

Brad Goebel was drawn to his 1937 Buick 90 Series limousine even before he saw it.

"It's unique, different," he says. "It's a big car."

He found it in 2000 while participating in the Rapid Rod Run. He and some friends decided to visit a couple salvage yards in the area to see what they had, and at one he saw a large car covered by a blue tarp. He had to see it, and asked the salvage yard owner to show it to him.

"It was a rust bucket," Brad says.

It had metal bands securing the doors shut so they wouldn't "flap in the breeze," which prevented him from closer examination, and determining whether it had a wood or metal frame behind the doors. The Salvage Yard operator refused to remove the bands, but assured everyone the car was all metal. The main thing Brad saw was that the car was complete.

"I went back to the hotel and called the bank to get a loan," Brad relates.

"While I was in the hotel, everyone was wondering why I wanted it."

Nobody that has seen it now wonders why. In fact, since finishing it, he has won numerous awards. Some of the awards have included Best of Show, Participants' Choice, People's Choice and Womens Choice.

But it took a lot of work and money to get it there.

When he got it home and cut those bands off the doors, he learned the doors had wood frames – rotten wood.

"Somewhere between Rapid City and here those metal frames had mysteriously transformed to wood," he said. He had to build metal frames from scratch to replace them.

"That was probably the biggest challenge, and probably the biggest let-down," Brad says.

1937 was the year Buick was transitioning from wood frames to all metal frames, he explained. Some models had wood while others had metal. There was no way to tell for sure which this car had while the doors were held permanently shut with those metal bands.

He bought a 1978 Buick Riviera to provide the parts that would turn this old luxury car into a street rod. He removed the original straight-8 engine and replaced it with the Riviera's 455 and automatic transmission. The Riviera also donated the front and rear portions of its frame, which were grafted onto the center portion of the limousine's original frame. The 455 was rebuilt with a mild cam. In spite of the car's size, he can get 18 miles per gallon, "If I'm easy on it."

The back and jump seats are still original to the 1937, but he replaced the front seat with one from an International pickup truck, modified to fit. All of the upholstery is done in leather.

The car also features an air-ride suspension, heat and air conditioning, tilt steering, power brakes and an MP-3 CD AM/FM stereo with subwoofer. He had difficulty choosing a color for it, but went with a pearl ivory tri-coat paint. "I think that made the car," he says.

His wife Darla also helped in determining how the finished car would look. She picked out the authentic spoke wire wheels with knock-off hubs. He said he hesitated at her choice in wheel, because of the work involved to keep them clean, but they do add to the car's elegance.

Brad notes that he had help from friends in transforming this rust bucket to a show-winning luxury liner. A good friend, Erv Vogel, did all of the frame fabricating, mechanical work and the rough body work. Another friend, Mike Jones, did some body fabricating, the finished body work and paint.

Being a limousine, he does get the occasional request for service in weddings and anniversary celebrations, which he accommodates for friends or acquaintances a couple times each year. It provides an avenue for him to give them a ride as a very personal gift from him. But the occupants are far more likely to be Brad and his family.

"I built it to drive it," Brad says. "I drive it all over."

