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Dream Machine

- Rudy Cardenas' painstaking restoration of 1939 Chevy Sedan is making dreams come true for the retired Metro Bus Operator.

By ARLENE LIM

He bleeds Metro pride, and breathes Chevy air. Retiring two years ago, after 24 years of service with the agency as a bus operator, Rudy Cardenas is now turning heads with his restored 1939 Chevy Sedan.

Already, Cardenas' 1939 beauty has graced the pages of "Lowrider Magazine." The car has been featured in a three-page spread in the September issue of the magazine.

"It's very hard to get in. To me, in my opinion, to be in the 'Lowrider Magazine' you have to be rolling with the big boys," says the Metro retiree "Now I'm a big boy, too, thank God!"

Cardenas attributes his getting into the magazine to friend Joe Ramos, an operator out of Division 2. On their way to pick up the Chevy from the mechanic, Ramos talked Cardenas into stopping and looking at bombs parked.

There, Cardenas and Ramos met an editor from "Lowrider", who asked to



Among other honors, Rudy Cardenas dream car earned the People's Choice Award at the 2005 Metro Bus Rodeo.

see the car. Dirty and dusty, just out of the mechanic shop, Cardenas' 1939 Chevy Sedan still caught the eye of the editor and made it into the magazine.

The Friendly Green, the name Cardenas dubbed his Chevy, will also be featured in the October issue of "Streetlow

Magazine."

Besides the magazine exposure, Cardenas has also participated and placed in various car show competitions. Recently, he won the People's Choice Award at the 2005 Metro Rodeo, second place in its class at this year's Lowrider Magazine car show, and Toys for Toys car show at the police academy.

"I've been dealing with old cars ever since I was 13-14 years old," says Cardenas. "And that was my dream car, a 1939 Chevy."

He found his dream car through a tip a friend at Crossroads Depot Division 2 had given him about a '39 Chevy that was for sale in Compton.

Cardenas took down the address and ended up buying the car after seeing it.

Since that day, it took him about five years to restore the sedan. The restoration, not yet complete, now only needs accessories.



The '39 Chevy has received new upholstery, interior wood graining, chrome and a paint job.

Cardenas finds all of the parts and accessories that he needs for his "bomb" through friends who are in car clubs.

"It's just a matter of getting the word out of what you need," says Cardenas "And as soon as they find it - they find you."

Since Cardenas does not belong to a car club – and prefers not to – he will add a plaque that will read '*Blessed*', a feeling that he's had since he first started the job at Metro some 26 years ago.

Cardenas isn't the only one with a love for cars. His wife, Lendy, loves to attend the car shows. In fact, Cardenas is looking for a '47 or '48 Convertible Chevy to restore for his wife.

"That way we can both go the car shows," says Cardenas " I can drive one and she can drive the other."