

One Smooth Character

Derrick Stokes has only had his 1963 Pontiac Bonneville 4-door hardtop for about 1 1/2 years, but during that time it has undergone a lot of changes, and is continuing to evolve into his vision.

He bought the car in August 2005 from fellow Great Plains Streetrodders Mike and Lori Paulson. At the time it was all original, and having spent its entire life in Sioux Falls, had some rust issues.

With help from Ron Hammerschmidt and Kirk Lee, Derrick removed the rust, replacing one of the fenders and the trunk floor. He also removed all badges and trim, filling in the holes. He was going for a smooth look, he explained.

"The only chrome it's got is the headlight bezels, the bumpers and the window trim," Derrick said.

He also shaved off the door handles and is in the process of installing a remote electric door release. It has lake pipes on the sides, plus full moon wheel covers.

He has painted it a two-tone with a striking shade of Organic Green over Orion Silver. The green color has brought the most compliments for the car.

Of course, removing all the badges and names can cause some confusion among those attracted to the custom car.

"It's already been mistaken for an Edsel," Derrick laughed.

Derrick wasn't looking for this particular car when his search led him to it, although he did want to stay close to his fondness for Pontiacs.

"I wasn't sure what I wanted – something big, something old and something I could take to

Back to the '50s," he said. The

cut-off for getting into the Back to the '50s car show in St. Paul, MN, is 1964.

But this car has the style to allow him to create the smooth, custom machine that he

has envisioned. And it still has a ways to go before that vision is completed. He pur-



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chased a Cadillac split-back seat

with electric controls to replace the stock bench seat. Future plans

include installation of air ride suspension and an audio and video system. He also wants to replace the current stock 389 c.i. engine with a 400 c.i. from the mid-1970s to provide greater parts availability.

Working on an old car always has its hazards, and Derrick acknowledges his Bonneville has had a close call already.

"We only had one fire while putting it together," he said with a smile. That was while installing trunk sealer at the same time someone was welding in the trunk. Petroleum-based sealers and welding sparks are not a good combination.

But the car survived and is looking good. And as Derrick gradually continues to complete his plans for this car, it will only look better in the future. Keep an eye on it.

