

B. Mitchell Carlson's



**You can't go wrong when your wife wants you to restore a truck.**

# Duck and Cover

**M**ILITARY VEHICLES HAVE BECOME POPULAR, and vintage four-wheel-drive trucks have always been well liked. A combination of the two is a sure winner, especially if it's as rare as this 1957 International S-120 panel, which is an original Civil Defense (CD) truck. This governmental entity may have done at least as much as the Armed Forces to popularize heavy-duty four-wheel-drive trucks, and CD vehicles are few and far between, particularly ones restored to their original specifications. That's what makes Edward Baldyga's panel truck so interesting.

The International was originally converted for Civil Defense use by Specialty Bodies of Toledo, Ohio. Stock S-120 four-wheel-drive panel trucks were sent to Toledo for the installation of prerequisite equipment. This included a roof rack for a ladder and a litter, plus racking and cabinets inside to hold a plethora of items ranging from hardhat holders behind the front seats to a drawer for the Geiger counters the trucks carried. Our featured truck is a textbook example of the *Federal Civil Defense Agency Rescue Skills and Techniques* manual TM-14-1 description of a light-duty rescue truck.

## CIVIL DEFENSE: THE ORIGINAL HOMELAND SECURITY

**G**rowing up in the rural Midwest in the 1970s, I believed that the fallout shelter signs and stockpiled, Civil Defense-marked supplies at my elementary school were products of a government agency that was fading into oblivion. I later learned civil defense has a long history and still exists today, albeit in a different form.

The first formalized form of civilian defense in the United States was the creation of the Council of National Defense by President Woodrow Wilson on August 24, 1916, when involvement in World War I was imminent. With little threat of a physical attack from an organized military force—aside from Pancho Villa in Mexico—this organization tended to be more of a recruiting arm for the Army. Shortly after the war, the council was disbanded.

In the early 1940s, with Europe at war and this country emerging from the worst economic times it had ever seen, the United States was an uneasy place. Sensing that the nation needed to prepare for the dangers looming on the horizon, President Franklin Roosevelt created the Office of Civil Defense on May 20, 1941, to oversee and assist communities in developing civilian-based responses to disasters and possible military attacks.

Britain, which was dealing with the Blitz, was a prototype for the U.S. plan. Additionally, the highly regimented Germans had

had a network of civilians acting in a similar manner since the dawn of the Third Reich.

Any doubt that the United States needed a civil defense corps became moot after the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor. Those who couldn't enlist in the Armed Forces became active in local Civil Defense chapters, scanning the skies and coastlines for possible attack or preparing to deal with damage to lives and property in case of an attack. Thankfully, the civilian corps did not have to act.

After World War II, our former Soviet ally soon became our Cold War nemesis, with atomic weapon capabilities. The Federal Civil Defense Act of 1950 created the Federal Civil Defense Agency—basically under the Executive branch of the government—which strengthened and coordinated the local chapters into a more cohesive entity. The Department of Defense assisted with organization and materials logistics (such as our featured truck).

Speaking of vehicles, Civil Defense units had an appetite for trucks of all sizes, especially for the rescue units. During the feast or famine funding waves that Civil Defense had in the '50s and '60s, when monies were allocated for trucks, they went all out on task-specific vehicles. In leaner times, ex-military trucks of all stripes were handed down to local units.

