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1956 DODGE



D-501

MOPAR MUSCLE CAR
NEVER BUILT - UNTIL NOW



1956 DODGE D-501 - Owner Ian Herring

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FORWARD LOOK MOPAR MUSCLE
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When I retired in 2011 - my wife, Heather, knew that I was going to need lots of interesting things to keep me busy after 40 hectic but fun years in the oil patch. She found the "Beast" a 1972 Hemi Road Runner for me on Kijiji that year which was subsequently written up in the Nov/Dec 2012 Northern Mopars News Letter.





1956 DODGE D-501 - Owner Ian Herring

If the car was a 1971 with an original street Hemi it would be really valuable but as a 1972 with a transplanted street Hemi it is a mongrel but it doesn't know that and it goes like hell.

Shortly after we bought the Road Runner I thought I should eventually own not only a Gen III Hemi in my Dodge Magnum 5.7 daily driver and the Gen II 426 in the Road Runner but also a Gen I. Gen I cores were getting scarce and I eventually located a 354 Hemi in a retired Fargo grain truck at Heavy Metal Wreckers in Trochu. At that time, our daughter was living in Prince George, BC which is filled with "car guys". On one of my many home renovation visits there - I was introduced to Jim's Engines in PG. Bob (machinist), Gerald (assembler) and Jim (dyno man) do excellent work and have a heavy backlog for good reasons. I hauled the 354 there and asked them to build a streetable engine with lots of torque and close to 400 HP. I initially thought I wanted a hydraulic flat lifter cam but Bob sat me down and insisted that I read the May 12, 2014 Hot Rod Motortrend article <https://www.motortrend.com/how-to/camshaft-comparison-testing> on Camshaft Comparison Testing. This is a must-read article for those considering the benefits of a roller. Jim spec'd and ordered a custom

Crane roller (282 deg duration) which produces very good power from 1500 rpm up. With many upgrade parts from Hot Heads and considerable creativity, Jim's Engines achieved 380 hp and 409 ft-lbs with a very street friendly flat torque curve. Oversized valves in the original steel heads considerably improved engine breathing. The dyno sheet for the final build Run 17 (with headers) and Run 10 (with stock truck exhaust manifolds) is attached. If you ever had any doubts about the value of headers please note the 20 hp boost across the entire rpm range!

The beautiful 354 wrapped in plastic sat in my shop for five years until Heather (again) discovered a car on Kijiji in the fall of 2019. It was a low mileage 1956 "pink" Canadian Dodge Regent 2 dr HT driver/survivor in Lethbridge. Soon thereafter, I purchased that Alberta car and drove it back to Calgary. The car ran fine but was the definition of a gutless wonder with a 2-speed PowerFlite transmission behind a flathead 6 engine. The original car was Desert Rose and White but had been "splash and dash" repainted to a hideous Mary Kay (Bubble Gum) Pink along the way. Further examination revealed more rust than originally expected.



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I decided to create an upgraded restomod from this base. In 1956 Dodge sold around 2500 D500's with 315 Poly engines and D500-1's with 315 Hemi engines that set 306 speed and endurance records that year. These were great Forward Look cars with modest fins and good superstock performance. In 1957, Dodge built 56 D501 race cars with the Chrysler 354 Hemi but they never built a 1956 D501 - so I decided to build this car to fill that gap.

The 354 hemi needed a better pushbutton transmission so I purchased an A518 46RH from Neale Felske and had it rebuilt and upgraded by Dennis Palmarchuk. The differential was upgraded to 8-3/4" with 3.91 gears by Neal Felske. Bodywork and paint was by Paul Turner. We went with the original Desert Rose but changed the white trim to another 1956 Dodge colour - Iridescent Charcoal Metallic. To make the car more fun to drive, an original 1956 power steering box was purchased from Dale Flatla in Tilley. New springs and shocks were installed as well as new rims, tires and disc brakes on all four corners.

The biggest challenge on this vehicle was fitting the largish 354 into the engine bay. Maybe there was a reason why Dodge never built a 1956 D501! The install was complicated by interference between steering components, oil pan and exhaust system. Many thanks

to Ray Werbiski who came up with great solutions such as vertical collectors on the headers. My brother, Bruce Herring, was very patient as the engine went into the car a dozen or more times to sort out the many interference conflicts but it finally all worked. The exhaust system was completed by Calgary Muffler and new carpeting installed by AutoMarine. The exterior chrome and interior panels, seats, dash and headliner are all original. Miscellaneous parts were also acquired from John Barrett and Wildcat Wrecking.

After rejetting the Holley 770 carb for higher elevation - the car runs very well. Steering is positive and the manual disc brakes work fine. The 354 sounds awesome and it gets a solid 20 mpg on the highway thanks to the OD, lockup and strong 354. The car is a driver and I enjoy it every summer.

The car was kept garaged and maintained for many years in Lethbridge by the sellers as an inherited "wedding car" for their daughters. Our daughter, Laura, has requested this same use for this gem for her upcoming wedding in Prince George. She has also hinted that I leave the car to her in my estate. Good to know that the car (and early Hemi) will have a good home for many years to come.