

Pro Re-Street: Mark Michals's Transformed Chevy II Words and Photos by Taylor Haney

Just like most of life, car projects are forever evolving. Cars are often seen as a form of expression and passion that is fed by hours in the garage, time and money. Mark Michal's vision for his 1964 first-generation Chevy Nova illustrates that evolving passion that goes into building a car for track or street.

Mark purchased the Nova in 1983 in a "twist of fate" as he puts it. After totaling his 1967 SS El Camino, he decided shop around for a new toy:

"I was living in the little town of Marietta Ohio 1983, and there was a dealer in Parkersburg that had some southern street machines for sale. I had my eye on a 1971 big block Monte Carlo that I had plans to make an offer on. But when I got there the Monte was already sold so I said "what else do ya got ?" and he showed me the 1964 Chevy II Nova with a radical solid lift cam and 3 speed tranny. The price was right and she sounded pretty nasty. The choice was made and I drove her home."

Mark's decision to turn the Nova into a drag car came naturally growing up in a family of mechanics and race junkies. During his teen years, he got hooked on drag racing through his father's friend George Long, who ran a 1967 Camaro in NHRA Super Stock called "Long Gone." From then on he knew he was hooked on going fast.

The Nova ran in the mid-11s during the four years he ran it. In the process, Mark met his wife, Janet, in between changing jobs in the airline industry.

"The car sat at my parents place from 1984 (still as a Pro Street car) while I changed jobs in 1986, married the love of my life Janet and went to work for Northwest Airlines in Minneapolis," says Mark. "I changed jobs again in late 1987 and we moved back to western Pennsylvania and I started working for US Air in Pittsburgh. Around 1992 we decided that it was time to hit it hard on the Nova and try my hand at bracket racing, along with restoring a 1972 RS Camaro for Janet. The goal was to race in the somewhat new NHRA class of Super Street (heads up start 10.90 et)."

Mark and his wife Janet both share a deep passion for cars and racing.

Later on, in a combined effort in fixing up the Nova, Mark and his brother-in-law Mike Wimer went to work. Mike sculpted the bodywork on the car while Mark headed the modding and fabricating front. Mark continued to race the Nova even with the arrival of his daughter Amber in 1996. Summer of 2000 brought heartache when the engine "grenaded in a big way", as he put it. In conjunction with the 9/11 tragedy and US Airways filing for bankruptcy, the build was put on hold once again.

Mark moved to Memphis soon after to work for FedEx with family and toys in tow. With a fresh start on the horizon, Mark and his wife Janet decided on building her Camaro and put his Nova

back to street legal. "After getting to the point of building a workshop we decided that racing was a good way to stay poor, so with Janet's Camaro already in show condition, we opted to put the Nova back on the street."

As Mark has figured out long ago, you have to pay to play when it comes to restoring, modifying and racing cars.

Mark calls the new transformation "Pro Re-Street," which is an effort to make the car streetable and more than just "a race car with a license plate." In support of this effort, Mark is making plans to put in a full interior to make the Nova feel more "street legal" again. In addition, he says he is "looking into a Gear Vendors overdrive unit as the 5.13:1 gear ratio is fun, it's not very practical. Also looking at a tunnel ram with dual EFI down the road as I want modern technology hidden for an old school look, but high tech performance."

Mark has proved his dedication to this build with his craftsmanship. The Nova's chassis was built with a modified front frame by Mark mostly because there weren't any kits made for that car at the time. Mark also connected the front fenders for easy one-piece removal, stretched the rear wheel wells 4 inches, and put an 8-gallon fuel cell in the trunk. In addition, he wired up his own switch panel on the ceiling for his drag racing days. This car truly is an intimidating street machine.

We look forward to seeing the progress on Mark's Nova in his efforts to "re-street" this beast.