

Another Chapter in a Car

By Bob Schmeichel

When I first saw one of our current members driving an unchanged 1948 Ford street rod that I had remembered from 30 plus years ago, it really kind of surprised me to see it was still in the area. Quite often when street rods are sold around here, they wind up in some other state here in the U.S., or even sometimes are shipped off to some country in Europe. Recently I have heard of Europeans paying dearly to get an old American car into their home land country. There is a huge liking for the classic looks of the big American cars with big engines that come with a great ride compared to what Europe has to offer.

So with curiosity bugging me about this familiar old 48 Ford, I decided to venture out one afternoon a few weeks ago and visit with the present owner, Greg Frederick, to find out how he wound up having it. Greg took me back into his office at his NAPA store location near Tea and proceeded to tell me his story. He told me he had built quite a few cars and motorcycles over the years and usually wound up selling them for one reason or another. He did say however since acquiring the new NAPA store, his time has been kind of limited with focusing on making the store successful. Even though any extra time for him was scarce, his love for old cars was always there. He mentioned seeing the 48 Ford the first time at the all Ford car show with a for sale sign on it a couple years ago. While looking at it he said the thing that surprised him was that it had a 302 Ford engine in it rather than the usual Chevy small block. For Greg, he liked the fact that it had the same make engine as the car was. He walked on to look at the rest cars at the car show and didn't think any more about the 48. Later in the summer he saw the 48 again at Hardies on a Saturday night still with the for sale sign on it. So he decided to look at the car a little more seriously and visit with the owner. He saw it was an older build with some small scratches in the paint, but still pretty well done even by today's standards. After visiting with the owner, Greg and his wife Teena were taken for a ride in the 48 and pleasantly surprised how solid and quiet the car was while being able to talk to each other at highway speeds with the air-conditioning on. Old cars can be noisy. Their impression of the car was pretty sweet. So later on their way home that night they decided together it might be fun to maybe buy this car that was done rather than spending time he didn't have building one. Within a week after more talking with the owner about all that was done to the car, it was finally theirs. Greg was surprised at the pile of receipts of what had been done to the car by the previous owner given to him. It showed him the car was well taken care of. Greg knew all about what the car was based on what was in front because of his past car building experiences along with all the receipts, but really didn't know anything about its beginning as a street rod.

I told him I could help him out there and get some of that early information for him to fill in the blanks about his car's early history. This challenge to myself kind of tested me as I personally have been involved with so many car builds that remembering back forty-five plus years ago, I sometimes question my own memory. I knew the original owner of the car in 1984 was Ed Benson who was one of the original founding Great Plains Street Rodders when we first formed as a club. Ed had Bob Schreiber, another founding GPRS member, do most all the mechanical mock up building of the car starting with installing a complete Mustang II front suspension, actually cut out of a Mustang as we all did then before kits were available, and fit into the old frames. Once the front suspension was in place, a 302 Ford engine with a c-4 transmission were mounted into the frame along with an 8" Mustang rear end mounted to the original rear springs with lowering blocks. With Bob having a exhaust shop business at the time called "Missile Muffler", Bob probably put the exhaust on the car too. Once the mechanical business was all in place, the car was handed off to Ron Tysdal, another founding GPSR member, and Les Heidebrink at Ron's Body Shop to strip the car, do what little body work was needed, and apply the paint that still resides on the car today. Once the car rolled out of the body shop it was taken to Jeff and Sue Mendering, other GPSR founding members, or "J&S Upholstery" in Inwood, Iowa to have a totally new grey cloth interior created and installed which is also still in the car today. Once the car was done, Ed drove the car every day, many of the times driven between a lake home in Madison and Sioux Falls. I never did get a reason for Ed selling the car after so many years so long ago, but it now has come back into the fold of the GPSR group with Greg and Teena Frederick as its owners. Greg smiled while telling me they drove the 48 6,500 miles last year without missing a beat and they couldn't be happier. He also said he's thinking of putting fuel injection on the engine to make it a little more efficient along with an automatic overdrive transmission to slow the engine down a little bit to help the gas mileage too. I find it kind of ironic that 25% of the original founding GPSR members since 1985 have passed away, yet many of the cars from 30 plus years ago as with this 1948 Ford still proudly roll and represent great feelings, memories, as well as tons of smiles with thumbs up.

