

Stovebolt reunion



Arizonan Kent Zimmerman and son Scott brought a 1950 Chevy cabover to the 'Stovebolt' reunion in Midwest.

Kent Zimmerman (left) brought his 1950 Chevrolet cabover from Arizona to the Midwest All Truck Nationals in September in Kansas City, Mo., accompanied by son Scott. Kent is an ATHS member in Mesa, Ariz., and also belongs to the 'Stovebolt.com' group, which held its 12th annual reunion at the truck show.

By Stormy Wylie

PHOTOGRAPHY STORMY WYLIE

Retiring three years ago after a long, satisfying career as a pathologist, Kent Zimmerman knew exactly what he wanted to do next: buy an old truck and fix it up himself.

Kent had wanted an old car or truck since he was a teenager, but didn't have the money. Then life happened. He went to college and medical school and became a doctor, got married, and had children. Now he *really* didn't have the money for an old vehicle.

Finally, Zimmerman is at a place in his life where he can indulge himself—with wife May Gin's blessing, of course.

Since he had absolutely no experience with automotive mechanics, Kent took an auto body class to learn the basics. Now, remember that Zimmerman spent his career as a pathologist, so he was already good with his hands and using tools. This was just a different kind of body work.

Okay, that may have been in poor taste. But it's the truth. Even Kent's oldest son Scott says so.

In fact, this 64-year-old ATHS member is producing some pretty good work. After perfecting his new craft on three old Chevy trucks—1942 and 1951 half-ton pickups and a 1950 2-ton cabover—as well as a 1947 Diamond T 509, Zimmerman now is tackling a frame-up restoration of a 1937 Chevy half-ton truck. He's even learning how to work on engines and brakes.

Kent is quick to give credit to the nearly 36,000 members of Stovebolt.com, a website created by ATHS members John and Peggy Milliman of Mechanicsville, Md., that brings together hobby-

ists who collect classic, pre-1973 GMC and Chevrolet trucks. The site has articles, technical tips, a discussion forum, a swap meet, and much more.

"Bolters," as they are known—the term "stovebolt" refers to the head bolt on a 6-cylinder Chevy or GM engine that resembles something seen on a pot-bellied stove—are a close-knit group. Several ATHS members also are Bolters.

"It's a wonderful place to get information and is a great resource for parts," Kent says.

For the past 12 years, the Stovebolt group has held a reunion in the Greater Kansas City area during the Midwest All Truck Nationals in early September. The Stovebolters hold meetings and seminars, get together for dinner, purchase Stovebolt T-shirts, and, of course, exchange stories and information about their classic Chevy and GMC trucks.

For the second year in a row, Zimmerman traveled 1,200 miles (one way) from his home in Mesa, Ariz., to attend the Stovebolt Reunion. In 2015 he drove his 1951 Chevy pickup from Arizona to Kansas City. Kent wrote about that "trip of a lifetime" in the ATHS Northern Arizona Chapter newsletter, "As the Wheels Turn," which, coincidentally, is written, edited, and designed by Scott Zimmerman, 28, Kent's oldest son.

This year, Scott accompanied his father on the trip to Kansas City for the 12th Annual Stovebolt Reunion. (They trailered Kent's 2-ton 1950 Chevy cabover and pulled it with a gleaming new Chevy pickup.) The truck has been restored to "stock," as Kent says, meaning it is as close to original as possible.

The cabover Chevy—rare, as only about 1.7% of Chevrolet's entire domestic truck production were cab-over-engine models—was built in Kansas City in July 1950 and spent most of its life on a farm in South

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Dakota. “[The truck] was delivered to the dealer as a cab and chassis,” Kent notes. “The grain body and hoist were fitted locally.”

With help from several friends, Zimmerman began restoring his 1950 Chevy cabover in 2008 by taking it apart and then sandblasting and powercoating the frame. The engine, a 1958 remanufactured unit, didn’t need a rebuild, but the 4-speed transmission, hydraulic pump, and 2-speed axle were disassembled and rebuilt. The grain body required all new wood, which Kent built from reclaimed telephone poles.

Zimmerman says his commitment to a stock restoration is simply his own personal philosophy.

“The trucks I’ve purchased have been in pretty darn good shape, so I think it would be criminal to modify them,” he says.

The only real liberty that Zimmerman took with his ‘50 cabover are the wheels. His truck had the type of split-rim “widowmakers” that are considered too dangerous, so he had new Accuride wheels modified to fit his hub and bolt pattern. (A feature that did not go unnoticed at the Stovebolt reunion, as many of these hobbyists have the same issue.)

If things go as planned, Kent may bring his 1937 Chevy to the 2017 Stovebolt Reunion.

So, why Chevrolets? Despite the one Diamond T, Zimmerman is a Bolter through and through.

“It was just an accident,” Kent says of his passion for Chevys. “When I found my first truck, the 1942 half-ton, in Arizona, it was love at first sight.” ■

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