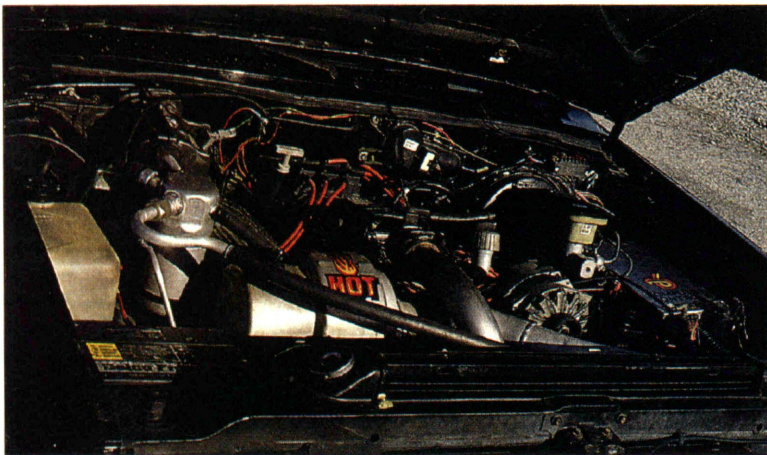


The Original...



Syclone - 1

Building the first prototype Turbo V-6 Pickup



This truck is more than "Just a V-6" as the license indicates. A close look at the hood and wheels bear a distinct resemblance to the Buick Grand National.

Under the hood the Turbocharged Buick V-6, with a few aftermarket goodies, has propelled this truck into the 12s. Interestingly enough, this truck was the prototype for what became the Syclone from GMC.

Note the boost gauge on the far left of the dash — another giveaway this is not just another V-6.



The popularity of light trucks is evident by the number seen on the streets everyday. Until recently though, trucking enthusiasts have devoted their time and money to cosmetically improving their trucks. Now trucking is entering a new era of high performance street trucks.

Perhaps the best example of that new trend is the turbocharged S-10 of St. Louis' Mike Christiansen. From a distance the little black truck could be any other but as you get closer you notice a few emblems that let you know that this is no ordinary S-10 Chevy Pickup.

This shiny truck has a full complement of Buick Grand National emblems, GN wheels, and seats. But it is under the hood where the real nature of this little street sleeper is revealed. A turbocharged 231CID Buick Grand National engine is shoehorned between its rails. This engine is fully tweaked and has pushed the little truck to a best time of 12.57 at 109mph in the quarter mile on street tires. If that isn't impressive enough, the truck gets over 30 miles to the gallon on regular gas when cruising the highways.

Text and Photo by Jeff Burk

The man almost totally responsible for this truck ever being built is Buick Grand National maven Mike Christiansen, also a Buick engineer from the performance division. Mike does Research & Development work and helps Buick with some special projects. In early 1988 he approached Buick about putting a turbocharged 231 Grand National engine into a Chevy S-10 truck. It took until May 1990, before the project was finalized and the 1989 model S-10 truck was on the road. The truck almost never saw the light of day. After the project was finished Buick turned the concept over to GMC and ordered the truck to be destroyed. Fortunately, Mike was able to convince them to let him keep the truck.

The turbocharged engine installation looks to have been an easy job but appearances can be deceiving. In order to get the engine installed, Mike had to move the firewall back three inches. Moving the firewall back that far made room under the hood for the intercooler Mike fabricated and the stock air conditioning unit. Moving the firewall also allowed the stock

GN oil pan to be retained. The steering gearbox and the steering column also had to be relocated.

Make no mistake – this engine swap was not an easy task. Mike explains, “The reason you haven’t seen other people making this swap is that it is hard and takes a lot of time to do. The frame itself requires extensive reworking so that the third exhaust pipe from the turbocharger will clear the frame rail.”

Mike feels that it would take a professional chassis builder two weeks to make the necessary modifications and a do-it-yourselfer type a much longer time.

The engine is basically a stock 1987 Buick V-6 that produces an estimated 300 hp using a Garrett turbocharger and a Bosch GN fuel

injector. Pump gas gets to the injector via a pair of fuel pumps in the stock 12 gallon tank. Fuel pressure is regulated with a Kenne-Bell adjustable regulator. The only non-stock components in the engine are found in the valve train area. The

installed a Kenne-Bell lock up converter switch for a little added performance. The stock driveshaft was retained, but, due to the increased horsepower Mike installed a narrowed 12 bolt Chevy rear-end housing using Richmond 3.73 gears.

With the kind of performance this stealth street machine has, adequate tire print to the pavement and stopping power are of primary concern. The rear tires are Goodyear P255/60 on Grand National 15” x 8” wheels. The front wheels are 15” x 7” GN’s with P225/60 Goodyears. Braking is provided by stock drums on the rear and discs on the front. The brake fluid is pushed by a Buick electric power brake unit.

This little truck represents the ultimate in street truck performance. It will run 12 second quarters with street tires. The addition of slicks should put it in the 11-second zone and nitrous oxide would probably put the little truck into the 10’s and it could still be driven and street legal.

If you want one of your own, all it takes is a turbocharged Buick GN

engine, a late model S-10 truck, lots of time and money and the kit that Kenne-Bell is going to make available for the swap. As we went to press with this story, the kit didn’t have a part number, but a call to Kenne-Bell should get you a kit. If you happen to have all those things, mating them together will give you a truck that will make you the envy and enemy of every other trucker on the street. After all, what red blooded trucker wouldn’t want a truck that will burn the tires off the wheels just by tickling the throttle and will pass everything on the road including the gas stations? It’s too bad Buick killed this project; it’s the kind of truck that could have given the heartbeat brigade a bad case of heartburn. □

“Make no mistake – this engine swap was not an easy task.”



The distinctive Buick logo on the tailgate identifies this as the original Syclone-1. Not just a V-6, this is a high output turbo engine from one of America's quickest production vehicles.

cam is a custom-ground hydraulic cam from Jim Bell at Kenne-Bell. The lifters, push rods and rocker arms also are from Kenne-Bell. A set of AC 44TS plugs and Kenne-Bell 6mm wires furnish the spark. The exhaust gases are handled by a Kenne-Bell 1-7/8” diameter exhaust header. Mike uses five quarts of synthetic oil for lubrication pushed through a Kenne-Bell filter.

Once the engine was installed there were some other modifications and changes that had to be made on the S-10 so that it could be driven both on the street and on the strip and still be dependable. The tranny is a GM-200-4R that Mike rebuilt using a TCI steel flywheel and 11-inch converter with a 2,600rpm stall speed. Mike