

Stepping Into Uncertainty

By Bob Schmeichel



Bruce Aldrich expressed that he has never had what might be considered a fun car all his life, but always admired what others drove when he was out and about. Then there came a time, in the not too distant past, and I guess later is better than never, that he and his wife, Suzie, decided it was time to try something that was a little bit different for both of them. Most of their adult lives had been filled with the usual routine for so many years with raising four kids. As you know, kids can take you in many directions at the same time with priorities for them on a daily basis. With the kids out of the house now, the idea of having an old car and cruising around with it was exciting and growing on them rather quickly.

Their story began in September of 2013, driven by their old car idea that Bruce started looking online at carsforsale.com. He told me they were really looking more specifically for an older Corvette that would fit into their agreed upon budget, when he came across a '57 Studebaker for sale here in Sioux Falls. Both he and Suzie liked the different lines and style of car that they saw with the advertised pictures and thought it was priced fairly for what it was. After a couple days of thought, Bruce decided to call the owner to see if they could come look at the car. The owner said with a heavy sigh that he was sorry, but the car was already sold and going to South Bend, Indiana, the next day. Because Bruce had missed seeing the car in person, kicking himself for not acting quicker, he decided to watch other Studebakers online for sale ads to see if he could find another one similar to the one he missed. He watched quite a few different websites daily for over most the next year, and then in September of 2014, the exact same car he missed that went to Indiana was now for sale there. Not wanting to miss out on another chance, Bruce called the now owner that same evening. After a little discussion, the owner admitted he had blown the engine up in his hot rod pickup and had to sell the Studebaker to fund building a new engine for the pickup. The owner told Bruce about some of the updates he had done to the Studebaker and that the price was a little more than the first time he saw it online. More talk on the phone led to an agreed upon selling price with Bruce and Suzie moving forward on totally blind faith as they still had not seen the car in person yet. Eager to get the car home, Suzie called around and found a local car transport carrier to bring the car back to South Dakota. Two weeks later it arrived back in Sioux Falls on the transport carrier with them being surprised to see that the car still had South Dakota plates on it. Apparently the owner had not taken the time to transfer the title yet in Indiana. As they looked at the car on the transport trailer before it was unloaded, both Bruce and Suzie saw that it was pretty much as the owner had explained it was over the phone at least outwardly. I think that this moment in time had to be a little bit apprehensive and scary for Bruce as he openly admitted to me that he has no real mechanical ability or automotive knowledge of any sorts, but at the same time he wanted this unique-looking car they both committed themselves to anyway.

Driving their new-old car seemed to have all the fun experiences they expected for the first few months, but after a period of time Bruce noticed that the engine was using more oil than it should. After looking for advice and visiting with other car club members about the oil usage issue, Bruce opted to invest in a new Chevy 350 crate engine to replace the old 350 Chevy engine the car came with. Today when it comes to a stock Chevy engine in some cases, buying a new crate engine is more economical than rebuilding the old engine. Ken Buchanan did the engine swap along with installing a newer Ford Ranger rear end that had the same width and bolt pattern as the original Studebaker rear end. With the S-10 5-speed manual trans, it is a fun car for both Suzie and Bruce to drive, and now with the new engine, who knows where they will take it. Future plans for the car include installing a new headliner, hooking up the air conditioning lines and getting the car repainted someday. Bruce also mentioned that his overall feeling with the Studebaker, and not knowing too much mechanical, has truly been a fun learning experience with

no one being condescending when he asked questions to find out answers or directions. I think it is one of the things that makes our club unique, being able to draw off a vast knowledge of most anything automotive related. The other is the friendship that turns into one

big family of fun, which reminds me of Paul, an old buddy of mine who always used to say, "Keep smiling and keep the shiny side up!"



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