

Our LIL CPE 1940 Champion Coupe

On May 10, 1960, I came out, looking for something to drive. Models and Hot Wheels would have to suffice until I turned 16 and got my license. Around 14 a neighbor named Carl Elliott introduced me to restoring Model A's. I helped him rebuild my father's Volkswagen beetle engine among other things. You could say that I was always interested in cars – it did not “just” happen. I owned several cars (1956 Chevrolet, 1970 Monte Carlo) which did not make it to the road. On April 19, 1983, this changed. Going to work in Woodstock, ON (Kelsey-Hayes) I saw a 1940's coupe behind a garage. Further investigation uncovered that it was a 1940 Studebaker Champion and it was for sale. I purchased this “real good deal” which I discovered required a great deal of work and money. I played with it until 1990, when I met Judith. Born three years later, she had similar interests in cars, but not as fanatical. She had a neighbor, John Lomax, who had an Austin Healy and supported her decision to buy her first car, a 1975 Triumph TR6. When we met, she had already gotten rid of the Triumph and had a Mazda (wrong decision). I now had a 5.0 litre Mustang, so it was a match made in heaven for two car nuts!

She first saw the 1940 in a thousand pieces. We either restore it or sell it. We decided to restore and 5 years later in the fall of 1995, it finally saw the road. Many car shows later, a few changes and some very memorable moments, it is part of our life. One of the highlights was in 2007; we were invited to attend the Canadian International Auto Show (CIAS) in Toronto, ON as part of the Studebaker display. We were given a spot at the entrance to the hall where all the Studebakers were being displayed.

The modifications are many. The body is basically stock appearing on the outside; it is underneath that all the changes appear. A custom chassis was manufactured by Forrest and Forrest Racing. It comprises of 2x4 tubing with a Mustang II front, Ford 9" rear with four-bar/coil-over setup. The engine is a 383 cid Chevrolet (with 350 dyno'd HP at the rear wheels, I make no excuses) with a modified 200R4 automatic O/D from a Grand National. Wheels are 15x10 and 14x7 Welds sporting P295R50 and P205R70 BFG's respectively. The interior is gray tweed over Dodge Daytona buckets, a custom back seat hiding the battery and MSD ignition, stereo and A/C. The paint is a dark blue “mica” paint, which means it is green or blue in the sun, dark blue or black at night.

This is the 14th summer for the car; it still looks great and seems to run better with each passing day. It recently spent close to 4.5 hours on the road for Drive Your Studebaker Day with the Hamilton Chapter. It surprisingly gets decent gas mileage and still draws lots of attention.



The beginning – a purchase is made, 1983...



As Judith first sees it in 1990.

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Glen Forrest showing off the new chassis and engine, fall 1992.



Chassis is complete – just waiting for the body, winter 1993.



Finally all fixed, new floor, summer, 1994.



Pick-up day, August 1995, no interior yet.



First Trophy, 1996.



CIAS, Toronto ON, February 2007.



Crossroads Zone Meet, St. Catherines ON, 2008.



Drive Your Studebaker Day, 2009.