Working on old cars, whether restoring 'em, or just tying to keep 'em alive and on the road, requires space and a lot of valuable parts. If you're a person who works on old cars, you're probably thinking this is no great revelation. But there are certain parts that get collected, stored for a time, if not forever, that are completely worthless. On my workbench, they take up an increasing amount of space. And I've noticed that the real estate area of other Clubmembers' workbenches also have a specific corner dedicated to these useless parts, too.

In my case, I call it The Workbench of Woe. There, you'll find an exhaust valve out of the original 340 from my GTS Dart. It has a fourth of it's edge burned off due to the effect of non-leaded gas on '68 heads that were never prepped for unleaded fuel. Here's a pinion yoke from my '67 Cuda. A threaded hole for the u-joint strap is stripped out. A corroded reluctor plate from an electronic distributor also from the Cuda sits on top of a non-automotive part: a four inch by six inch by 4 inch thick hunk of the concrete paving from I-805 at Balboa Road.

In the case of the burned valve, it represents the beginning of a series of major efforts to keep the GTS on the road. Rode hard and hung up wet, I bought the car, sight unseen, and drove it home from the Seattle area, an adventure that contributed several parts to my Bench of Woe. The pinion yoke was replaced after running the '04 Iron Bottom Motoring Tour. The Cuda bottomed hard and broke an exhaust hanger, which I repaired beside the road with a hose clamp. But evidently the hit also took out the u-joint strap bolt. We were lucky on that one. The reluctor plate stranded us in Borrego Springs during the '06 run of the Golden State 400. A long tow from a good friend got us home that Sunday. So far, it remains the only time we've needed a tow. The chunk of I-805 was kicked up by a speeding lane changer in '93. It hit the Cuda's windshield which exploded into a jillion pieces. Only by totally restoring the car in '96-'97 did I remove all the pieces of shattered glass.

Broken parts taking up valuable bench space. Dumb. But the stories behind such parts are as valuable as the parts are worthless. I bet you have a few of these parts, too.

—Bob

-Bob Gough, Y' r 'umble E'dtr & Prez

The Newsletter of the Mopar Club/San Diego

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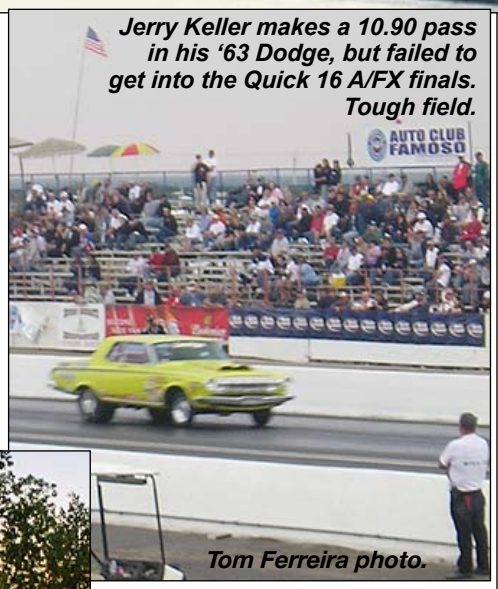
NOV 2007

Hot Rod Reunion!!!

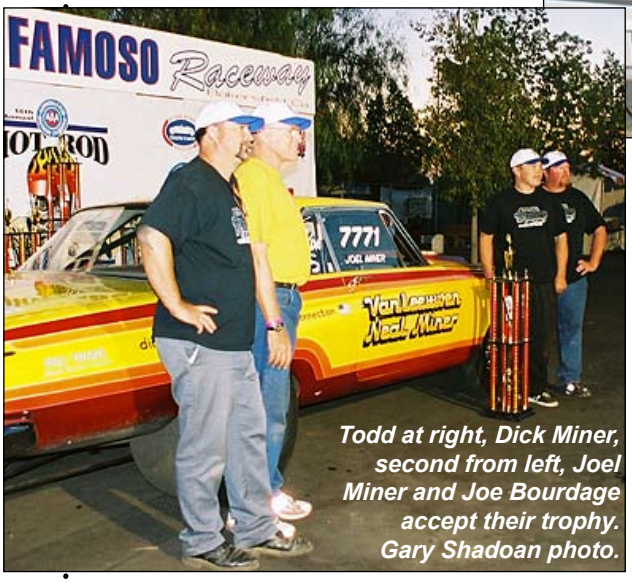
Joel Miner in the "Wedge Express" trailers a 4-4-2. Tom Ferreira photo.

Hot Rod Reunion, Bakersfield Famoso Raceway Oct 12-14 A number of Club members braved an unusual rainstorm but had a great time at the races, anyway. Included were Bob Martello, Gary Shadoan, Tom and Terry Ferreira, and John Halpin, among others. Some made the tow and were racin', like Jerry and Kristy Keller in his 440 Dodge and Joel Miner in the '64 Belvedere "Wedge Express". Both cars were entered in the loosely defined A/FX class which was limited to a field of the quickest 16. Jerry didn't make the fast final field with his 10.90 Dodge, but Joel had a special weekend. With help from his dad, Dick, and Joe Bourdage, Joel hammered the "Express" through four rounds and an all-Mopar final to win the event.



Jerry Keller makes a 10.90 pass in his '63 Dodge, but failed to get into the Quick 16 A/FX finals. Tough field.

Tom Ferreira photo.



Todd at right, Dick Miner, second from left, Joel Miner and Joe Bourdage accept their trophy. Gary Shadoan photo.

Fall Fling Sat Nov 10 Woodley Park Well, the rain kept all but one Club show car from trekking up I-5 and I-405 for the show n' shine and swap meet. That, and gas at $3.50/gallon. But that's not to say that Club members weren't there, including Bill Andrews, Lee Meyer and Michelle who shared a swap meet space with Aaron, Jerilyn and Tom Bourdage, Marc Viau who also had a swap space, Dale Gallup, and Terry Ulmer, among others. That's Bill Baugh on the right, wondering why his Rumble Bee didn't trophy.

ProFile

work in progress

A famous advertising guy once said that perception is reality. And over the years, nobody, but nobody has built the perception that the best trucks made are Chevy trucks. You know the jingle, it's sung by a gravelly voiced man among men with a country band as back up during any NFL game. And you've heard it so often you know the lyrics by heart: "this is our apple pie, this is our mom, our flea-bit dog, this is our country, and this is our truck." It's hard not to get caught up in that hooey.

Such was the trap that caught Clubmember Steve Ramos who has always been a Chevy truck man, and owned several over the years. But his buddy owned a 1978 L'il Red Truck, a Dodge of all things, that Steve thought was pretty cool. And back in 2003, when his buddy couldn't get it smogged, he offered it to Steve. Cheap, too. And Steve needed a truck as his Blazer had just been stolen. Steve snapped it up.

Mind you, the truck needed some work. Bought new by the dad of Steve's buddy, the truck landed on hard times. So hard, in fact, that it sat in a field for ten years. And that field, unfortunately for the L'il Red Express, was in Pennsylvania.

Interestingly, the owner rebuilt the 360 cubic inch V-8 five years before letting the truck out to pasture. With good compression, the engine ran fine when Steve took possession. So Steve did a few mechanical tweaks, including replacing the stock carb with a new Edelbrock four barrel that is 50-state legal, and got the truck running up to California's smog standards.

But there's a whole lot more that Steve's L'il Red Express needed, as ten years in that Pennsylvania field had taken its toll. Steve's research indicated that the work was justified, as production of the L'il Red Express in '78 was only 2,188 vehicles. The next year was the vehicle's last of production, but 5,118 were turned out. And the 225 horse police-spec 360 V-8 mill made the L'il Red Truck the fastest American production vehicle for those years, including Corvette.

After Steve got the Express running to legal standard, he began the process of restoring everything else, a process that continues to this day. And since Steve drives the truck every day for his business, it's a process that takes time. Among the first items accomplished are rebuilt front power disk and rear drum brakes, and the cooling system. The 727 TorqueFlite automatic transmission and 9-1/4" differential were in good shape, so reliability was acheived. Steve had a new 2-1/4" diameter exhaust made up with Flowmaster mufflers, which send a pretty healthy sound out the top of the new side stacks. Steve mounted new BF Goodrich tires, 275/60 R 15's all around on aftermarket chrome rims that are close to the original. Steve is presently applying new single stage PPG paint to the truck, starting with the engine bay, hood and front fenders and doors. The color matches the original Bright Canyon Red. For the '79 edition, Dodge changed the color to Medium Canyon Red. When he finishes the rest of the sheet metal, Steve will install new oak trim and bed, exterior decals, and new black vinyl on the seats and a new carpet to complete the L'il Red Express package. Steve also intends to rebuild the air conditioning compressor and hopes to locate some original wheels.

Meanwhile, Steve is happily truckin' in his L'il Red Express every day.

And these days, Steve is a Mopar truck man. All the way.

Above: Clubmember Steve Ramos picked up this '78 L'il Red Express from a buddy who brought it out from Pennsylvania. After getting some basic mechanical and smog issues sorted out, Steve has been restoring it back to new, a tough job since he drives it every day for his business.

Perhaps the next time you see Steve in his truck, it'll be proudly sporting the new oak trim and L'il Red Express decals.

Above: There have been no trucks made that equal Dodge's L'il Red Express for style. Made only in 1978 and 1979, Steve Ramos' is a '78, one of 2,188.
Left: All L'il Red Express trucks were made with the 360 V-8 four barrel engine. In '78 that meant 225 horsepower, making it the fastest production American vehicle. Steve's features optional air conditioning.
Right: Black vinyl bench with a folding armrest and a Tuff Wheel were standard.

Upcoming Events

- **5th Cruise In** Sat Nov 3, 8a-2p, Bates Nut Farm, 15954 Woods Valley Road, Valley Center, $10 + unwrapped new toy 760/440-9058, eastcountycruisers.com
- **Veteran's Day Show** Nov 10 9a-3p Gillespie Field, El Cajon, $20 pre Nov 1, $25 after, supports Warbirds West Museum www.wwam.org
- **San Diego Dragfest** Sat Nov 17 9a-6p, Barona 1/8 mile, info@motomania-usa.com
- **Auto Waste Recycling** Sat Nov 17, 9a-1p School for Creative & Performing Arts, 2425 Dusk Dr.
- **Queen Mary Show,** Sun Nov 18, honoring Mopar, $20pre/$25 @ gate inc. admission to Queen Mary 951/845-5916
- **Lakeside Speedway Centennial** Sun Nov 18 10a, Lindo Lake Park, 9841 Vine St. free to view pre 1929 race cars
- **Toys for Tots** Qualcomm Stadium, Sun Nov 18 6a-2p, $5, free to active military wwwsandiegoautoswap.com
- **Fontana Track Day** Nov 30 Fri 8a-5p $100, limited to 100 entries, NHRA 1/4 mile info http://www.alternativemotoring.com/
- **MCRD Car & Motorcycle Show** Sat Dec 1, 10a-2p, $10 entry + unwrapped toy, 619/524-5240
- **Auto Waste Recycling** Sat Dec 8, 9a-1p Mira Mesa H.S., 10510 Reagan Rdoil, oil filters, batteries, antifreeze
- **22nd StreetMasters Xmas Cruise** Sun Dec 9, 8a-2p, Torrey Pines H.S., 3710 del Mar Hgts. Rd. no fee except new unwrapped toy 858/566-8629
- **Mopar Club Xmas Party** Sun Dec 16, 1p-? at Casa Signorelli, bring a dish & PLEASE rsvp Kay @ 760/789-4445
- **Monday Nite Car Club** 6:30p Tuesdays VFW Hall 12650 Lindo Lane, Lakeside
- **East County Cruisers** 6:30p Tuesdays, Tyler's taste of Texas BBQ 576 N. 2nd St, EC
- **Fallbrook Rods & Relics** 7-9p, Sat. Sunrize Cafe, State Rt 76 @ Mission Rd., Bonsall
- **Clairemont Cruisers** 5-8p 4th Sat Woodies Chili Dogs Clairemont Town Square
- **Santee Lakes** every Fri. 4-8p, $2 entry
- **Crusin' Italian Style**, Pernicano's, 1588 E. Main, El Cajon, ea. Thur nite
- **Chicken Pie Diner**, 14727 Pomerado Rd., Poway, ea. Wed, 6-9p
- **The Malt Shop** every Friday, 6p, 3615 Midway Dr.
- **Home Town Buffe**t 1st Sat each month 9am, Main St. El Cajon, host King Pins
- **Dalton's Roadhouse** 1st Sunday each month 12-4p 775 Center Dr. San Marcos
- **Cruise Nite Ramona** 5-7p Sun, Denny's State Rt 76 @ Main St. 760/789-0513
- **Boll Weevil/Chief Auto Parts** 6-8p last Tues of month, 169 Rancho Santa Fe Rd, San Marcos
- **Fred's Old Fashioned Burgers** 1st, 3rd & 5th Sat ea. month, 2754 Alpine Blvd, 5p

Classifieds

As a tangible benefit to being a member of The Mopar Club, you get free ads. Give Bob a fax 858/292-5344 or better e-mail dgough1@san.rr.com

For Sale: HEMI 4 speed trans & shifter out of a 1968 to 1970 Mopar.
Randy 619-994-8187

For Sale: NOS "Cycle Bond" brand brake shoes from gas station. Part #'s 1002*, 1007, 1056*, 1058, 1060, 1063, 1066*, 1071, 1072, 1218*, 1219*, 1220*. $10/box. Call Bonnie 760/751-0129 *2 boxes

For Sale: Polara 2dr HT Anniversay Edition, modified 318 Poly 4 bbl., auto, rebuilt front w/ disk brakes,radiator, etc., straight sheet metal & good beige metallic paint, Torque thrust D's, very dependable, serious only, $19,750 obo, Craig 619/851-3490

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