

Did you see it before it was gone?

If you've been in the Great Plains Street Rodders Association for very long, you've seen this 1950 Mercury coupe. But you aren't likely to see it much longer.

Dale and Pat Bruining are in the process of selling their old Merc in preparation for a lifestyle change. After having been in the club since the beginning, Dale will be retiring in November after which they plan to sell their Sioux Falls home and most of their belongings and become nomads (not the Chevy kind). They will be hauling a camping trailer behind their new hotrod, a late model Ford truck with dual rear wheels and a fifth wheel bed as they travel the country to see the sights and visit family.

"We'll probably live in a travel trailer," he said. "We're going to see a little of the U.S."

That doesn't leave room for a show car, after the house and garage are gone. He built it to be driven, and he wants it to continue to be driven.

"I'm not a person that trailers cars, and I'm not a person to let them sit," Dale said.

His new lifestyle won't leave room for an occasional cruise in the old Merc. But selling it wasn't an easy decision, either. The car has been a part of the family since 1990, and a part of his life since 1963.

It was in 1963 or 1964 that Dale bought his second car, which was a 1950 Mercury, not much unlike the one in which he's been seen cruising around in recent years. But he was 16 years old then, and like many things of the teen years, he eventually let it go.

But his desire for 1950 Mercurys never waned, and on Christmas Day in 1990 he was able to purchase another one, albeit in much poorer condition.

"I dug it out of a grove of trees up in Brookings," Dale said.

He then spent three years on a frame-off restoration. While most of the car is stock, he included a few upgrades to make it a cruiser to be driven. They ranged from something as simple as painting the Mercury emblem gold instead of black to installing a brand new engine and transmission. He bought a Chevrolet 350 c.i. crate motor and an automatic transmission for this car. However, he did not bother with power steering or air conditioning, feeling no need for such things.

When asked why he went for a Chevrolet motor in a Mercury, he said his interests do not hold to any particular marquee or make. He once had Chevrolets, but now has mainly Fords, but that always had more to do with availability of what he required than anything else. But he makes no apologies for putting a Chevy motor in a Ford product, noting the Chevy 350's reputation.

"I wanted something I could drive and depend on," he said.

After completing the car, it won its fair share of trophies and awards at various car shows. But in the more recent years he has used it to participate in the Great Plains Street Rod Wednesday evening cruises more than anything. Having been a member of the club since it was founded, his Mercury has been a fixture of the weekly events.

"I used to go to a lot of car shows, but kind of got tired of them," he said. "I kind of got tired of trophies hanging around."

But he never tires of his friends from the club hanging around. Until the membership got too large, he and Pat often hosted the annual Christmas party.

"I appreciate all the fun we had over the years," he said.

A sale on the Mercury is presently pending, and while it would not be to a club member, it will remain in the Sioux Falls area if the deal is completed. But while Dale and Pat will not be remaining in the Sioux Falls area, they will come back during the summer months to visit their street rod friends. And most would probably agree that they're more interested in seeing Dale and Pat, with or without that nice 1950 Mercury.

