

## **MY STUDEBAKER STORY**.....pictures & text by George Christie

Back in 1996 while vacationing in Arizona one of my activities was to look for some parts for a friend of mine who was restoring a 67 Pontiac convertible. That is another whole story. While at a junkyard arranging to get some major body parts shipped home, I spotted an old Studebaker as I was walking down the aisles of old cars. I did not stop to look at it. However it stuck in my mind. It was in terrible condition.

I always did like the 1950 Studebaker as a kid, thinking it was so far ahead of its time. An employee of my Grandfather had actually purchased one and I can remember admiring it. By the time I got home from Arizona, it had gnawed at me enough that I called the junkyard & said "ship it". They arranged to have it delivered to Buffalo. I rented a trailer and went to meet the transport truck to pick up my "bucket of bolts". My friend Bruce Burgess, who operates a one-man body shop, came with me in case I ran into any problems. After some difficulty we got it loaded on the trailer, which had sides high enough, that the doors could not be opened, and we headed to the border.

Here was our next challenge. I had the bill of sale, but they wanted a serial number. As everyone knows, the serial # is on the driver's door post, but it so happened that we could not open any doors without taking the car off of the trailer, and beside that the drivers door was smashed so badly that it could not be opened anyway. So next place to look was under the hood. To my pleasant surprise there was the number. I later found out that this was the body number, but the customs officers were happy and away we went. What a trip home. The trailer was supposed to have tongue brakes, but we soon found out they did not work. Anyway we made it and unloaded my Studebaker at Bruce's farm located body shop, where it stayed for a couple of years.

The first chore was to get that door opened, which Bruce was able to do, and then we cleaned out the 40 years of Arizona dirt & dust, removed the rotting seats so we could get inside to pop the roof back into place. Sound like fun yet? We then discovered that the serial number plate was not there. That is another story to be told later.

I then had the car taken to my house where a retired mechanic & I worked at dismantling every nut & bolt from the entire vehicle. That took most of the winter. We then loaded the empty body shell on my snowmobile trailer & took it to Techno Strip in Brampton to have it, the frame and a million other parts, all dipped in acid. The only small rust hole was in the bottom of the wheel well.

Then the re-build was started out at Bruce's. We had to clean all the metal, then prime & paint every piece. Re-assembly was underway, which was a challenge. It eventually was done, the motor & all other parts were rebuilt or replaced and a few months later the car started.

I was able to find a spot on the inside of a door where the paint seemed to be the original colour and had a computer reading for the paint formula, as close as a computer can tell, I have the original paint color which was called Maui Blue.

Everything that was plastic, upholstered or rubber was totally baked, cooked or rotten. I was able to get NOS, or reproduced parts for everything except the rear door no-draught rubber,

but Bruce was able to craft a front one to make it fit the rear. I did want to make the car as original as possible so after conversations with Rene Harger at Phantom Auto Works, found that we could get the original upholstery reproduced, but he needed 5 orders to justify the cost. I wrote to all 22 owners in the Drivers Club to see if anyone else needed upholstery. He got 4 orders, so went ahead. It took 5 years, but I now have original upholstery.

The same story applied with the steering wheel. After Rene was able to send a pretty good steering wheel to D & D Automobilia, they made a mould and reproduced the original steering wheel for me.

The car was certified, licensed and insured with body number as its serial number. I did go to the Museum in South Bend to see if I could get the serial number, equipped with the engine number and body number. With the help of Richard Quinn he found that the engine came out of a green car & we found the body # before mine and the # after mine, but mine was no where to be found, so my body # is still my serial number.

The car had a problem when I first used it in that it would quit going after a few miles, let it sit for a 30-40 minutes & it would go again. Then I discovered that the shield over the carb was upside down. I fixed that & have had no problem since.

My Maui Blue 1950, 4 door Studebaker Land Cruiser was on display at the International Auto Show in Toronto in Feb 2007 looking as pretty as it could be. I intend to drive to South Bend this June and if someone would like to buy it I might give it consideration, so that I could look for a convertible to restore to its original splendor.

I have driven it a couple of thousand miles over the past 5 years, gone to a few Cruise Nights, and it does get a lot of attention.



**IN THE BEGINNING** - THIS IS WHAT GEORGE FOUND IN ARIZONA. ONE LOOK AT THE INTERIOR WOULD HAVE CAUSED MOST TO SAY "NO WAY" NOT TO MENTION THE ROOF AND OVERALL CONDITION. THE REAL VALUE IS THE "NO RUST" THAT ARIZONA OFFERS. WHAT YOU SEE HERE IS SURFACE RUST, EASIER TO FIX THAN PERFERATIONS *Paul*





FROM ANY ANGLE, GEORGE'S LAND CRUISER LOOKS FABULOUS



HAVING A NEW AND CORRECT INTERIOR REALLY MAKES THE RESTORATION COMPLETE

