

Always Wanted

By Bob Schmeichel

Some cars leave an impression or an absolute mark in your brain for one reason or another that can last a life time. The appeal doesn't go away. If you were around drag racing in the 60s, you would have noticed both 1933 and 1941 Willys cars becoming iconic to the scene. This happened not only because of their light-weight bodies, which helped speed but also because of their mean outward visual appearance. I have often wondered how passing along human traits to a car had evolved, but I guess it has always been as a way of relating thoughts or impressions from one guy to another. I have also got to believe that the body shapes of these Willys cars had a lot to do with their racing success, too. More specifically the '41 Willys with its sharply chiseled nose hood going to its swoopy back end looks as though it was designed in a wind tunnel. Because of everything I have mentioned above, Kevin Kappenman has always wanted a '41 Willys coupe as far back as he can remember.

So in February of 2009, (notice this time frame) Kevin started out on a trek with a trailer in tow, to see an unfinished '41 Willys project car in Atlanta, Georgia. In route going south, he picked a buddy of his in Arlington, Texas, to help him out with checking and getting the car. Kevin and his buddy were surprised having to drive from Arlington, the whole 850-plus miles to Atlanta in a blizzard, which wasn't expected earlier in the week. Upon arrival Kevin saw the car was a new build, but only a roller with a tube frame and fiberglass body. It had a Mustang II front end and a narrowed 9" Ford rear end with no engine or trans. Although it was missing a lot of pieces, the present owner couldn't afford to finish it. So Kevin bought the car for what he thought was a really fair price. After pushing the car into the trailer and tying it down, Kevin and his buddy headed out into the blizzard again that continued all the way back to Arlington, Texas. On the trip back, Kevin commented how people down South get stupid driving in a blizzard. He couldn't believe how many would become idiots and wind up in a ditch in front of him after they passed him while he was pulling his car trailer on the slick roads. It became a stressful source of predictable entertainment.

After getting the car back to Sioux Falls, it sat in Kevin's garage for over a year while he gathered parts to finish the car. Then in August 2010, it was taken to Color Mystic to let Don and Mike Jones handle the rest of the mock up, finish, and final assembly of the car. Kevin had located a newer Hemi engine and automatic overdrive trans out of a wrecked 2004 Dodge Durango with 18,000 miles on it for the Willys. The trans had to be converted from 4-wheel drive to 2-wheel drive before it was installed. After the engine-trans combination was installed into the Willys frame, the entire car was blown apart and much extensive body work began. It took careful planning how things were going to come together with the finished painted car. One of the things that I really enjoy when it comes to building cars that was done on Kevin's car was the custom mixed one-off finished color. There is nothing neater than having something no one else has to set your car off. Now

finished, Kevin's car has all the creature comforts of a new car with power steering, power brakes, power windows, heat, air conditioning, CD stereo radio system and tan leather interior along with a smooth ride. Kevin said he thoroughly enjoys driving his Willys with the 400 horsepower the engine produces that can feel like a rocket ship at any time, or he can get up to 28 miles per gallon as he has proven on recent long trips. With that combination under his foot, Kevin has the best of both worlds in a car he has always wanted! Wouldn't you agree? Take me for a ride, Kevin; I have a need for speed!!



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