

Shoulda had a V-8: Not just veggie PiMp Juice anymore!

Part I: The beginning of the 5.3 GM Vortec swap.

So a chef, a mechanic and an electrician..... sound like the beginning of a joke?! Well the swapping of a 4-banger to a 5.3 Vortec V-8 started on Saturday September 20th. I felt about as lost as a mechanic in a classical kitchen, tools in hand and ready to go with the likes of a Thomas Keller or Charlie Trotter. Here, take this case of onions, carrots and celery, I need each of those diced bruniose, some lean ground veal, egg whites and fond de veau...go make a perfectly clear consommé and to top it off let's serve it with molecular gastronomy porcini noodle strands! "HA how 'bout 'dems apples"!

I knew I had to unbolt a bunch of stuff, unplug a bunch of stuff, take a bunch of big things out and create a large space for the V-8. This was the first day of a three to four day process. Mitch Hess of RMHE in Denver is about as top dog in the transmission and engine business as either of the two chefs mentioned are in the Culinary field...straight up, top notch, big dog, pimp daddy status!

It was comforting to know as I embarked on this endeavor I had the expertise of Mitch to guide me through. The t-case came off without a hitch, Mitch was happy to see it was already set up with the stouter 29 spline output shaft. "With the way you wheel DeNittis had you had the 21 spline shaft it would have exploded long ago for sure" was his comment.

Next was to remove the NV4500 transmission, go big or go home we say, I had blown the AX-15 three times back in 2004 before finally going with something that could stand up to my heavy right foot. No problems with taking the transmission out.

Just as I was going into the engine compartment is when Jon arrived! Jon is the electrical-guru-wizard master, the Anthony Bourdain of the electrical world if you will. Jon and Mitch both looked at my so-called-wiring of electrical accessories and just shook their heads, "If this thing is going to have my name on it when it leaves here after a V-8 swap no part of any electrical will look like that poor bird's nest!" was Mitch's response. I guess I need to work on my electrical skills as I do my welding...at least the welding doesn't have much goose poop anymore. Really it's no different than each and every finished plate going out perfectly to the dining rooms of my past. It's quite simple run with the big dogs or stay on the porch with the puppies.

The first round of parts had come in and a quick check of the packing list showed everything but the motor mounts came in as they were on backorder. The Centerforce Clutch, Advanced Adapters plates, bell housing, all the other goodies along with the new aluminum radiator were all in order. The wiring harness and new computer from Howell should come in this next week sometime.

Well the end of the day and no major crisis! I still have all my fingers and toes, that's a plus. I am looking forward to next week, cleaning up the old 4-cylinder to part out and sell to recoup some of the costs. Also I will start prepping the V-8 to go in. It was a relief to find that all of my transmission and t-case was ready and had all the stout parts to match up to the fierce fury of the new 8 hamsters.

PART 2: COMING SOON!