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Fully functional customs

By Jim Allen Photography: Jim Allen

If you knew the builder of these trucks also built real firefighting brush trucks, would you call "Lil Squirt" and "Silly Willy" art imitating life, or life imitating art? If you ask Jeff Cook, owner of 1st Attack Engineering, he'll answer, "Both!"

Cook is a graduate of "Monster Truck University" and "Custom Truck College," as well as a trained firefighter with 18 years experience. It makes for an interesting mix of experience. Shortly after graduating from Northwestern College with a tech degree, Cook went headlong into the world of monster trucks, building and driving trucks for several teams, including his own, the legendary "War Wagon". His father, Jack Cook, is well known in the Midwest for building custom cars and trucks and Jeff spent his early days at Cook's Body Shop in Auburn, Indiana, learning the custom car trade from a master.

After becoming a local volunteer firefighter, he put those fabrication

skills to work building a brush truck for his fire company. In the process, he discovered a life's work and founded a company, Wildfire Manufacturing. While not running the monster truck circuit, he built fire trucks. Business picked up enough that he recently left monster trucks behind to focus on fire trucks. The name of the company has recently changed to 1st Attack Engineering after nearly 10 years as Wildfire.

Silly Willy was constructed in 2002 to highlight the design and construction skills of the company. It's built on a custom chassis and suspension and mounts a '52

Willy pickup cab. Lil Squirt was built in '05, also on a custom chassis, but with four-wheel steering. Both have a lot of "show" and are regularly seen on the show and truck Jambo circuits, as well as at firefighting conventions.

They have a "go" side, however, and it may surprise you. They are both fully functional brush trucks, mounting 1st Attack hardware, and every once in a while, they are allowed to flex their firefighting muscles. Such was the case in the fall of 2008, when they appeared at a training fire set in a wheat field. Yep, they may be "just" show trucks, but they can do the job of a brush fire truck. When asked why he would risk the expensive trucks, Cook replied, "Oh, they'll clean up."



◁As dark clouds roil on the horizon, Silly Willy and Lil Squirt are equally ready for the next truck show or the next brush fire.



▽Into the breach! Lil Squirt does what any good brush truck does in a wheat stubble fire—put it out as quickly as possible. With around 850 horsepower on tap, “quick” definitely applies.

CHARIOTS OF FIRE





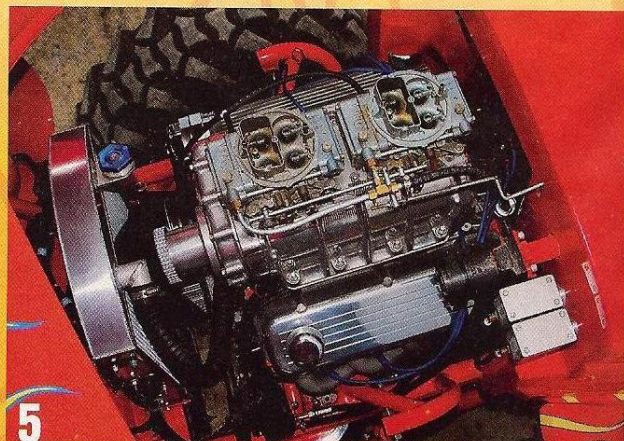
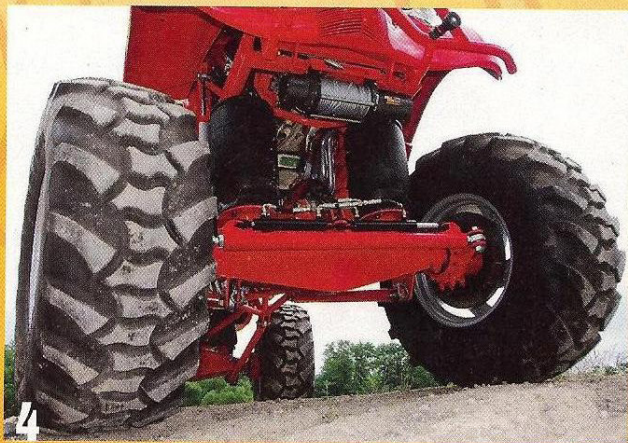
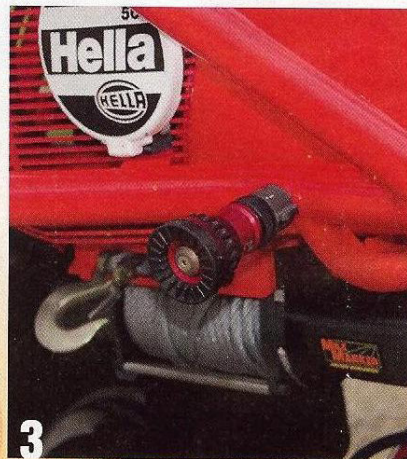
1 Lil Squirt uses a fiberglass body to represent a '37 Ford truck. The chassis and underpinnings are a smaller version of what you might see on a competition monster truck. The bed and firefighting apparatus are just the same as used on production 1st Attack brush rigs, which can include the 200-gallon water tank, Honda-powered fire pump, and two ¾-inch handlines on reels as seen here. The outward-facing jump seats, from which firefighters can safely work a fire while strapped in and protected by a rollcage, are a signature 1st Attack feature.

2 Lil Squirt also mounts front and rear Mile Marker 12,000-pound winches in addition to a variety of work lights and emergency lights. The tires are 51-inch Firestone 500/70R-24 Duraforce RT Radials used on construction equipment.

3 Brush trucks often have spray nozzles at the front to clear fire. Both Lil Squirt and Silly Willy are so equipped. In this case, Cook used the bumper as a supply line.

4 Both Lil Squirt axles have Ford 9-inch dropouts in custom housings that use 2 ½-ton knuckles from GI Rockwells. Auburn spools are used in both. The Firestone air springs have 22 inches of travel, and K-S Nitro shocks are used for dampening. Steering is fully hydraulic.

5 The 454 Chevy in Lil Squirt makes between 850 and 900 horsepower using dual Holleys and a 6-71 Jimmy blower. Power is handled by a built Turbo 400 and a quick-change billet drop box.





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SPECIFICATIONS

GENERAL

	Silly Willy	Lil Squirt
Vehicle/Model:	'52 Willys	'37 Ford
Estimated value:	\$75,000	\$100,000

ENGINE

Type:	454 Chevy V-8	454 Chevy V-8
Aspiration:	Gerardot EFI	Dual Holley 4-bbl, 6-71 blower
Output, hp/torque (est.):	550 hp/NA	850-900 hp/NA

DRIVETRAIN

Transmission:	Turbo 400	Turbo 400
Transfer case:	NP 205	Custom Gear

SUSPENSION

Front:	Custom 4-link, Firestone air springs, 20-in-travel K-S Nitro Shocks	Custom 4-link, Firestone air springs, 22-in-travel K-S Nitro Shocks
Rear:	Custom 4-link, Firestone air springs, 20-in-travel K-S Nitro Shocks	Custom 4-link, Firestone air springs, 22-in-travel K-S Nitro Shocks

AXLES/DIFFERENTIALS

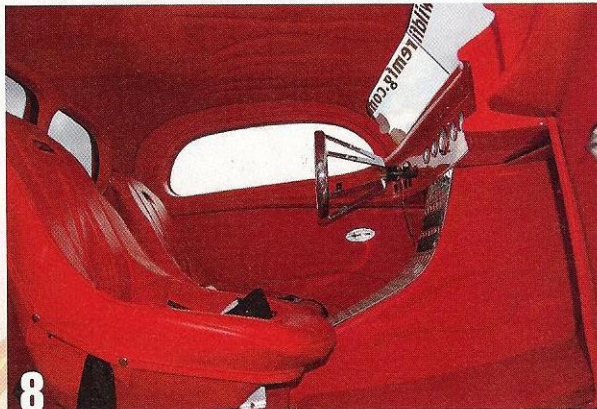
Front:	Dana 70	Ford 9-in. w/ custom housings
Rear:	Eaton 1½-ton 4.88:1	Ford 9-in. w/ custom housings 4.88:1

WHEELS/TIRES

Wheels:	Mickey Thompson 52-in. Michelin Super Terrain	Custom 24x15 500/70R-24 Firestone
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6 Silly Willy uses a '52 Willys pickup body on a custom, monster truck-style chassis. It's powered by a 454 fed by a Gerardot racing-style fuel injection system, adapted for gasoline. The power feeds through a built TH 400 trans and into a New Process 205 transfer case. From there, power goes to a Dana 70 front axle from an IH application and an Eaton rear dropout-style axle used in a 1½-ton truck. Silly Willy also mounts a 1st Attack bed system with water tank, ¾-inch hand lines, fire pump and jump seats. It

also carries a chainsaw and a backpack sprayer for hot spots.



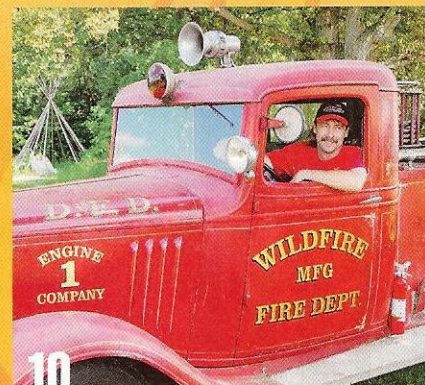
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7 A high standard of workmanship and design went into the suspension of Lil Squirt. Cook gained much valuable experience having to race what he built in monster truck competitions. The high standard of workmanship and "outta-the-box" thinking have served him well in the fire truck realm.

8 Lil Squirt's interior is Spartan in a futuristic sorta way.

9 Cook incorporated all he learned building monster trucks to build the suspensions on both his custom fire trucks. A four-link design with air springs and long-travel shocks and sway control make these trucks surprisingly stable for their height.

10 Jeff Cook in his beloved '34 Chevy Fire truck, still wearing original paint. No, this one won't be turned into a custom truck! **FW**



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SOURCE

1st Attack Engineering Inc.
260-925-1951, www.1stAttack.com