

This One Brings All Kinds of Smiles

It's not just the small size that endears Cheryl VanNoort's little 1956 Nash Metropolitan to her, but the styling as well. She doesn't care that her husband Roger has already reached the car cruise destination in his modified 1934 Chevy before she builds enough speed for second gear.

"It's cute and it's little," Cheryl said in explaining why she likes the car so much. "I told Roger if I ever get a car, it was going to be cute and little."

Little doesn't just describe the outward dimensions. Its 1500 CC motor was rated at 52 horsepower. But don't laugh – that was a significant increase from the Metro's first two years (1954-55) when it had a 1200 cc motor producing 42 horsepower!

"It's for putzing around," Cheryl explained.

And remember, the big three American car manufacturers laughed at Volkswagen, too, when it first brought over what became the Beetle.

Roger and Cheryl bought their Metro in June 2004, after looking for one for about two years.

"I saw one and it was for sale, but Roger talked me out of it because he said you couldn't get any parts for it," she said.

But they found parts were available, and after passing the word around a friend found one for them. He is a car collector himself, who also appreciated the little car's qualities, and had actually bought the car for himself, but later offered it to Cheryl. "He knew I wanted one and he liked me," Cheryl said.

The car had already been restored to original when her friend had bought it. And at the first car show Cheryl took it to, in Del Rapids, it won first place.

Cheryl doesn't mind taking her time to get to places in it, and takes the teasing in good spirit. Roger teases her the most about it, she said.

"I've been following you, and even the gophers taunt you," Roger said.

Or Cheryl's favorite, "It goes so slow even the bugs have time to get out of the way."

People may laugh, but Cheryl says the car does draw a lot of favorable attention. Everybody seems to see it as "cute." And even in its day it was popular enough to be offered by Nash and American Motors for eight years with very few styling changes.

Cheryl has taken its most common compliment and added her upholstery profession to it to create a vanity license plate that describes both her and her car – "SEW CUTE."

She may not win any races, but she probably collects far more smiles than most racers do trophies. And she appreciates that as much as the car's attractive styling. How fast it goes, or doesn't, matters nothing to her as long as it gets her down the road.

"It rides like a four-cylinder car," she shrugs.

Ah, but it carries those four cylinders quite stylishly.

