

DRIVER PROTECTION PROGRAM

Relocating an In-Cab Fuel Tank to the Rear of the Frame

Words and Photography by Josh Kaylor

Since the early days of pickup trucks, fuel tanks have evolved from being a vital part of the design to a tucked-away, forgotten container found in, under and around the chassis and the cab. The fuel tank in a Model A Ford was the cowl itself, which was then transferred beneath the seat, then behind the seat, and finally inside the framerails. That's how far we've come, as all of the earlier designs had negatives that helped make the decision to relocate the fuel tank inside the framerails an easy one.

For years, classic truck enthusiasts have been heading to the junkyards to cross-reference sizes of fuel tanks for everything ranging from

mid-'60s Mustangs to late-model minivans for possible inclusion in their truck modifications. For the last decade or so, the aftermarket for classic truck upgrades has really taken off as the popularity of these trucks has grown. Today you can practically build a 1-800 truck simply by calling and having the parts shipped directly to your door, eliminating the need to go junkyard hunting. This has certainly helped the mechanically challenged become at-home builders, and one of the products that has taken off is the gas tank relocation kit. Many early trucks had their gas tanks located inside the cab, which caused nasty fumes to fill the interior. Another drawback was the thought of all that gasoline directly behind you, which you couldn't help but notice simply from the sound of the fuel sloshing around behind the seat. This also resulted in a lack of room for speakers and storage.

The owner of this early '70s Chevy pickup just couldn't take the fumes any longer, and as he plans a 5.3-liter Vortec swap it was a good time to purchase a new fuel tank. After looking at all the available possibilities, he decided on a Kustom Tanks aluminum unit. The 18-gallon

aluminum tank is a direct bolt-in and offers a very affordable (about \$399.99) fuel tank that mounts right between the rear framrails and bolts in with new provided hardware. He ordered the tank with a GM EFI pump (\$245) for the Vortec, as these tanks are available for carbureted engines. The owner held off on ordering a filler neck, as plans for a custom filler are in order.

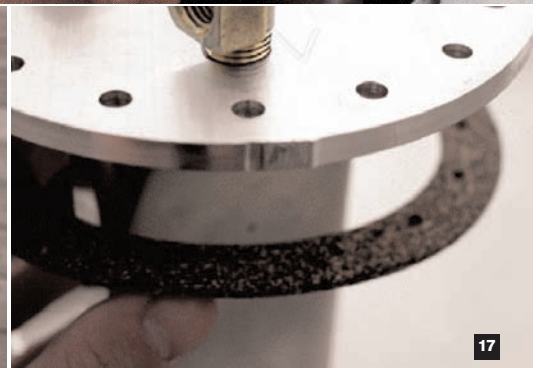
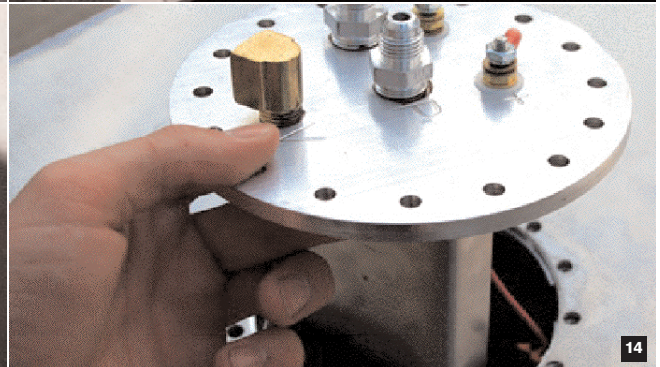
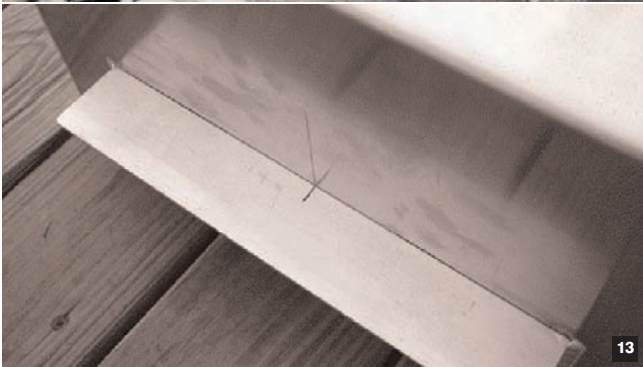
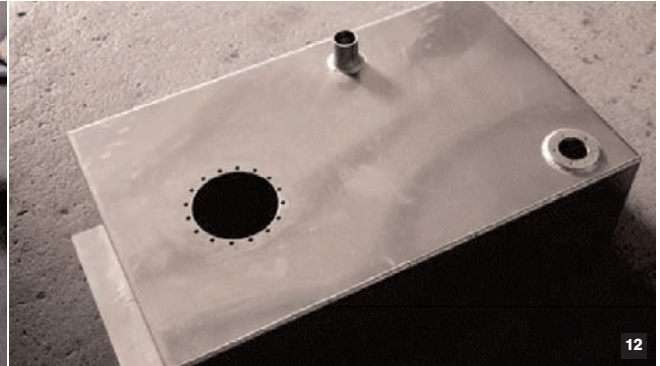
Once the tank was ordered, the stock behind-the-seat unit was removed from the truck and scrapped. About three days later the shiny new tank arrived and work began. All that was needed for the installation was a simple set of hand tools, a drill and the correct-size drill bit. The tank fit quite nicely and took but a few hours to install. While the pump came uninstalled, for a small additional fee the com-

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1 The stock fuel tank is located inside the cab and behind the seat in Chevy trucks from the late '50s through the early '70s. This install began by removing the seat prior to removing the gas tank. You could smell the fumes from the tank—it's time for this thing to go. **2** The first step is to begin unbolting the fuel tank mounting bolts from around the edges of the tank. There is a stud welded behind the tank, which makes removing the bolts much easier. **3** The bolts came out quite nicely, along with the mounting plate located behind each one. After removing the first bolt we quickly learned to hold the plate or they will fall to the floor with a sudden ding. We will not be reusing any of the hardware from the factory tank, but you don't want those bolts rattling around. **4** There are four mounting bolts along the bottom of the fuel tank. A ratchet, along with an extension, makes quick work of removing the bolts. **5** The fuel tank hard line is then disconnected from the cab line. Be sure to have a rag or a paper towel handy, as there may be fuel sitting inside the lines. **6** The 12-volt power running to the fuel-sending unit was then removed. A single 3/8-inch nut holds the connector in place. **7** We then stepped back outside the cab, where we unlocked our fuel cap. With the fuel cap off we can now press the filler neck back inside the cab, which will free the fuel tank. **8** Pressing firmly on the neck of the tank, it proceeded through the hole into the cab. On the other side two people held the tank firmly to keep it from falling over and spilling fuel.



9 The fuel tank can now be removed from the truck. **10** It was decided to take the fuel tank outdoors to let it vent. Since the gas was pretty new, and premium, it was filtered for use in the lawnmower. Hey, at \$3 a gallon we might as well use it.

11 The last work inside the cab is the removal of the hard line running beneath the cab to the frame fuel lines. Just pull the rubber line clamp and the hard line will pull through the floor. **12** Here is the new tank from Kustom Tanks. Kustom Tanks will install any one of many upgrades with the tank. The owner of this truck decided to get a GM fuel injection in-tank pump, since this Chevy will be receiving a 5.3-liter Vortec in the not-so-distant future. **13** The tank is built with these frame brackets on either side. These will lie against the framerrails for mounting. This makes installation much easier. **14** The fuel pump has to be installed into the tank, since the owner chose to purchase the assembly but elected to install the pump himself.

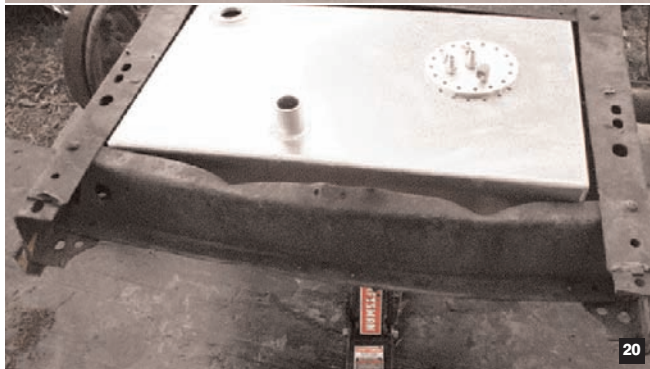
15 The fuel pump ring must first be slid into the tank, and one or two of the mounting screws must be started to hold it in place. **16** With the ring now in place, assemble the fuel pump. A single screw and nut holds the lower assembly in place, and the new Walbro fuel pump is held using a zip tie. **17** Be sure that the gasket provided with the kit is installed around the pump mounting flange. Lower the fuel pump assembly into the tank and begin to start a few of the mounting screws that hold both the ring and the pump in place.



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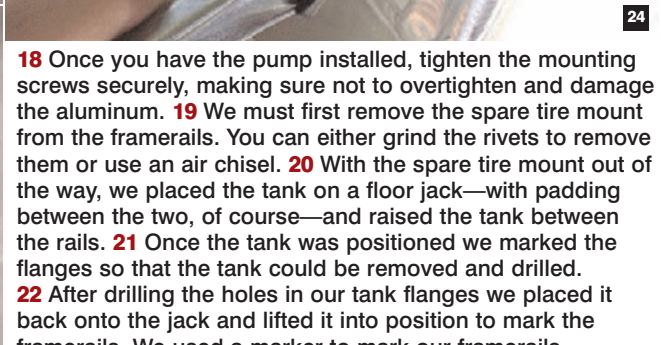
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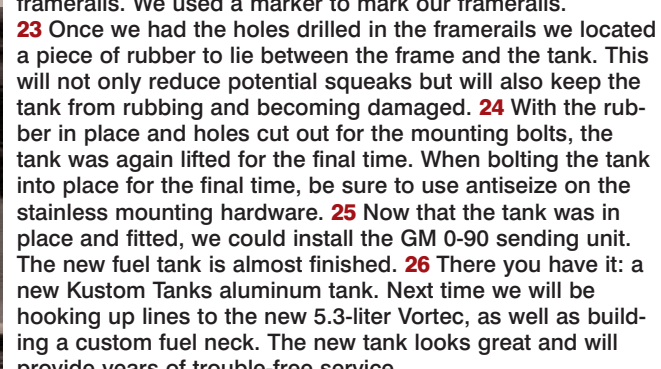
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18 Once you have the pump installed, tighten the mounting screws securely, making sure not to overtighten and damage the aluminum. **19** We must first remove the spare tire mount from the framereils. You can either grind the rivets to remove them or use an air chisel. **20** With the spare tire mount out of the way, we placed the tank on a floor jack—with padding between the two, of course—and raised the tank between the rails. **21** Once the tank was positioned we marked the flanges so that the tank could be removed and drilled.

22 After drilling the holes in our tank flanges we placed it back onto the jack and lifted it into position to mark the framereils. We used a marker to mark our framereils.

23 Once we had the holes drilled in the framereils we located a piece of rubber to lie between the frame and the tank. This will not only reduce potential squeaks but will also keep the tank from rubbing and becoming damaged. **24** With the rubber in place and holes cut out for the mounting bolts, the tank was again lifted for the final time. When bolting the tank into place for the final time, be sure to use antiseize on the stainless mounting hardware. **25** Now that the tank was in place and fitted, we could install the GM 0-90 sending unit. The new fuel tank is almost finished. **26** There you have it: a new Kustom Tanks aluminum tank. Next time we will be hooking up lines to the new 5.3-liter Vortec, as well as building a custom fuel neck. The new tank looks great and will provide years of trouble-free service.