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69 Roadrunner Time Machine



Labor of Love

REMEMBERING RUSS FLAGLE
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1969 Plymouth Roadrunner - Bill Mollerson

69 Roadrunner Time Machine

by Bill Mollerson

The Roadrunner was one of Chrysler's better ideas from the nineteen sixties.

An affordable, tough and solid 1/4 second quarter mile car with a hi performance 383 with a starting price of under \$3000.00. This legendary budget brawler in base trim was fast, but amazingly fast with the expensive optional 426 hemi engine. This car was so good it was Motor Trend magazine's 1969 Car of the Year. In 1968 Chrysler management thought they would sell a few thousand Roadrunners, instead they sold 44,559. The following year they sold 84,420 Roadrunners and in 1970 they sold 43,404. This was an amazing success story based on a Warner Brothers cartoon character that went "beep beep".

In the spring of 2019, I sold my 73 Challenger and was on the lookout for another classic Mopar. If you know me its "Mopar or no car". I looked at many cars, but never found one I really liked enough to buy. To my delight in the July/August edition of Northern Mopars magazine was a classified ad for one of my dream cars, a 1969 Roadrunner for sale by a club member.

I contacted the car's owner, Howard and after many conversations on the phone I went to see his Roadrunner. After inspection, I realized "This was the car for me". All the major work had been done although I knew some additional work would be needed to meet my demanding expectations. Being a retired heavy-duty mechanic, I had a good idea what the car required. After a road test and a few more meetings he reluctantly sold the car to me. I sensed that Howard really did not want to part with the car, but he was getting to the point that he was not using it anymore. One important thing for Howard was that whoever bought the car would look after it like he had. I knew and I sensed he knew that I was that guy.



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I did a history check on the car and found it had always been a Canadian car, originally sold in Vancouver B.C., bought and sold throughout the interior of B.C. and finally ending up in Radium B.C. The good news was no accidents were reported, though I did learn that there was a minor mishap with a guard wire hitting the hood and grill that was not on the history report from AMA. Fortunately, no major damage was done, in fact the original hood was repaired and is still on the car. To the best of my knowledge, I am the seventh owner of this wonderful Roadrunner.

Howard, the previous Northern Mopars club member had bought the car in Radium in 2003 and brought the Roadrunner back to Calgary. He spent the next 15 years restoring the car, including the required out of province inspection and making all the required safety repairs to have the car registered in Alberta. Many parts were replaced, including: a complete brake job, front end rebuild, new steering box and pump, a front disc brakes conversion and numerous other repairs. The car then had a complete body job including some new panels, doors, front fenders, rust repairs and paint that was completed in 2005. The paint color was changed from original F8 green to R6 Red which really looks much better and suits the car. Not show car paint but after 16 years of use still looks good. Next the interior was redone to change the color from green to black.



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The original 383 engine had blown up and was replaced by a low compression mid 70's 440 engine from a motor home many years ago (not sure of the date). In 2017 the 440 engine was treated to a performance rebuild to bring the compression back to hi performance specs. The engine now has performance aluminum heads, Keith black pistons, headers and a hi-rise intake manifold. A great street engine, not too temperamental with slightly more power than a stock hi-performance 440 from the 60's. The 727 transmission was rebuilt with many upgraded parts and the 8 ¾ diff was also rebuilt including new gears. All major mechanical repairs were done by the previous owner Howard before I purchased the car. I am grateful for all the restoration and improvements which he did.

In 2019, my first summer of driving the Roadrunner, I had lots of fun going to many classic car shows, driving with family & friends and attending Northern Mopar club cruises. The more I drove this beauty, the more I realized many items would require my attention to make this car as perfect as I could. I spent four months working on the Roadrunner in my rear garage in the winter of 2020. Days turned into weeks as I worked on this amazing car. Make no mistake: this was a labor of love. Repairs included: inspecting the underbody to discover minimal surface rust thanks to Chrysler factory undercoating, two small rust holes in the floor were discovered that were easily repaired. Two weeks were spent underneath the car cleaning, de-greasing, sanding, rust treating, rust proofing, painting and spraying box liner underneath the car from bumper to bumper. Next, I completely stripped the interior and to my delight only found minimal surface rust. All surfaces were chemically stripped, rust treatment was applied, painted with POR 15 and covered with sound deadener. Then I installed new carpet underlay to further quiet the interior. All door, dash, window and heating mechanisms were repaired. Lots of other repairs were done, too numerous to mention. Many thanks to my fellow Northern Mopar club members, previous owner Howard Swennumson, Carmine at Classic Performance and Dean at Deans Dodges for advice, help and parts.



The summer of 2020 rewarded me with a car that was a joy to drive. Most things were working properly, sorted out and the Roadrunner was really becoming my car. Quiet inside with no more rattles, the perfect environment to hear that wonderful Mopar big block exhaust sound (you know what I am talking about). The engine was starting to break in after 5 thousand miles since the rebuild. I could feel it getting more responsive and powerful with every mile. I plan on keeping this car for many years, with many improvements and repairs planned. What a great way to spend my retirement, driving and working on a classic Mopar muscle car.

To me, the Roadrunner is a time machine from 1969. It brings back fond memories when many of my friends owned Mopar muscle cars: a friend's Challenger 340 six pack 4 speed leaving my other buddy's Ford Cobra Jet big block in the dust racing from stop light to stop light. Another friend's amazingly fast 68 Charger with built 440 six pack winning street races. I can still remember the amazing sounds and great impressions these cars made on me like it was yesterday. There is nothing better these days than going for a drive in my Mopar time machine on a warm sunny summer day, roll down the windows, part the air with that big "B" body and listen to the exhaust music of that wonderful 440. Also, I would like to mention it has the one of the most distinctive car horns known to mankind. This Roadrunner gives me a special feeling, a joy from owning one of Mopar's best. It's just pure pleasure every time I look, sit in, work on, hear it run and drive it, meeting new and old friends along the way

