

Another Youthfulness Relived, Only Faster

Denny Heidebrink really wanted the 1951 Oldsmobile that was owned by a man with whom he worked. It's a '51 Olds 88A, differentiated from the 88 in that it used some of the styling cues of the 1950 Olds 88, apparently to use up a parts inventory, while the '51 88 had different trim.

"I wanted it pretty bad, because I had one as a kid," Denny said. "There were a lot of them around when we were kids."

However, he noted that you seldom see them now.

The Oldsmobile 88 of the early 1950s featured the "Rocket" V-8 motor, and Denny remembers they won a lot of races back then. It is often referred to as a factory hot rod.

This particular car came from the West River area, but was purchased by someone in Denver before being purchased again and brought back to South Dakota by Roy Dyce, with whom Denny worked. Denny acquired it after Dyce died, purchasing it from his widow. Although the car had only 47,000 actual miles on it, somewhere during previous ownerships the engine was left exposed to the elements and became ruined.

"When I got it, it didn't have an engine. I bought a wrecked '96 Camaro and used that engine and drive train," Denny related.

He took the body off the frame and had all of the chrome rechromed, polishing the stainless steel himself. And it has a lot of chrome and stainless trim, plus some brass trim. Denny says the trim is "nifty" with the large headlight trim pieces are solid brass underneath the chrome, likely due to some post-war metal shortage during production. The car also features a factory sun visor.

He helped with the painting and had Sewing Pros do the remarkable interior for him. The green color comes from a late model Chevrolet offering, but he noted that Oldsmobile had a very similar color in the early 1950s.

"It's gotten a lot of trophies," Denny said of the finished product.

Other than the drive train, he kept the car mostly stock in appearance. Even with the modern GM subframe and front end, Denny kept the stock steering wheel with it's additional world globe trim piece. The steering wheel also has an optional clock mounted on it, which is rewound by floating counter weights in it as the steering wheel is turned.

And while he enjoys the power and modern features of the 1996 drivetrain, he said if he had to do the car all over again, he would find an original 1951 "Rocket" engine for it to make the car completely like his original '51 Olds.

Denny and Betty also own a 1940 Chevy street rod, and often when they go to car shows, he'll drive the Chevy while Betty takes the Oldsmobile. However, he said he likes the Olds better because of the memories it brings back of the one he had as a youth.



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