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Raccoons Evicted, Restoration Started

ROUTE 66 NOVA

By Arvid Svendsen

The musclecar hobby is filled with people who dream of one day owning a car that they have admired only from a distance.

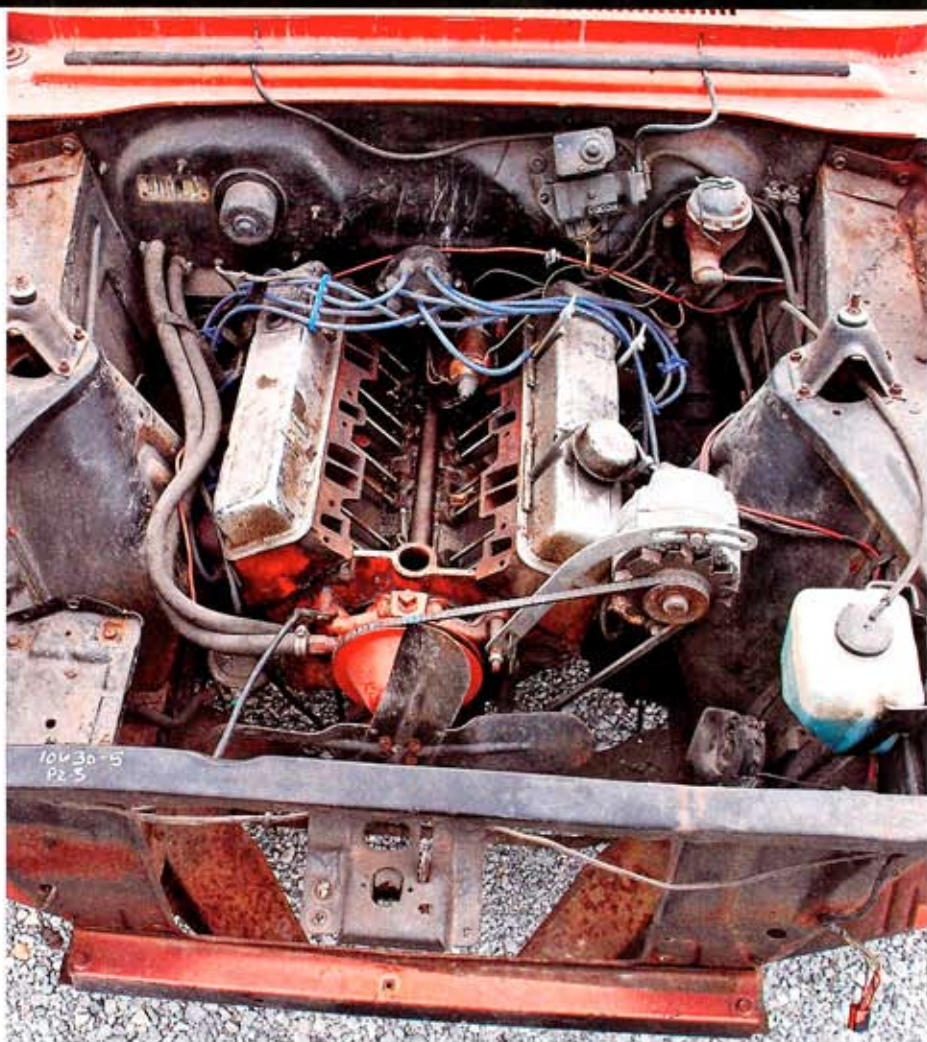
While I was growing up in New Jersey, it was Stan's '67 Marina Blue Nova SS that cemented my '66-'67 Nova covetousness. Others have been smitten by that same Nova bug. For many Chevy guys, the second generation Nova was, and still is, regarded as the ultimate "junior musclecar." The combo of a small-block engine in a lightweight package would

often put the bigger-inch musclecars on the trailer at the race track.

A '66 Nova L79 was raced by Bill "Grumpy" Jenkins in NHRA Stock Eliminator's A/S class—a car that was, in fact, the first of the infamous *Grumpy's Toy* racecars. Other racers, like Duane Goodman and Bill Thomas, saw great results from the newly redesigned Nova. With a solid racing heritage, stunning good looks and performance to match, it's little wonder the '66-'67 Novas remain among the most popular small-block screamers of all time.

L79 was the code used on the 1966 option sheet to designate the 327/350-horse motor. Rated at 350 horsepower at 5,800 rpm, and 360 lb-ft of torque at 3,600 rpm, the "Zi" screamin' small-block was packed with forged 11.0:1 high-compression pistons and a forged-steel crank. "Double hump" iron heads held 2.02 intake and 1.60 exhaust valves, moved along by the 0.447-lift hydraulic-lifter cam. A Holley 600-cfm carburetor sat atop a factory dual-plane aluminum intake manifold.

Though 5,481 Novas were equipped with



The original, numbers-matching motor and Muncie four-speed were included in the purchase, but the car presently sports a garden-variety small-block. The original components will be rebuilt and returned to their proper home.

the L79 option, it's been estimated that about a thousand of them were either post cars or sport coupes, with possibly a few wagons thrown into the mix. The remaining L79s went into the Nova SS body. While we searched for a good L79 candidate to feature in this issue, we learned that Bill Jelinek of Rt. 66 Motorsports in New Lenox, Illinois, had just purchased a numbers-matching Aztec Bronze L79 Nova SS.

Expect big things from this recent find. Jelinek's '66 will undergo a complete restoration, with close attention paid to bringing the car back to original specs. The only major component missing from the car is the original 12-bolt rear (no great surprise there), but one will be found. Bill showed off his newest acquisition in its "as found" state. It's not pristine, and it needs work, but it's a real L79.

The car had been hit in the driver's front, which sentenced it to sit for the past 10 or so years. Though the original motor is not

in the engine bay, the original 327 and Muncie transmission were included in the purchase. Because of the damage to the front end, the hood and driver's fender will be replaced. Also, the front doghouse will be replaced with one that Bill already located in California.

The Nova sports rust around the rear wheelwell lips on both quarter panels, though the passenger quarter seems worse than the driver's quarter. Excellent aftermarket panels are available for the '66-'67 Nova, but both the original quarters on Jelinek's car will be saved. The trunk floor is very solid, and the glass channels appear to be in good shape. Most of the chrome, interior pieces and hard-to-find trim parts are present and accounted for. Bill had already wisely removed the rear trunk panel and data plate prior to these pictures being taken.

The car will be squirted in the original Aztec Bronze, with the original SS hub-

caps and redline tires, giving it the perfect factory look. The black interior needs to be touched up a bit, especially after a raccoon mama and four babies took up residence. The family was finally evicted; animal lover Bill patiently waited until they waddled away into the night.

Rt. 66 Motorsports has built a reputation in the Midwest for delivering top-shelf restorations of some very exclusive cars. Recent projects include a '67 427 Impala SS, a '70 429 Torino and a lift-off-hood Super Bee. Bill's freshly restored '70 Chevelle SS396 was the recent winner of the 2007 ChevyVette Fest's new "Diamond Award," given to the most outstanding car making its first showing in the "Restored" class. Suffice it to say, the L79 is in good hands. Look for coverage on the restoration in future *MCR* issues, where we'll be passing along valuable information and tips that will help you get your project on the road.

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Bill Jelinek, owner and operator of Rt. 66 Motorsports, knew about this numbers-matching L79 Nova for about 10 years and had established "first dibs" with the owner. When the car became available, it took one look for Bill to declare, "I'll take it."



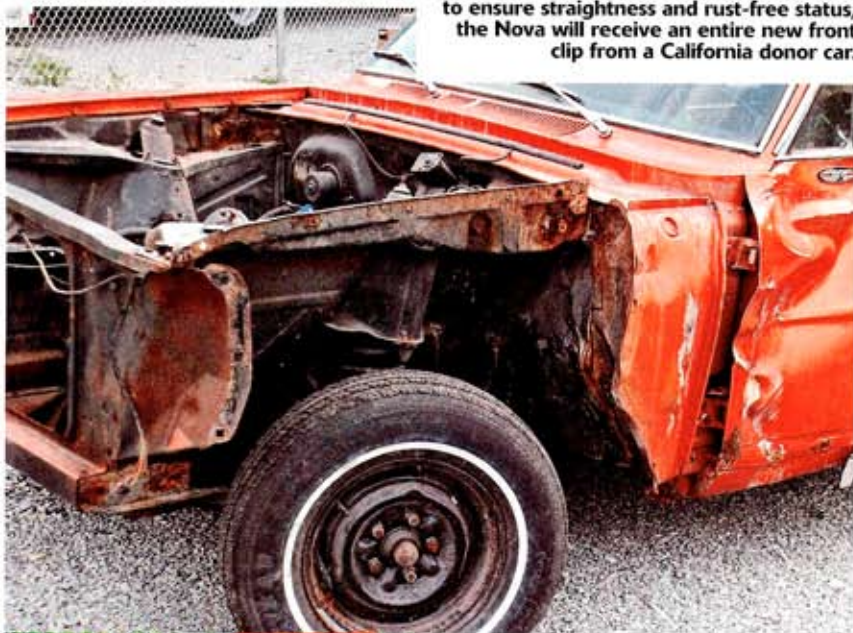
The interior was better than it had been two weeks prior to pictures, thanks to a raccoon family that found shelter at Hotel Nova L79.

The driver's quarter panel is fairly solid, though there will likely be some minor rust issues to address once all the exterior trim is removed. There's some significant bubbling around the rear quarter glass that will also be surgically removed and repaired. Bill feels the quarter panels can be repaired, so neither will be replaced.





Some time ago, the car was hit in the front driver's side, causing significant damage to the hood, fender and door. The entire front clip—framersails to inner fender panels—bolts to the attachment points at the firewall. Typical rust was found at the attachment points to the firewall. In order to ensure straightness and rust-free status, the Nova will receive an entire new front clip from a California donor car.



Source

Rt. 66 Motorsports
708-997-CARS (2277)
www.rt66motorsports.com

OK, how many of us have had to address various "guests" that have taken up residence in our project cars? Fortunately, these critters left without a struggle. *MCR*

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