

## Liking the Final Destination

By Bob Schmeichel

Jules and Marilyn Harper are no strangers when it comes to having their fingers in old cars. They love the attention and the fun of going down a road on a trip with others in a group. It always makes the event more memorable for all involved knowing we are all going to the same destination in an old car.

The first time I met Jules some years ago; he was building a 1947 Ford pickup and turning it into street rod by adding a late model Chevy drive train. When it was done, it drove so easy that Marilyn used it quite a bit to run errands by herself when Jules wasn't driving it. I think the fun began there with that pickup, and Jules has expressed many times that he wished he still had the pickup today.

A short bit after the truck was done, Jules brought a 1941 Chevy two-door sedan home that a mutual friend had who had lost interest in it as a project. Even though it was mostly a rusted-out basket case, Jules dove right in and worked vigorously for a couple years till he had it done. During that build-time frame, the '47 Ford pickup was sold to fund part of their new project. The finished '41 Chevy had a unique sinister look with a chopped top to the bright metallic pink paint. The car was a feature in our archives for reference to check it out. As the car was being built, Jules acquired some other cars along the way to have something to immediately drive to the local events. One car was a rare bright green '75 Corvette as well as a bright yellow 1974 Volkswagen Karmann Ghia along with a Volkswagen beetle. He mentioned something of a stocker 1948 Chevy that he drove briefly also, only to sell it to help pay towards the new project. Jockeying cars around in the garage got to be habit depending on what was going to be driven and when. A couple years later on one fall day, Jules acquired a 1923 Dodge 4-door sedan body shell while visiting some relatives and decided it was going to be his new street rod. In order to fund the new project, the next July the '41 Chevy was sold at Back to the 50s and the '23 Dodge was in the full forward motion of building. Jules started with hand fabricating a frame and adding drive train components as well as chopping the top of the four-door body. As it turned out, it evolved into a nicer, more refined version as seen in the rat rod trend today. I'd say it was probably one of the first going this direction in this area. The end result was noisy and windy because of the lack of door seals and left a bit to be desired with the ride as well it being hot inside with no air conditioning. Jules realized it was all those things but Marilyn clarified it when she said, "We have to have a better car," while pointing out all those issues after a couple of summers of driving it. So a search began for a car that had everything they wanted.

Then in the first part of July in 2010, they found a 1939 Chevy two-door sedan street rod for sale on eBay. After checking it out a couple days later in Springfield, Minnesota, both Marilyn and Jules agreed that it could not be built for the asking price. So they bought it and drove it home. The car itself was equipped with a new 350 Target engine, a 350 Turbo trans and had disc brakes all around. Jules thinks the car was around 10 years old with an OK grey and black paint job along with the finished off velour interior with a heater and air conditioning. Confident the car was going to work for them as-is, the very next weekend they drove it to the Rapid City Rod Run along with a bunch of friends. Loaded down with luggage and gas, on the trip out they noticed the center of the rear end was hitting part of the rear cross member making a loud bang every time they crossed a bridge. Up on arrival in Rapid City, one of the Count members took them to his shop and trimmed out the area on the cross member so it wouldn't be a nuisance the rest of the time out there. Other than that the car has performed pretty flawlessly the last few years getting them where they need to go and home again. Jules said he is a little disappointed that it gets only 15 mpg no matter how fast or slow he drives it. Jules took out the original front seat and installed more comfortable bucket seats that match the rest of the interior. Since they have finally found a car that they both like, there are plans in the future to add power assist for the disc brakes, open up the welded cowl vent to let fresh air in, and a new paint job more to their liking to make the car feel new again. Jules is planning on retiring next year and is eye balling Route 66 as a road trip with  
the '39 after the new paint job, or maybe before. I guess we'll find out. Meanwhile the fun continues.

