

Total Talent

By Bob Schmeichel

It is kind of funny how the interest and excitement of restoring a car by one person can rub off on to another person. So was the case of a younger friend of Gary Ebright when he saw the fun Gary was having tinkering around with old cars. He was so intrigued with the idea of himself restoring a car that he bought a 1955 Dodge Coronet from an older neighbor who lived nearby. And the fun began with great enthusiasm.

My experience with restoring a car by yourself has taught me that you have to have a ton of drive or persistence, and most importantly if you don't have it, patience is what you will be forced to learn when following through with a project to the end. As it turned out, four years later in 1993, Gary's young friend had not only tore the '55 Dodge completely apart, but had lost interest in following through with his project. He was about to move and didn't want to deal with the Dodge and all the related parts strewn all over his garage. So he called Gary to see if he had any interest in buying what was in the garage. Gary came over later only to be a bit overwhelmed at what appeared to be a complete basket case of a whole car torn apart. Not wanting to see the car wasted, Gary bought the car and all of the parts for what he thought was a fair price. Buying a car this way sometimes can be frustrating, not knowing where all the parts go since you didn't take it apart. That didn't scare Gary though, as most of the cars from the 50s are actually quite simple compared to today's computerized cars.

After getting the car and all its parts home, Gary thought he should try to get the car running first before he went any further with it. As it turned out, Gary found many burned out items on the car that kept it from starting. Apparently, Gary's young friend had done the damage by trying to start the '55 Dodge with a 12-volt battery. In 1955, Dodges were still using only a 6-volt system. So after replacing all that was necessary, Gary got it running. Once he was at that point with the car and with it being pretty much totally apart in pieces, Gary decided to rebuild everything so he would know what he had. Gary mentioned, because it was a Chrysler product, it got expensive to do. One of the first areas was because of the engine and the unavailability of parts for that year. The beginning of the engine rebuild led him to have a cam shaft reground to have that part close to new, again. Gary commented that his final engine cost him twice as much to rebuild as a small block Chevy. Gary then followed through with rebuilding the 2-speed automatic trans, all the brakes, all the lines and hoses, the radiator, and the gas tank to get the drive train portion of the car all buttoned up. Once that was all done Gary, jumped in with doing all the body work and painting the whole car. He mentioned that the original pink color on the two-tone car wasn't pretty enough, so he used a mauve color he found used on a 1972 Harley-Davidson to give the Dodge more appeal. Gary said he had quite an ordeal and expense finding an original working radio for the '55 Dodge as it didn't come with one from the factory. Next he installed all the glass and started in on the interior. His dear wife then, Judy, who has since then passed away, stitched up a new headliner as well as new seat covers, which Gary installed as well as new carpeting. With all that Gary did on this 1955 Dodge and continues to do with other cars he has built, I think Gary takes the term "multi-tasking" to a new level.

Gary has been driving the Dodge for quite a few years now. He enjoys the fact he can haul five others with him comfortably while getting 18 mpg going down restored with every nut and bolt 59 years old. Think about that!! accomplishment for any one days. My hat is off to Gary!



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