

## Long Roof

By Bob Schmeichel

For those of you are not acquainted with the term “long roof,” it is the loving nickname given to station wagon-type cars these days as they are being widely accepted into the collector car and hot rod car scenes. Although they have been replaced by vans and SUVs, the early memories of childhood fun in these types of cars, along with parents realizing the practicality of their use, helps hold a connection to many who have had or ridden in one. I always remember my daughter saying, “I want to go in the way back” in the early 80s when we would go on a trip or vacation in a station wagon we had then. Those times came and went but not forgotten with our kids either listening to stories played on the car’s tape player or they were sleeping peacefully as the road glided under us where ever we were going

Ken and Vicky Levene, being avid car collectors, decided it would be fun to have an old station wagon to pretty much recreate some new fun and memories with their grandchildren. Although station wagons are getting hard to find these days, about two-and-a-half years ago, Ken did see one for sale at a Jenson dealership in Sioux City on the internet. It was a rare 1959 Edsel Villager station wagon. Not wanting to miss out led to cruising down to Sioux City later in the week with some car buddies along and making an offer. The venture proved to be fruitless. Even though the car was really nice, the owner wanted way more money than Ken thought it was worth at the time. A few days later he decided to go look at the car again and make another offer. As it turned out, when he got there the original owner had already taken the wagon back to his shop in Le Mars, Iowa. So from Sioux City, Ken drove to the owners shop in Le Mars, which turned out to be an old abandoned Walmart store. Ken said the guy had it packed with old cars and after walking around inside awhile looking at everything, they finally came across the wagon sitting inside near a garage door entrance. After a bunch of small talk, Ken gave the owner his final offer only to have it flatly refused again. So Ken left, like a dog with his tail between his legs, knowing the guy wasn’t going to budge off his asking price. Ken had kind of given up searching for awhile because of that last refusal.

Then about three months later when Ken was in Las Vegas, helping out at the Barrett-Jackson auction with diving cars up to the auction block, he got a call. He knew he was instructed not to take calls when they were in line with vehicles, but still being two cars away from the main center auction spot, he chanced answering the phone on the sly with it on the seat. As it turned out, it was the Jenson dealership in Sioux City calling to see if he still had interest in the Edsel Wagon. Ken told them he was not in a good position to talk right then, but would call back in 15 minutes. So later after rolling off the auction block, he called them back. As they talked, Ken told them that he wasn’t interested with the original asking price, to which they interrupted and said the owner had accepted Ken’s last offer. Ken then said, “Consider it sold!”

Now the story begins. Ken, since getting the car home, has been connected with a National Edsel Forum that has every bit of information about any Edsel car ever built originally, if they still are in existence, what has been done to them and who owns them. After getting the 95,000-original-mile car up to snuff mechanically, next on the agenda will be rechroming the bumpers and a new paint job. Even while fixing the car with what was needed, Ken and Vicky are busy creating memories with the grandkids hauling everyone in the wagon to do whatever. One event that will surely turn into an annual ritual is going to a Christmas tree farm and picking out a tree, cutting it down, strapping it on the wagon’s roof, and heading back home while looking like a scene from 50 years ago. Ken said the grand kids can’t wait to go for a ride in the old wagon, and in the summer when he puts old suit cases on the roof to make it look like they are on vacation, everyone wants pictures of the car when they stop. The Levenes thoroughly love the ride of their Edsel wagon and when it’s parked in front of the old-timey gas station that Ken built in their Lucky K Ranch yard, you really step back in time visually!!



SCHMEICHEL 2015