independent.

'49-'60 Studebaker E-Series— Great styling, especially the earlier models. Unique pickup box design.

'46-'62 Willys/Jeep pickup & panel— Rugged, practical and looks great roddeed.

Paul McLaughlin—author of *Ford Pickup Trucks: 1948-1956* and *Ford Pickups: 1957-1967*.

'90 Chevy 454 SS— It brought back the factory hot-rod concept.

'72-'79 Ranchero GTA— A tough, light-duty truck with the flavor and look of a grand touring sedan.

'69 Ranchero GT w/428 Cobra Jet and the '70 El Camino SS454— These rockets offer the best bang for the buck, if you like to travel in straight lines.

'56 Ford F-100 Custom Cab— Its wrap-around windshield produced a cult classic.

'53-'55 Ford F-100— An overnight sensation. The wide "driverized" cabs and bulbous fenders are still appealing.

'47-'55 Chevy 3100— For many people back then, there was no better way to see the USA than from behind the wheel of a Chevrolet.

'55-'57 Chevy Cameo— Prior to the Cameo, truck styling was given a low priority.

'57 Ford Ranchero— A trendsetter.

'40 Ford ½-ton— It stands at the top of the "10 most-wanted list" to most fans of pre-war iron.

'48-'52 Ford F-1— Stock or modified, this line makes for some tough-looking trucks.

'61-'63 Ford Styleside— Ford took the slab-sided pickup box to its logical conclusion: an integral cab/box pickup.

'78 Dodge Li'l Red Express— Came with goodies such as oak sideboards, chrome exhaust stacks and a pumped-up 360 V-8.

'67-'77 Ford F-250 4x4— They look tough, ride tough and have enough muscle to move mountains.

James Flammang—contributing editor for the *Standard Catalog of American Light Duty Trucks* and author of numerous technical and historical automotive books.

'48 Chevy— A down-to-business, yet modern look that suggests vigor and vitality.

'48 Ford F-1— Something about the truck's front end with its inboard headlights makes a person just want to climb aboard and get some work done.

'56 Ford F-100— The modernized, big-

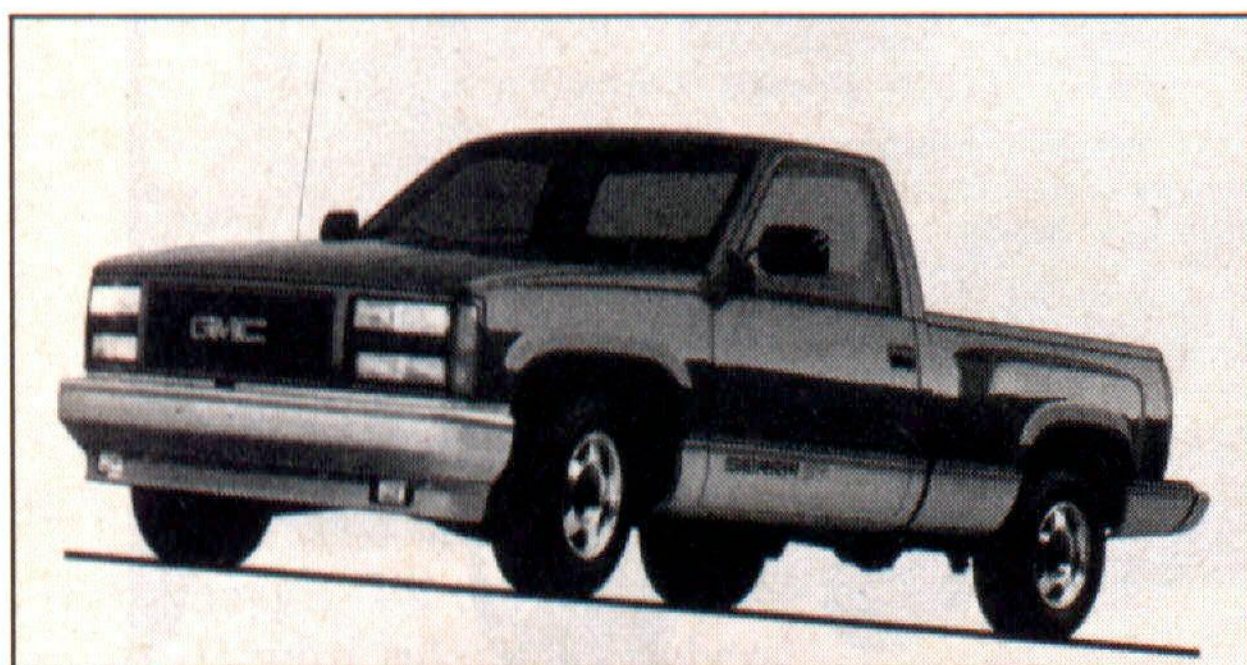
'64-'65 Dodge Custom Sports Special

Dodge has not always concentrated on building the working person's truck, although that is a common perception. Dodge offered creative packages like the Warlock, Dude and Macho. Those options were mostly cosmetic trims that reflected current fads; however, the '64 Custom Sports Special was different. It added the performance of a 365-hp 426 Wedge and sporty convenience options such as vinyl bucket seats, a center console, a tachometer, plush carpeting and racing stripes. Automotive writer Don



Bunn believes at least one unit rolled off the production line with a 426-ci Hemi. Production figures are not available, but Bunn suspects few Custom Sports Spe-

cials were manufactured, because not many are known to exist today. That's unfortunate since it is a truck that was light-years ahead of its time.



'88-'91 Chevy/GMC Sportside

Over \$1 billion were spent on the five-year GMT400 development program at General Motors. The resulting Chevy/GMC C/K trucks are the most refined, technologically advanced full-size pickups on the market today. New features include aerodynamic body lines, a revised suspension, upgraded engines, improved

corrosion protection and a torsion bar IFS on 4x4s. When it debuted in mid-1987, the new Chevy/GMC truck stirred skeptics who questioned the innovations and fancy styling on a work truck. Any concerns about the truck's durability or performance have since been silenced.

Our favorite model born from the GMT400 platform is the Sportside that is marketed by Chevy and GMC Truck. It is the best-looking full-size truck available today, and it's the most unique since no other manufacturer offers a stepside option. If you combine the Sportside with a 5.7-liter V-8, the new Muncie-Getrag five-speed tranny and the high-back bucket seats, you've got the best performing, most stylish, late-model truck on the boulevard.

shouldered body and that front end are too hard to pass over.

'55 Chevy 3100— GMC's version always had a tougher look, but Chevy gets the nod for the availability of the Cameo Carrier.

'36 Dodge— A typical, yet handsome example of pre-war design.

'61 Studebaker Champ— A unique blend of car and truck that took advantage of the fresh Lark sedan design.

'91 (and other recent) Ford Rangers— What more can a reasonable person ask of a compact pickup, short of quicker quarter-mile times?

'91 GMC Syclone— Syclone stretches the compact pickup to its practical limit.

'49 Studebaker 2R— Lighter in look and lower in profile, the Studebaker lagged only in performance.

'78 Dodge Li'l Red Express— One of nearly everyone's choices, no doubt. It's hard to keep off any Top 10 list.

Don Bunn—co-author of *The Heavyweight Book of American Light Trucks*



'53-'56 Ford F-100

No other truck has attracted such a following as the F-100. This particular body style, introduced during Ford's 50th anniversary in 1953, produced the most distinctive truck ever designed. The tall cab, fat fenders, massive front-grille opening and expansive window glass contribute to a classic look that has never gone out of fashion. The F-100 was welcomed by the working class because of its improved suspension, more payload options and a wide range of transmissions. It was one of the first trucks designed with driver ergonomics in mind.

"Henry's Hauler" also became an instant hit with customizers and it has continued to be a favorite with rodders. Our two favorite models are the rare flathead-powered '53 and the '56 "big window" with its wraparound rear glass. Almost 800,000 '53-'56 F-100s were built, yet it seems that no two are alike today. The '53-'56 F-100 can be restored, rodded or heavily modified without losing its character. It is the classic truck by which others are judged.

and Dodge Pickups History and Restoration Guide: 1914-1971.

'35 Dodge KC & KCL— The first pickups offered in two wheelbases and respective long or short boxes.

'40 Dodge VC-3 military pickup— The first production military 4x4 pickup.

'46 Dodge WDX Power Wagon— America's first production 4x4 pickup. Rewrote the book on truck toughness.

'48 Dodge B-series— The first pickup with integral front fenders, a three-man cab and Pilot-House vision.

'54 Dodge w/V-8— The first Dodge pickup with a 241-ci, 145-hp V-8. A 241 Hemi was available in medium-duty trucks.

'57 Dodge D100 Sweptside— The most desirable, collectable Dodge pickup. They featured rear fenders from station wagons and two-tone paint jobs.

'57 Dodge W100 and W200— Dodge's first conventional-cab 4x4s. This model lineup set Dodge firmly in the forefront of the four-by pickup business.

'64 Dodge Custom Sports Special— It was the first high-performance work/play truck ever built.

'73 Dodge Club Cab— The first new idea in cab design since pickups began. So logical and popular, all others developed their own extended-cab models.

'87 Dodge Dakota— First midsize pickup.

From The Petersen Publishing Family

Pat Ganahl—Rod & Custom

'28-'29 Ford closed cab and Roadster pickup

'40-'41 Ford

'48-'50 Ford F-1

'47-'50 Chevy

'55-'57 Chevy Stepside and Cameo

'53-'56 Ford F-100

'57 Ford Ranchero

'59 Chevy El Camino

'58-'59 Dodge D100 Sweptside

'68-'72 El Camino

Steve Campbell—Petersen's 4-Wheel

'88 Chevy 4x4

'59 Ford F-250 4x4

'91 Dodge Dakota V-8 4x4

'80 Ford F-150 4x4

'82 Chevy S-10 4x4

'91 GMC Syclone

'89 Dodge W350 Cummins 4x4

'89 Toyota SR5 XtraCab 4x4

'91 Ford Ranger 4x4

'87 Nissan Hardbody 4x4

Jeff Smith—Hot Rod

'72 Chevy 1/2-ton with 454

'66-'67 El Camino SS396

'65 El Camino w/L79

'91 GMC Syclone

'86-'91 Chevy S-10 V-6

'70 El Camino SS454

'90-'91 Chevy 454 SS

'55-'56 Chevy Cameo

'89 Dodge Dakota convertible

'74 El Camino SS454

T O P 1 0



'78-'79 Dodge Li'l Red Express

While the '55 Cameo is mentioned by experts most often in this Top 10 list, the Dodge Li'l Red Express is the most popular truck on readers' ballots. That's surprising, since we're so often criticized for being a Chevy mouthpiece, and you wouldn't think that we would have a large Dodge following. The big surprise could be that the Li'l Red Express *is* the best truck of all time, since it is also our experts' close second choice. The Li'l Red Express—also known as the Li'l Red Truck (LRT)—is the last true American hot rod that was available from the factory. It was released before federal emission and mileage standards were applied to trucks, and its thunderous, dual-exhaust stacks did not meet many community noise standards. The LRT was powered by a 360-ci E58 police motor; no smog pump or Lean Burn hardware on this engine. Its bumpy camshaft, twin-snorkled Thermo-Quad and 2½-inch exhausts helped net 225 horsepower.

Other performance features included a fast-shifting LoadFlite, a 3.55:1 Sure-Grip differential, a heavy-duty suspension, 60-profile Goodyear radials and full instrumentation. Production models ran the quarter-mile easily in the mid-15-second range, and one automotive magazine cranked an LRT up to 119 mph—the fastest of any American vehicle in 1978.

The LRT has the looks to match its performance. The Canyon Red paint is enhanced with gold-leaf decals, slotted rims, oak sideboards, Adventurer trim and, of course, those distinctive 18-wheeler, chrome-plated exhaust stacks. The LRT is a great resto choice. The '78 model is the most desirable since fewer than 2200 were manufactured. The following year, more than 5000 rolled off the line, but they were detuned with the introduction of smog equipment. Either year, the Li'l Red Express represents the last of the factory hot rods. Although, that spirit has been born again in the GMC Syclone, and superior high-tech innovations make the Syclone the ultimate street truck. But the Li'l Red Express expresses time-honored passions that can be triggered only with raw, big-block torque, throaty exhaust notes and classic pickup styling. Our readers feel the LRT is the greatest truck of all time, and so do we.