

# ERNIE ADAMS'S



## DWARF 1939 CHEVROLET

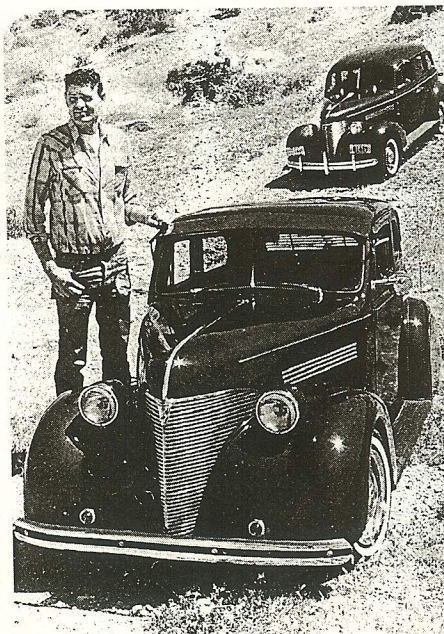
**E**RNIE Adams is one of those fellows who can build anything. There aren't many left. He's a craftsman in the tradition of those who used to hammer out the coachbuilt classics of the 1920s and thirties. And what's amazing about Ernie is that he learned it all on his own. He taught himself.

By trade, Ernie Adams is a line mechanic. He maintains a fleet of cement trucks for the Tanner Company in Phoenix, Arizona, doing everything from welding to electrical and mechanical work. He obviously enjoys what he does — so much so that when he comes home, he keeps right on working.

Ernie Adams, who grew up in the tiny town of Harvard, Nebraska, began building cars at age nine. He'd take the sideboards off orange crates, soak them in water, and twist them into shape, using buggy wheels and adding jar lids as "lamps." He put together a motorized tricycle when he was 10, in 1951, and built his first dwarf car in 1965.

A word about "dwarf." Ernie is the ac-

by Michael Lamm  
photos by the author



knowledgeable father of dwarf auto racing. If you've never heard of this sport, neither had I. But you'll be hearing more about it in the future, because it's fast evolving from a grass-roots hobby into big business. There are several regional dwarf car racing associations, at least one of which runs a speedweek series. There's even a magazine called, appropriately, *Dwarf Car Racer*. According to editor Jeff Diehl, there are currently an estimated 1,500 dwarf race cars in existence, although the number remains unconfirmed. The cars compete on 75 dwarf-friendly tracks in 17 states. Racers call themselves "dwarfers."

Ernie Adams built his first (the first dwarf race car in 1979, and he says that he has personally constructed some 50 of them. Present rules call for motorcycle engines and transmissions. Displacement is limited to 1,250 cc and weight has to run between 1,000 and 1,200 pounds. Dimensions, too, are regulated, and the race cars must have specific safety items. These petit racers reach speeds of 100 mph, usual