

NEW CRUISER ON PATROL

By: Paul Cronkwright

The Hamilton Police Department has had a long and somewhat intimate relationship with Studebaker. With the Studebaker Corporation based in Hamilton from 1948 until the still mourned closing in 1966, it seemed a natural fit. Back then, there was a lot more sense of loyalty than there is today. Supporting local business and industry was more the norm, the right thing to do. So the local police department supported local industry by purchasing their products. It was common place to see Studebaker police cars patrolling the streets of Hamilton. Today it is more the dollar that does the dictating. In 1964 when Studebaker was in financial trouble and the American and parent corporation was about to collapse, the Hamilton Police Department purchased 20 Studebaker Commanders for their fleet.

Approximately two years ago, the Hamilton Police Service struck upon the idea that restoring a former police car would be a good thing to do. Not only would it be cool, but it would encompass former employees to organize and implement the project. It certainly seemed like a win, win situation. The community would end up with a neat nostalgic example of a classic police cruiser, members of The Retirees' Association would have a worthwhile and enjoyable project and the Police Service would have a fabulous vehicle to use for public relations work. So it began, and Police Service embarked on a search and finally found a 1964 V8 four door Studebaker. Hamilton Chapter member, Ray Martin, supplied the car and the project was launched.

Hamilton Chapter member Stu Chapman was instrumental in guiding this project from beginning to end. After all, the Retirees' Association members knew what they wanted, but didn't know quite how to get there. Early in the game it was decided that at the end of the restoration, the car, for all intents and purposes would end up replicating a 1966 Commander. Once the wheels were in motion, the project moved along fairly well. Hamilton members Max Corradetti and Paul Cronkwright also helped the cause with technical advice and locating parts.

On May 14th of this year the Studebaker Commander was unveiled at a ceremony that took place in front of Central Station. Complete with the vintage red cherry on the roof and the wailing siren the car was the highlight that opened the Hamilton Police Services' annual Police Week. Police Chief Brian Mullan, Retirees' President Jim Garchinski and our own Hamilton Chapter President Barry Leppan all spoke to the guests present. The cruiser had already attended some of the local cruise nights garnering expected attention. The Hamilton Police Service became members of SDC and the Hamilton Chapter.



Barry speaks about the SDC and the Hamilton Chapter



Hamilton members, left to right, Stu Chapman, John Spillett, Max Corradetti, Barry Leppan, Paul Cronkwright, Mike McCurdy, Sam McCurdy & Ted Calder kneeling.



Former Studebaker Employees Sam McCurdy and John Spillett reminisce ,
Barry Leppan, president Hamilton SDC looks on.



Some information about this automobile.
Pictures on page 2 courtesy Ted Calder.