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'72

**DODGE
CHARGER**

Special Edition

Brougham



*So Different
So Luxurious*

HEMI HIDEOUT
HOUSTON, TEXAS



1972 CHARGER SE BROUGHAM - Owner **Bill Mollerson**



'72 DODGE CHARGER *Special Edition* Brougham

I wasn't looking for another classic Mopar, but a '72 Charger in beautiful condition found me. I already have another B body, a '69 Roadrunner, which I lovingly restored and have written about in these pages. Why would I want still another Mopar? The answer is: this car is so different, so luxurious that it marks a distinct departure from anything I've owned to date. I enjoy this car so much I drive it nearly every day from spring to fall.



1972 CHARGER SE BROUGHAM - Owner Bill Mollerson

You may remember that the 70's were difficult years for Canada-US automobile manufacturers of high-performance muscle cars. The era of gas-guzzling big blocks was ending abruptly with the government EPA mandate to reduce vehicle emissions. High OPEC-induced gas prices, the switch from high octane leaded gas to unleaded regular, the insurance "premium" on high performance cars, and the Japanese car invasion all contributed to the rapid switch from all-out horsepower to gas-sipping vehicles. My '72 Charger reflects exactly those changes. We said goodbye to the last of the high performance 440 6 pack and 426 Hemi engines in 1971, replaced by lower compression and reduced performance motors designed to run on regular unleaded gasoline.

But there was a silver lining. Chrysler very successfully adapted to the changing automobile market by substituting luxury for performance, selling more Chargers in 1973 than all previous years. 327,838 Charger Gen 3 cars were manufactured from 1971-74 eclipsing the highly sought-after 1968-70 Gen 2 Charger with 250,878 cars produced. Buyers liked the Gen 2 Charger, but bought more Gen 3. Chrysler seemed to have a hit with a vehicle which captured the market's mood by delivering an appealing package.

Case in point is my beautiful '72 Charger SE Brougham which is what you would expect from a 50-year-old two-door car from that era. It has a smaller fuel-efficient engine, air conditioning, power windows, comfortable seats, a soft ride, a nice interior, a quiet drive with minimal wind noise. A very aerodynamic body slips through

the air and stays planted on the road at high speeds, traits that Richard Petty liked enough to declare, that this was his favorite car to race on high-speed ovals. My car's stock performance would best be described as "leisurely" with a 150 HP 318 two-barrel and 2.76 axle ratio - great for fuel economy but not a performance vehicle. This is a car that accurately reflected what was happening in the 70's. It's hard not to compare the '72 Charger to my '69 Roadrunner with a nicely built up 440 but that's not fair. This is a highway cruiser, a car built to sit back and relax while the miles melt away.

I bought this car from its second owner in Alberta. He had bought the Charger in the US for his wife to enjoy four years prior, but the car just wasn't for her. It sat in their garage logging less than 100 miles per year. When I first took a look at the car, I was amazed at the Charger's great original condition. After a thorough inspection we took the car for a test drive on the highway. It ran poorly and could not maintain highway speeds. The likely culprit: the car had been sitting and the gas was old and stale. After the drive, I was clearly not convinced this was the car for me. As I wrestled with this decision, I realized that the good outweighed the bad. The car was, after all, in great cosmetic shape, affordable and I was confident I could get it running "as good as new" based on my experience with Mopars and great support from club members. After some negotiation the owner agreed to bring the price down - he knew the car would be going to a dyed-in-the-wool Mopar guy.



All the documentation, maintenance records and original bill of sale were included with the car which was a decided bonus. I found that the car was bought new at Dishman Dodge in Spokane Washington for \$4,736.25. The original owners had the car for 30 years and meticulously cared for it. It was that regular maintenance plus having the car garaged which left it in such great original condition. After the owners died, their son inherited a car he didn't want. He left it in the garage, jacked up on stands. Luckily, he did start it several times a year and let it run. Many years passed and he finally decided to part with the car and it ended up in Alberta.



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Back in my garage, I completed an in-depth inspection and found little wrong with the car. Minor maintenance and repairs were performed - a tribute to the amazing condition of this fifty-year-old vehicle. The Charger was virtually unchanged from the way Chrysler built it in 1972 - original exhaust, belts and hoses, interior and vinyl roof, just like it had been driven off the showroom floor. This is a tribute to the care given to this vehicle by the original owners.

I found that after the first year of driving the engine ran better and better. With each tank of gasoline (and lots of fuel cleaner/conditioner) I realized that this was a keeper. Though not powerful, it ran nicely and was a joy to drive. In 2021, I decided it was time to look at ways to improve the performance of the 318. After consulting with fellow Northern Mopar members Ian Herring and Neale Felske, other car friends and internet research, a plan was hatched. I installed a set of higher compression swirl port heads from a 1991 Dodge pickup that I reconditioned. Next, an Edelbrock four barrel carb was added, an Edelbrock aluminum intake manifold, a Mopar Performance cam, double roller timing chain, 340 air

cleaner, and dual exhaust. I went so far as to recurve the distributor for that extra bit of power. The result: a big improvement in torque and throttle response, definitely not muscle car performance but way better than stock. The car now effortlessly cruises at speed and is a thrill to drive in town or on the highway. Another plus: the 318 is not fussy about the gas it burns - regular is just fine though I usually treat it to premium gas.

Additional repairs included: new rear springs, carb re-jetting, a tachometer, adjustments to the steering box and torsion bar, undercoat and paint touch up, tire rebalance, trunk re-paint and weather seal gasket replacement, windshield washer reservoir replacement, repeated hood adjustments for better fit and finish, throttle linkage modifications from a two-barrel to a four-barrel carb, new throttle cable, transmission kick down linkage modifications, carburetor re-jet, heater cable replacement, rewire of the hideaway headlight door, a carb spacer to remedy an occasional hot start issue, installation of daytime running lights, as well as much detailing and fine tuning. Whew!



After these many improvements completed by the summer of 2022, I was truly driving a different car. Engine power, throttle response, fuel economy, driveability and steering were all much improved. I am a firm believer in driving my old classic Mopars. Really what's the point of having a nice-looking vehicle that performs and not driving it on a regular basis? I know there's an ongoing debate on which is the better looking series, the Gen 2 Chargers or the Gen 3. I really can't take sides. The bottom line for me is that Richard Petty was right, these are great cars that drive amazingly well. Even though I wasn't looking for another Mopar, I am glad I found this beautiful Charger. It's a road cruiser that's easy to drive and I enjoy getting behind the wheel each and every day.