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JUNE 2024



THE ART OF BARE METAL



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ELIOT VANCIL'S 1949 HEBMÜLLER

A METAL MEISTERPIECE

THERE IS SOME RATIONALE FOR FEATURING ELIOT VANCIL'S BARE-METAL, UNFINISHED 1949 BUG IN OUR PAGES, STARTING WITH THE RARITY OF THE MODEL - A TYPE 14 HEBMÜLLER WITH AN INTERESTING STORY BEHIND IT. WE ALSO FEEL COMPELLED TO SHOW YOU THE BEAUTY OF THE BODY, WITHOUT A DROP OF PAINT. HOW DO YOU ATTAIN SUCH PERFECTION? LET'S FIND OUT...

BY STEPHAN SZANTAI

As VW enthusiasts, we all know how to appreciate beautifully painted cars. Yet how many of them are hiding poorly done repairs and thick coats of filler? The convertible featured within these pages has none of the above. The glowing and arrow-straight panels, along with the lines and position of the side moldings are simply perfect. Not surprisingly, well-established car builders love to display their project cars in bare metal, as it underlines the quality of their work - and this specific example was done by some of the best in the business.

The property of Eliot Vancil, it appeared in all its glory at the 2022 Grand National Roadster Show, where it wowed the crowd. The quality of the metalwork, courtesy of Type One Restorations in Arizona, is simply second to none. Eliot's VW happens to be a rare Type 14 Hebmüller, one of 696 built, thus making it extra special too.

The Texas resident is no stranger to the pages of hotVWs, as we have previously featured some of his rides. Growing up in the Dallas area, he came to appreciate Volkswagens thanks to his dad's '64 Beetle and his uncle Bobby who raced a VW-powered Fiat drag car. Eliot has since become a prominent Vee-Dub collector, with his fleet currently welcoming circa 100

Though looking fantastic as seen here, the car will receive some drastic changes. In fact, you might be hard-pressed to recognize it when it will be unveiled at the next Grand National Roadster Show in Pomona, California.



BUILT QUALITY IS BETTER THAN IN 1949

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Without canvas fitted on, you better understand the intricacies of the top's installation that mixes a steel frame, wooden bows, rear window frame, straps etc.

models, including several 1940s and '50s treasures.

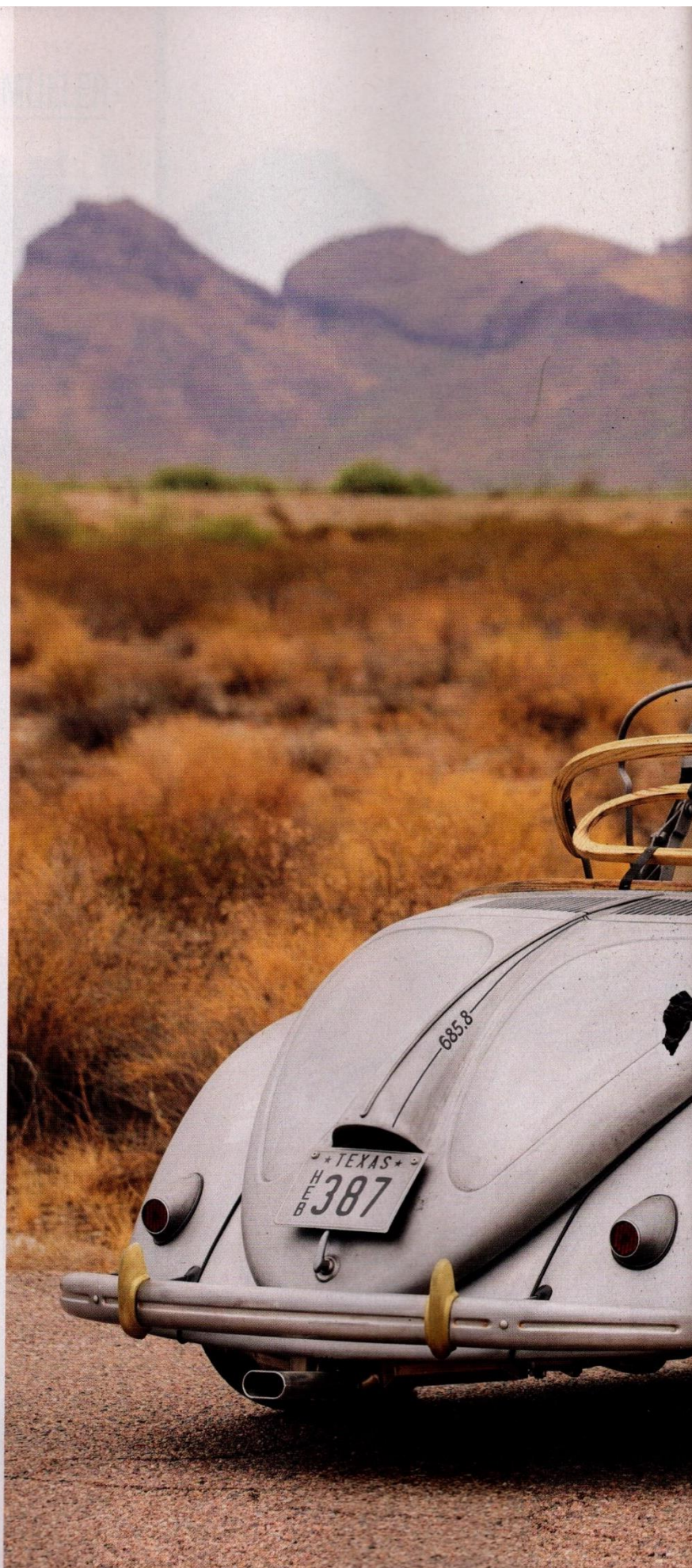
THANKS CHRISTIAN!

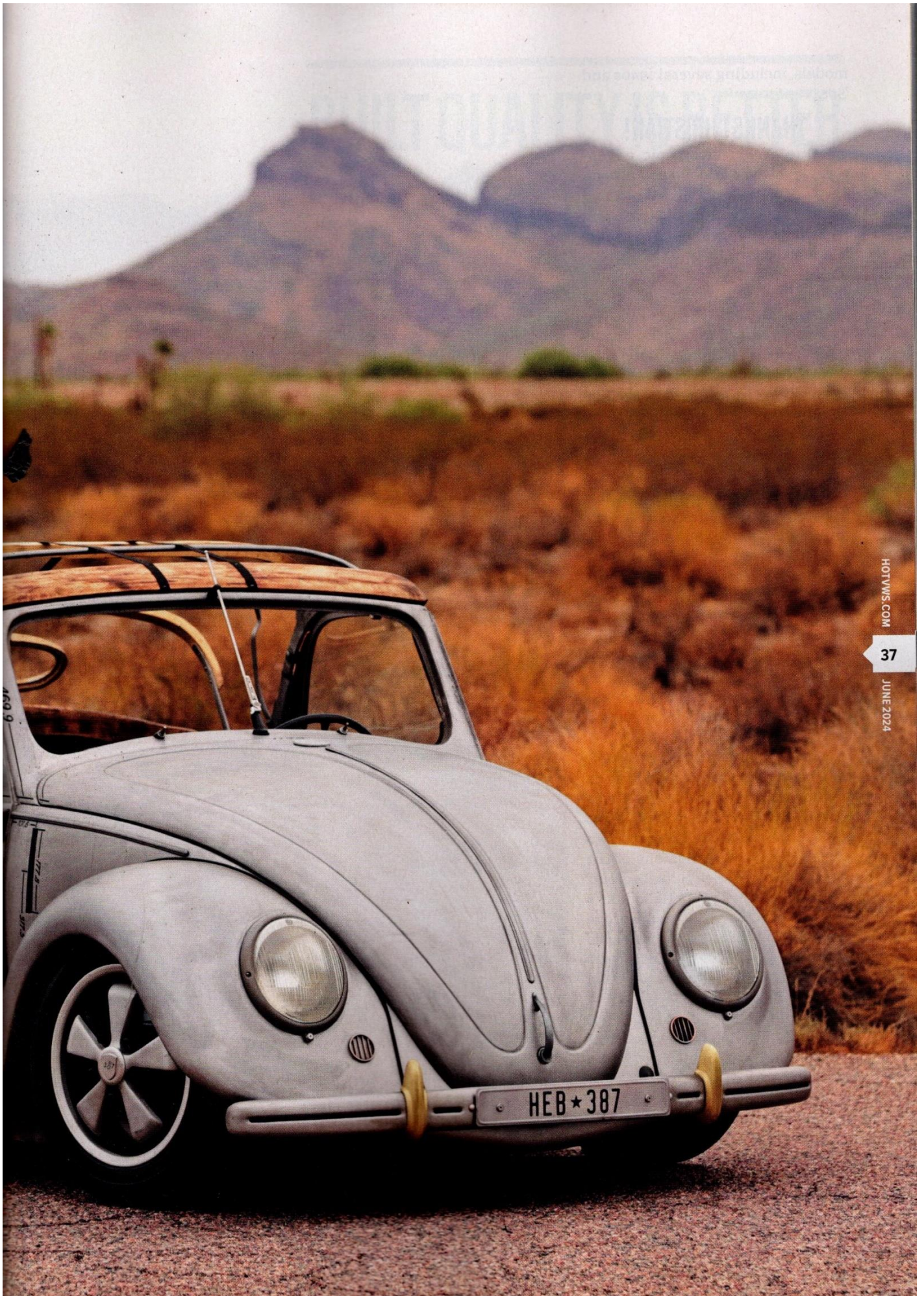
One of his most epic adventures involved a Fridolin postal vehicle, which he picked up with friend Konstantin Lytvynchuk in the Check Republic in 2014 – see hotVWs' October 2016 issue. This trip allowed him to visit vintage Volkswagen collector Christian Grundmann in Germany, leading to a great friendship. Christian even helped him score a few amazing rides, such as a '42 Schwimmwagen, a '47 Beetle and... this '49 Hebmüller. Buying it proved to be an intense experience, as Eliot had to secure the funds immediately to get not only this car but also a '50 Karmann Cabriolet, both tied up in a German estate. He ultimately managed to have the duo join his fleet, with invaluable help from another respected VW collector in the U.S., Gene Langen.

"The Heb didn't really look all that bad when I got it," ponders Eliot. "Having been in a collision in the 1960s, it received the front end from a '60s-era Bug and a '54 non-stamped NOS pan to bring it back into compliance and road worthiness in Germany. Unfortunately, they discarded the wrecked front end with the Hebmüller production number"

Eliot had fun with the convertible for a while, after dropping the body on a slammed pan with Porsche Fuchs wheels. But there was a lot more to come... Later on, he was introduced to Steve "SteVWe" Dressler, one of the brains behind the Heb Hunters group, dedicated to preserving Hebmüller's history. SteVWe, who would prove instrumental in bringing the vehicle back to its glory days, explains: "It was the first 'online' collaborative build with the Hebmüller Registry and 12 highly knowledgeable experts worldwide. We started five years ago, and everyone chipped in to get the docs and history straight first, and then the metal just as it came out in 1949."

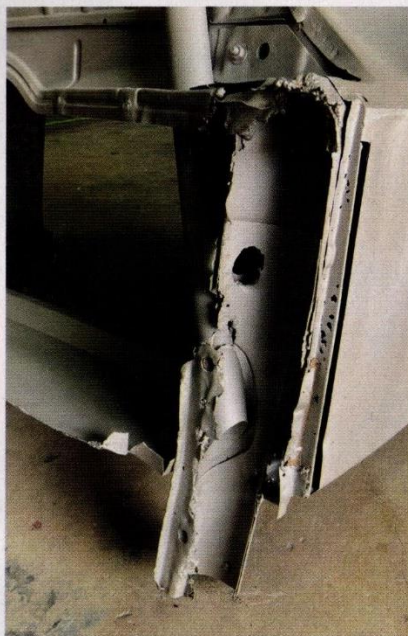
As a fan of bare metal project cars from coachbuilders such as Steve Moal, Eliot dreamed about showing the Heb in bare metal prior to painting. He thereby delivered it to a Texan builder described by many as a "metal magician". The experience ended up being







A one-off jig allowed the crew to mount the chassis, starting with the bulkhead – it was 70% rusted out. Then came the body. Among the many challenges: the front and rear clips were twisted in opposite direction due to impact and fatigue. What a job!



How rotten was the shell? Well, filler and multiple coats of paint hid these types of surprises...



"I would love to keep this car in bare metal, but it's just not realistic," commented Eliot about his project car. Incidentally, it features perfect gaps around the doors, hood and engine lid.



Hard to believe... These are the two main pieces that led to the car featured within these pages!



"What was left of the badly cutup body was rusted or completely gone," said Buddy.



Some panels came from Wolfparts, others from... a very clean, stock '49 Split Bug.



In many areas, the remaining metal was extremely thin, measuring 28 gauges.



After fixing the severely rusted and damaged tunnel, the team spot welded in new pan halves.



Thanks to a second jig used to mount the windshield, the crew could fit other panels.



Mocking up the rear quarter panels in great shape... The '49 sedan supplied these pieces.



Reunited, at last! The convertible top mechanism, requiring a ton of work in particular.



The decklid was usable, though it required many hours of straightening and massaging. Help from the Heb Hunters proved invaluable during the seven-month restoration.

THE QUEST FOR PERFECTION

"We had no clue of the challenges that were ahead of us," concedes Buddy, the man behind Type One Restorations. With help from the Hebmüller experts assembled by SteVWe, he managed to solve a number of problems, including figuring out some key measurements, which often varied from one Heb to another. Remember, these were hand-built automobiles... Buddy first began to tool up by spending about \$35,000 on TIG and Pro-Spot welders, together with a TMG planishing hammer. With help from Carlos Castro, he went to work, first by building a jig to mount the chassis, allowing them to twist it back to its original location and restore it with new pan halves.

The body came next. With another jig supporting the windshield posts, Carlos and Buddy could tackle the next tasks: welding up the bottom door jams, reconstructing the rockers and inner kick panels from scratch, repairing the hacked-up dash, forming the lower dash area, creating the semaphore boxes etc. Numerous components came from the '49 sedan mentioned in our story, along with new panels from

Wolfparts. Incidentally, the hood originally equipped a '65 Bug, though you would be hard-pressed to recognize it now.

The door proved especially challenging, since the team only used the upper 3 inches of the outside skin – a four-week process. Next came the restoration of the correct aluminum window frames. Another major project involved the installation of the rear portion of the body. "We only had the upper 6 inches to start with," ponders Buddy. The inner seat area required various hand-fabricated inner braces, based on measurements and photos. Later, the MIG welder was put to good use to duplicate the factory welds on the inner brackets, rear firewall and luggage tray, rear seat brackets, convertible top brackets...

It took Buddy and Carlos seven months to complete the body and chassis, before they could begin the assembly to display the car in bare metal at the 2022 Grand National Roadster Show. "It received a lot of praise from high-end hot rod builders," concludes Buddy. We can't wait to see the completed HEB387 at the 2025 GNRS!

a major disappointment, as nothing happened once this gentleman cut the car in pieces without taking any measurements. That's when Eliot called his friend Buddy Hale at Type One Restorations, announcing that they would be collaborating on the rebuild. Buddy was adamant that he could morph the 'vert into a bare metal showpiece.

WHAT'S THAT NUMBER?

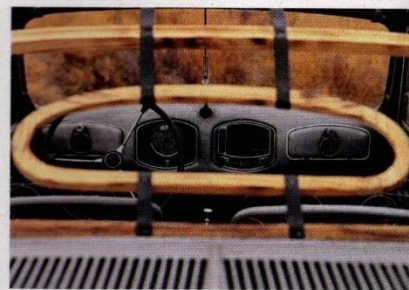
One of the challenges faced during the reconstruction was to determine the Hebmüller's "14-00XXX" production number. Buddy ultimately managed to uncover a faded stenciled number on the vehicle's bulkhead, applied on Type 14s that came out of the factory after it burned in July 1949. Working closely with the registry folks, it allowed them to guess the correct production number, which led Volkswagen to positively identify the seven digits: 14-00387.

Though Eliot started as a Cal Look/custom VW guy, he wanted to get the body and chassis as period correct as possible. He even went as far as supplying Buddy with a stock "donor" '49 Beetle in good shape... which gave plenty of its components, such as the pan, suspension and many of its body panels! Due to the Heb's '49 engine missing, Eliot decided to build another '49 motor with a little more grunt, though it will eventually be replaced with an even nuttier '49 powerplant – we'll talk about it via a future article. For the sake of safety, he also chose to replace the cable brakes with an hydraulic setup. Yet it precisely follows the instructions from a 1950 VW service manual provided by the aforementioned Heb Builders online group.

Elsewhere in this article, you will find a sidebar featuring restoration pictures supplied by Buddy, with plenty of additional details about what went on to create this metal masterpiece. The project is obviously far from being done, as Eliot's vision is to pay homage to the Vintage Speed era. "The car will be built like they would have done it in the 1950s," adds the proud owner. "There is absolutely no one better than Type One Restorations to get the job done. As a lifetime Volkswagen enthusiast, it's been a dream come true to see this car brought back to its glory days." **HWWS**



The lack of paint shows the amazing quality of the metalwork in the trunk as well.



The dash welcomes a handful of goodies, such as a Blaupunkt radio and dual glove box doors.



Notice the brushed alloy finish on the three-spoke steering wheel to match the bare metal.



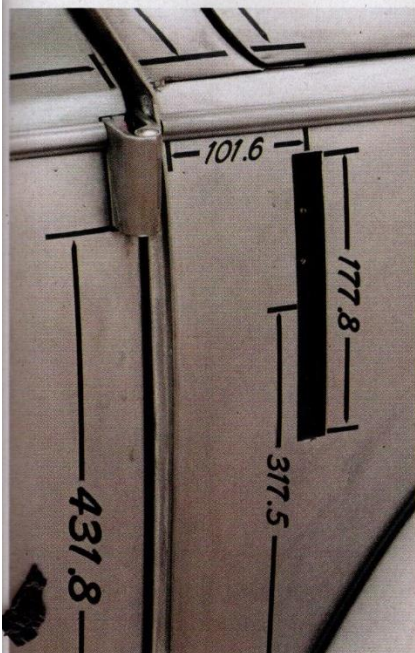
Restoration has already started on the 1949 seats. This is how they look so far.



This photo illustrates how Hebmüller designed the area behind the front seats.



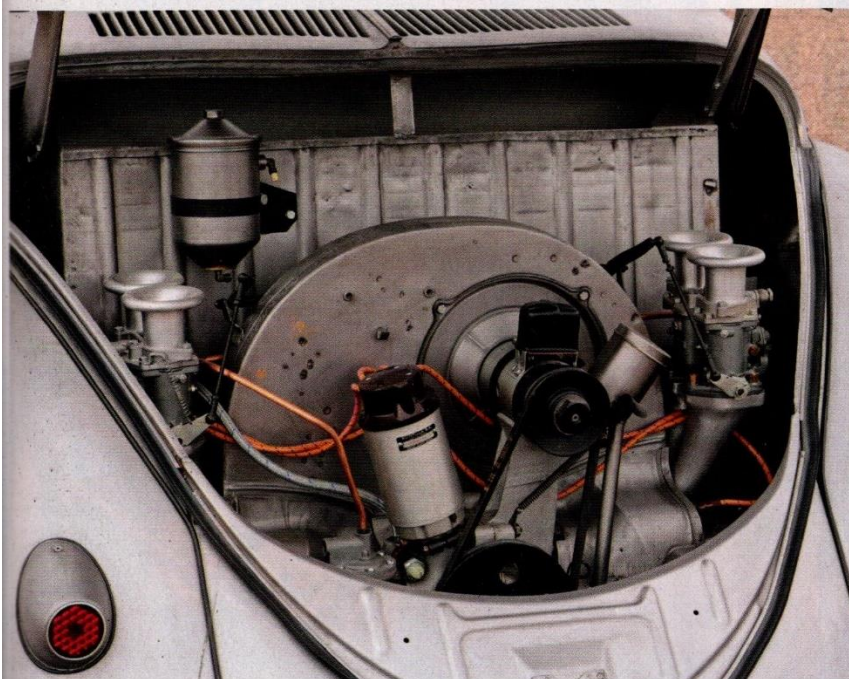
The Vintage Speed exhaust is reminiscent of the Sebring model found on Porsche 356s.



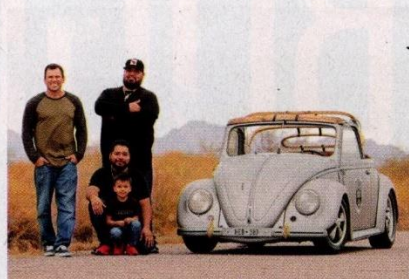
Just for fun... Measurements follow the "industrial theme" of the car in its present shape.



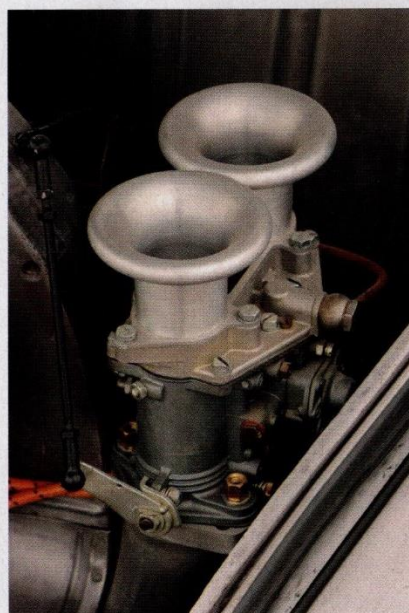
Thanks to over a dozen members from the Hebmüller Registry, Eliot and Buddy managed to gather key information to accurately restore the vehicle to late 1949 standards.



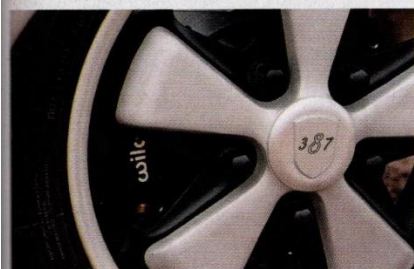
This mocked up 1949 Beetle engine will soon be replaced by an even wilder "25 Horse"!



The main crew that made it happen: Buddy, Jesus and Carlos (kneeling with son little Carlos). Very talented folks!



The 1620cc motor is topped with a pair of Solex P11 carbs featuring custom velocity stacks.



Though the 'vert currently sits on Fuchs wheels, it will likely end up with 356 rims.



While not final, the license plate was specially made for Eliot Vancil's Heb No. 387.