

June 2015



Does anyone want to come over and bleed my brakes for me? I'm feeling very burned-out this year and though I have completed most of my winter car projects, I'm just not feeling it yet. The past winter has been quite full for me, and even the bright sunny weather just isn't getting those "I wanna drive" juices flowing. It's mostly family commitments with two teens in sports (basketball with me coaching, dance, gymnastics), a change in my job which has my brain going nonstop even when I'm just sitting there, and then the typical household projects that have popped up. I'm pledging 3 things to myself this month: bleed the brakes from the caliper swap I did over the winter, make it to a dinner out with the guys, and attend the Back to the '50s swap meet. Each one has its own symbolism, but in the end I think I just need a break. That aside, I *have* been able to find time to finish quite a few projects this winter between work and family time: I swapped on new front brake calipers, added new front and rear Viking coil over shocks (the rears were NOT fun to do), lost 15 pounds, picked up a free air hockey table and made it workable again, built a loft bed for my daughter, found 20 pounds, and a bunch of other stuff. Maybe I just need to take the summer off, recover and let life calm down.... or maybe I just need to suck it up, finish those brakes and go bang some gears.

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Project: Rear Coilover shocks

Before I start, please forgive me for not taking good pictures. I thought this would be a quick install but ran into a few problems that stretched this job out over several short work sessions. This will be the short and brutally honest step by step how-to version. Enjoy.

Step 1: Remove your old shocks and rear springs. Unless you're replacing every last part at the same time, I suggest doing one side at a time. That way the rear end will be easier to bolt back in. Think about it: unbolt the lower part of your rear shock and drop the lower control arm. That's 2 bolts and the spring comes out. 2 small bolts up top remove the shock. That's it.

Step 2: Position upper coilover bracket and carefully mark upper shock mount area for 2 additional bolt holes. My fuel lines run right through this area on the passenger side, but I was VERY careful to keep them from getting nicked. One additional hole actually is on a curved piece and the other is horizontal. Once drilled, the fun *really* begins.



Holes marked, ready to go

Step 3: Assemble the shock per the directions, then bolt the shock to the upper bracket with the bolt pointing towards the back of the car. If you don't, you can't tighten it later.

Step 4: The directions didn't really say, but I think the proper way is to run the bolts down through the holes from the top. The original shock bolt holes were easy to do. The more forward one was relatively easy. The last one took me well over an hour to get pushed through and poked through the hole. You need a magnetic stick to get it behind the metal and rotate it into position. Then you also have to lift and hold the shock and bracket assembly up, align all 4 bolts into the holes and try to get nuts on them. Yeah, loads of fun. Remember those 2 additional holes? One won't likely be perfectly in alignment. Its car stuff, it happens, but it does slow things down. Once you get the nuts on, you're halfway done with that side.



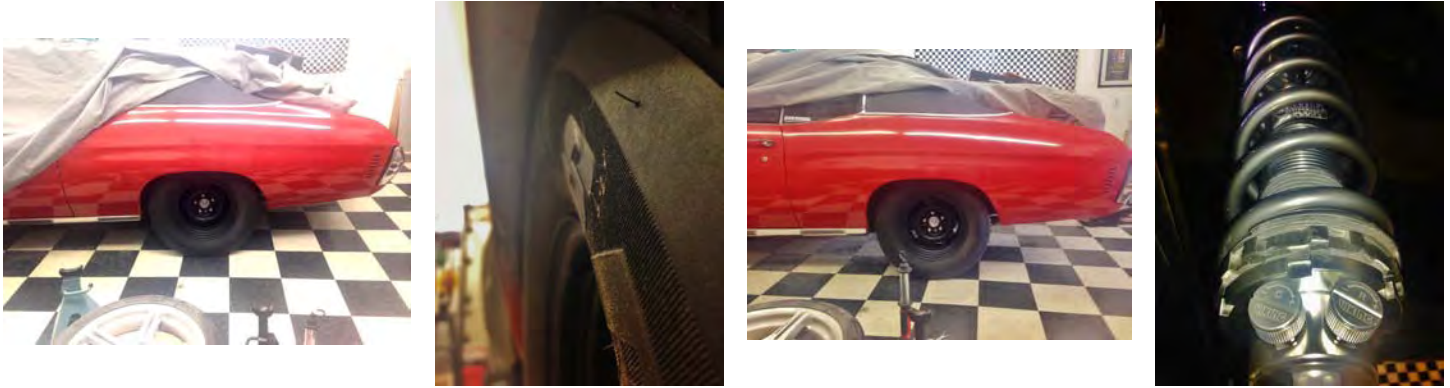
Opposite side, bolts installed



Same as picture above

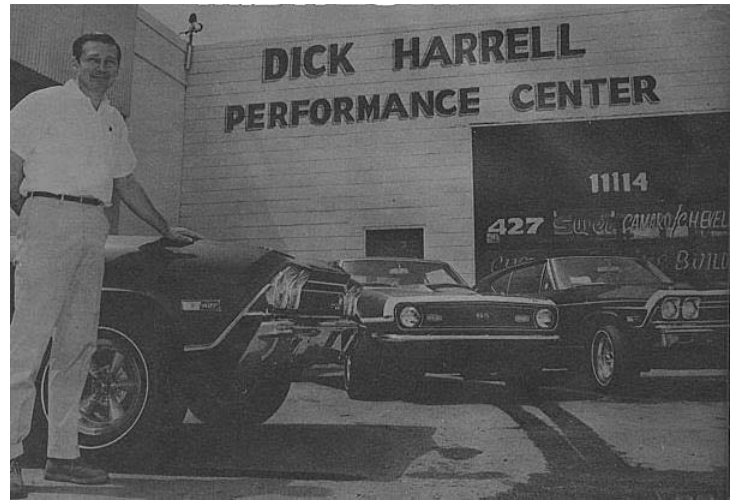
Step 5: Position lower bracket on axle housing and try to get the lower control arm bolt through. Good luck with that. I got mixed up with the directions which said make sure the bracket is on the front side of the axle housing. Trust me when I say it won't work on the back, even after some massaging of the metal bracket on the housing. That being said, it didn't fit well on the front either. The main issue I ran into was that the bracket wouldn't rotate up far enough to run a bolt through the original lower shock hole and a correlating hole in the new bracket. I probably have 2 hours into trial and error fitting and then grinding "just a little bit more" to make it fit. Then you have to jockey that lower control arm bolt back through which was actually pretty easy using a ratchet strap to the frame and lug stud.

Step 6: Set it back on the ground and check your new stance. Mine was waayyy too low. I liked the look, but the body was actually sitting on the tires at the wheel lip. Until I can get new wheels (and tires), it's going to go to a reasonable height.



Thanks again to Chris King and Viking shocks for making such a great product. The brackets are from Speed Tech and other than the factory pieces not fitting to them well, they worked quite well. The nice thing with coilovers is that you jack it up, spin the spring nut up a few more turns, and see how it sits. I also will need to play with both of the shock valve settings to find what feels best but that's literally just a turn of a couple knobs.

That Yenko picture on the front cover got me thinking about some of the other dealers out there who have become famous over the years. Names like Dick Harrell, Fred Gibb, Nickey, Baldwin-Motion they're all synonymous with performance. Here's some pics from the past.



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