

MY SLANT ON THINGS

A man with grey hair and sunglasses, wearing a dark brown zip-up hoodie and light blue jeans, is leaning against the front of a white Chrysler car. His left leg is propped up and resting on the car's hood. The car is a white sedan with a black grille and dual headlights. In the background, there is a residential street with a house, a mailbox, and another car parked further down the road. The scene is lit with warm, golden light, suggesting late afternoon or early morning.

**Tales of old
Chryslers and
junkyards and
stuff**

*by
Gary Platz*

About the Author



Gary Platz at the legendary Circle Auto Recyclers

Every once in a while you come across someone who's created their own world and become king of it.

That's Gary Platz. Gary is an artist, promoter, illustrator, hot rodder, mechanic, body man, Mopar historian and all-around good guy. He's also a cheapskate and proudly so. If anyone is able to channel Ed "Big Daddy" Roth while on a budget, it's Gary.

Time and time again, I've watched Gary drag home some sorry excuse for a car, haunt the Chrysler rows at Circle Auto Recyclers, buy up cases of flat black spray paint, make buddies with the guys at MAACO and suddenly be driving a nice set of wheels that's getting trophies at the local car shows.

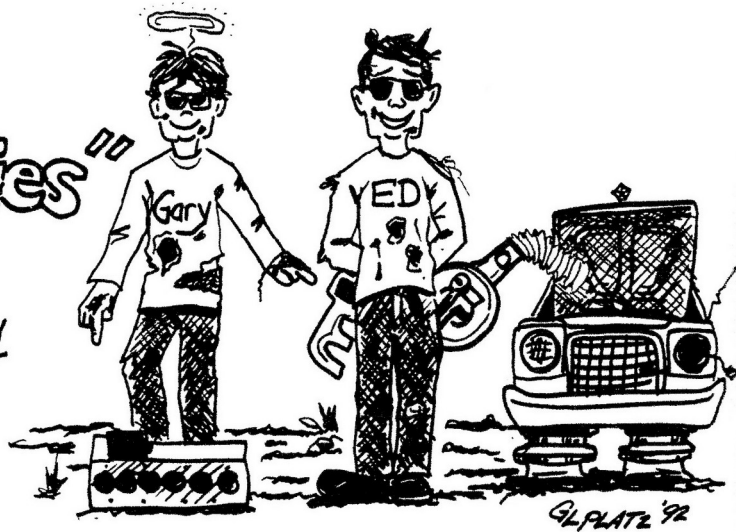
Gary's cartoons, crazy stories and unique slant on life were a mainstay of the late, great Slant 6 News. His *Cheap with an Attitude* car meets are legendary and his line of T-shirts are collectors items. In his quiet time, Gary actually paints landscapes and other gallery-worthy art.

The rest of the time, he's cooking up ways to turn old Chrysler base models into amazing show cars. Yup, Gary's the king of the Slant 6-powered planet he invented. If you're lucky, he'll invite you over for a visit now and again.

-Ed Dreistadt

Junkyard Junkies

The Adventures of Ed & Gary



by Gary Platz

I saw a show on TV the other night about that men's movement where guys go out in the woods somewhere, beat on drums and get in touch with what it means to be a man. Woods? Drums? Yeah, right. I got news for those guys. Real men go to junkyards and rip apart old Mopars.

For example, there's the time I went with Ed Dreistadt to the grand opening weekend of Circle Auto Recyclers.

It was late December and Ed was trapped in the house going crazy. Circle Auto Parts U-Pull-It had just opened up, so I gave him a call. The next day he rolled up to my house at the wheel of his '64 Valiant with a two-day wino-style beard and \$35 he had managed to scrape together.

Like I said, the yard was brand new. It was only about one-third filled with cars. They were in neat rows by make, with tires stacked under the frames so you could crawl under them if you felt like tempting fate. The whole yard was paved with crushed stones and there were a good four rows of old Chryslers. In short, it was pretty much the way the Bible describes Heaven.

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It cost a buck each to get in, plus we had to sign a piece of paper saying that if we were stupid enough to go in there, we should expect to die, so don't even think about suing. The paper also entered us into a drawing for one of the few running cars that came in with a clear title. We now had a chance to win a clapped-out Pontiac J2000.

The yard turned out to be a little shy of Darts and Valiants, but had a ton of Aspens and Volares. A lot of those had the Super Six two-barrel carb setup. Ed's parts

horde was already a little out of control and he had promised his wife he wouldn't bring home any more junk, so he immediately set about grabbing one.

I went off scouting Dusters and Valiants and came back to find Ed hurling cusswords at the 1/2" nuts way down under the intake next to the block. While he was doing that, I took the EGR fitting off the head with a hammer. This was definitely a two-man job.

No matter what we did, the intake wouldn't budge from the head. A couple of rows up, a guy with the misfortune to own a Ford sent his girlfriend down to borrow a 7/16ths socket. Ed walked it up to him and he suggested we solve our problem with a big tire iron out of a land yacht. A look in the trunk of a nearby LTD yielded one and we used it to try to yank off the intake.

However, even the mighty FoMoCo pry-bar wouldn't work. So I reached up under the intake and found two more nuts by feel. Nice thorough job, Ed. After taking those off, the intake fell off the head. Ed had his manifold.

Then we went into a feeding frenzy for small pieces: air cleaners, Duster arm rests, two barrel linkage pieces, spare throttle cables, ballast resistors and trim pieces.

The sun was going down and the pile of loot was getting substantial, so it was time to head back up to the office.

The challenge now was to get the big pile of parts and our toolboxes all the way back to the entrance of the yard. We tried a couple of ways of packing up before we hit the magic combination. Ed came up with the bright idea of hooking some tools and parts to his belt and pockets. I kept dropping my load of stuff from laughing at the buttcrack jokes I got to make.

We finally dragged into the office, filthy dirty and tired, yet primed for the next challenge: negotiating price.

"I hope this won't cost too much 'cause were both pretty broke. You know, I got one of those manifolds free once. Hey, who wants that six cylinder stuff anyway, right? If it costs too much, we can just leave it here, right?"



I'd been there before and had run through this routine before. The guy behind the counter rolled his eyes and shook his head. "Thirty bucks." I started to say that we only had twenty five between us when Ed jumped the gun and pulled out his money.

Even with Ed screwing up the negotiations, we actually had money left over, so we headed toward a McDonalds and ordered up burgers and fries. While we were eating, I noticed some kids pointing at us and their parents telling them to

hush. It began to dawn on me how filthy we had managed to get in the yard. In our old clothes and with Ed's homeless-chic beard, we looked exactly what parents tell their children to avoid. I hunched over my burger and glared at them to enhance the effect.

From there we motored back to my place to divvy up our parts stash and un-mix-up the tools.

Ed stuffed his trunk full of parts and headed off. Now, those guys in the woods with the drums...what do they go home with? Other than tics and chiggers?

Take it from me, guys. Ditch the drums and get yourself some Detroit iron, save up a few bucks in cash and head to yard with a buddy.

That's where the action is.





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Rust Buster's Duster

by Gary Platz



Neil Young said it best: "Rust Never Sleeps". Anyone with an older MoPar (except for maybe those in Arizona) fights a never-ending battle against corrosion.

I live near Richmond, VA, Just far enough north to get an occasional dose of road salt. As the original owner of my 71 Duster, I've had to slog through the occasional winter snow storm, white knuckling the steering wheel as I think about all that corrosive slush seeping into every unprotected nook and cranny.

After my first unsuccessful bout with rust bubbles, I declared all-out war. My assault on corrosion started with rust proofing. Not some ripoff rustproofing shop, mind you, but a thorough job done by someone who cares-me! J.C. Whitney has a reasonably-priced rust-proofing kit (\$18) that comes with a variety of nozzles and body plugs.

I've drilled holes that give me access to every interior sheetmetal panel. I pop the body plugs once a year and completely re-rustproof the car. I've been told that if I keep it up, I'll end up having the world's heaviest A-body. That's fine with me, because it'll probably be around long enough to be the world's *only* A-body. It's also becoming the world's quietest and most solid-sounding A-body.

I found that rustproofing by itself isn't enough, though. The front fenders have a little ledge on the inside that lets leaves and dust build up. Leaves and water form acid. Acid and metal equal guess what? More rust.



I solved that problem once and for all by installing fiberglass fenders and a fiberglass hood. By the way, if anyone in the club is considering doing the same thing, please be advised that this isn't a simple bolt-on. The hood, for example, has very little stiffness to it. It will sag in the middle if you don't add extra bracing to it. It will also sag in the middle if you don't add extra hood bumpers. The fenders required fabricating shims and brackets and endless fitting and refitting to get them to finally line up.

Luckily, I visited a body shop before I started the hood and fender project. The guy I lined up to paint the car turned out to be an Englishman by the name of Phil. He was nice enough to advise me on what I needed to do to get the fenders and hood on the car. Without his help, they would probably still be sitting in a corner of my garage. Once on the car, the fiberglass units were so much lighter that I had to wind the torsion bars down to get the front end even with the rear (maybe this will make up for all the undercoating material). My trusty old Duster felt peppier and handled better, to boot.



My other campaign in the battle against rust has been banishing water leaks. Judging from the fit and finish of my 71, it was assembled on a Friday by a drug addict. One by one, I tracked down every source of offending moisture and eliminated it. Among other things, I:

- Pulled up my moldy carpet and got rid of the padding. The padding sucks up moisture like a sponge and holds it. I replaced it with plastic 'Cool Seats' that are available at most auto parts stores. They do the same thing under the carpet that they do under your backside on a hot day: let air circulate and water escape. I also put undercoating on the topside of the floorpan. It worked. My carpets don't grow mold anymore.
- Undercoated the backside of any Bondo work because Bondo absorbs water. If it's not sealed, it will cause more rust.
- Sealed my leaky taillight housings with 3M Strip Caulking, the stuff that the Virginia State Police use to seal their roof lights.

After 15 years of ownership, including a rough first 10 years with no garage, I think I finally have the rust demons at bay. My Duster is no longer my daily driver and now resides in a garage built especially for it in my back yard.

Lately, cosmetics and modernization have replaced rust fighting as the main thrust of my car project. I recently converted the 225 over to a factory Super 6 2-barrel intake and carb setup. The old breaker-point ignition was replaced by a DC electronic setup and I split the exhaust under the car and ran two pipes out the back with chrome resonators on each. I put a set of back window louvers on and repainted it three times-first when I replaced the hood and fenders, second when some idiot ran a nail down the driver's side and third when I was attending an art show and a kid ran his bike into it in a parking lot.

The original pebble-grain Chrysler vinyl top was replaced with GM Deerskin vinyl. While the purists in the club probably can't appreciate it, it's a lot easier to clean.



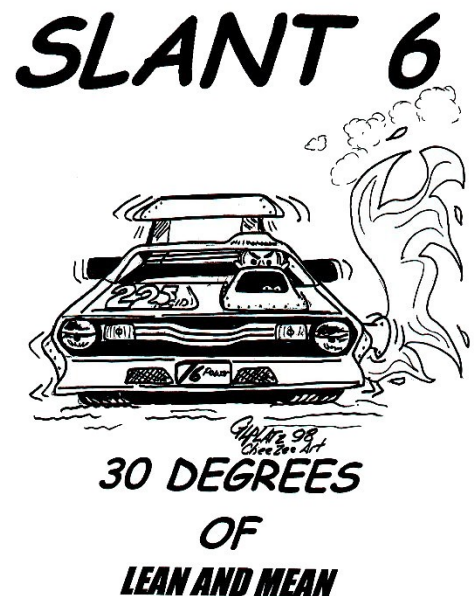
The old bias-ply tires are long gone. The Duster now sports ADDCO sway bars front and rear and gas shocks on all four corners. With the lightened front end, I can embarrass BMW's on twisty roads with ease. The headlights are now halogen units.

I got tired of having people ask me if it has a 340, 318, 383 440 etc., so I had a friend of mine duplicate the type style of the 340 logo on a computer and print out 225. I had a decal made of that for the rear of the

car. I still get a lot of comments, but there is no doubt now what is in it.

With only 36,000 miles on it, the trusty 225 runs perfectly and even with the 2-barrel, it gets 25 mpg on the highway with the air conditioner cranked up full blast.

Rust may never sleep, but that's probably because I don't give it any rest.



Rust Buster Duster, Part II

The Continuing Saga of Almost 50 Years of Ownership

by Gary Platz



Hope you don't mind an update on the heels of the last Rust Buster Duster article. That one just appeared in Jack Poehler's Fall/Winter 1992 Special Variety Issue of the Slant 6 News. I only have but so many cars, so I hope you don't mind a little repetition so soon after the last story.

As you know, I don't put up with rust and I do everything I can to ban it from my vehicles. I personally rustproofed and re-rustproofed every inner panel of my '71 Duster for the past 40 some years. A-body front fenders are notorious for rot, but not mine. The Rust Buster Duster sports fiberglass fenders and a fiberglass hood. The rust-prone parts they replaced are living in the rafters of my garage. Never know when you might need them for something.

As Neil Young put it, Rust Never Sleeps. Know what, rust? NEITHER DO I. Every year, the inside of the trunk quarter panels, lower rocker panels and the inside of the doors get a light coating of clear rustproofing from my trusty pneumatic rust buster gun.

But, rust is sneaky. I'll come at you from the inside, too. The Duster's interior floors have been coated so moisture can't touch steel. You know what, though? That ain't enough. Between the carpet and the floors resides plastic grids to keep air between the the carpet and the floor. No moisture trapped in the carpet, no rust. Platz wins again.

SLANT 6

BOYZ UNDA DA
HOOD



When not keeping rust at bay, my '71 Slant Six Duster gets the best of upgrades from the finest of sources. Over the years, Virginia's most exclusive wrecking yards and J.C. Whitney have contributed upgrades, including: front and rear spoilers, a rear window louver and 10-inch rear & 6-inch front 14" Cragers for that perfect big 'n little hot rod rake.

It has a custom interior, vinyl roof and custom Platz-designed graphics. The engine compartment is painted signature Platzblack, of course, with a detailed Leaning Tower of Power (not to be confused with the rock/jazz fusion 70s group, although *Ain't Nothin' Stoppin' Us Now* is a good Slant 6 theme song.) The mighty 225 has a Volare Super Six two barrel intake manifold and carb combo feeding into a ported head. Also included is a modern electronic ignition system from a '79 Volare that sends sparks through Accel plug wires.

Major power boosts come from a chrome alternator (10HP,) a chrome valve cover (15HP,) chrome breather cap (5HP) and a chrome coil cover & bracket (25HP.) At the rear of the car, acceleration is enhanced by a chrome 7 ½ inch differential cover, which acts much like a turbocharger as light from the car headlights behind me bounces off and pushes the Duster ahead to victory.

Underneath, front and rear stabilizer bars compliment the radial tires to provide Ferrari-like handling. Mini traction bars keep the rear axle from twisting off the car during hard acceleration. The stock drinking-straw-diameter exhaust pipe was torched off years ago and a nice, big low-restriction exhaust pipe now feeds into a poor man's Flowmaster muffler. The chrome tip at the end of the exhaust adds another 30 HP, plus gives the car I just passed something to look at.

The Duster makes a statement at car shows. The fiberglass hood is suspended on top of rods on all four corners so I can proudly display the engine compartment. When spectators see the Duster they immediately think it's a 340 or 360 or at least a 318 powered muscle car. Then they see the 225 graphics, look at the motor and start saying things like, "Hey, I think half your motor is missing."

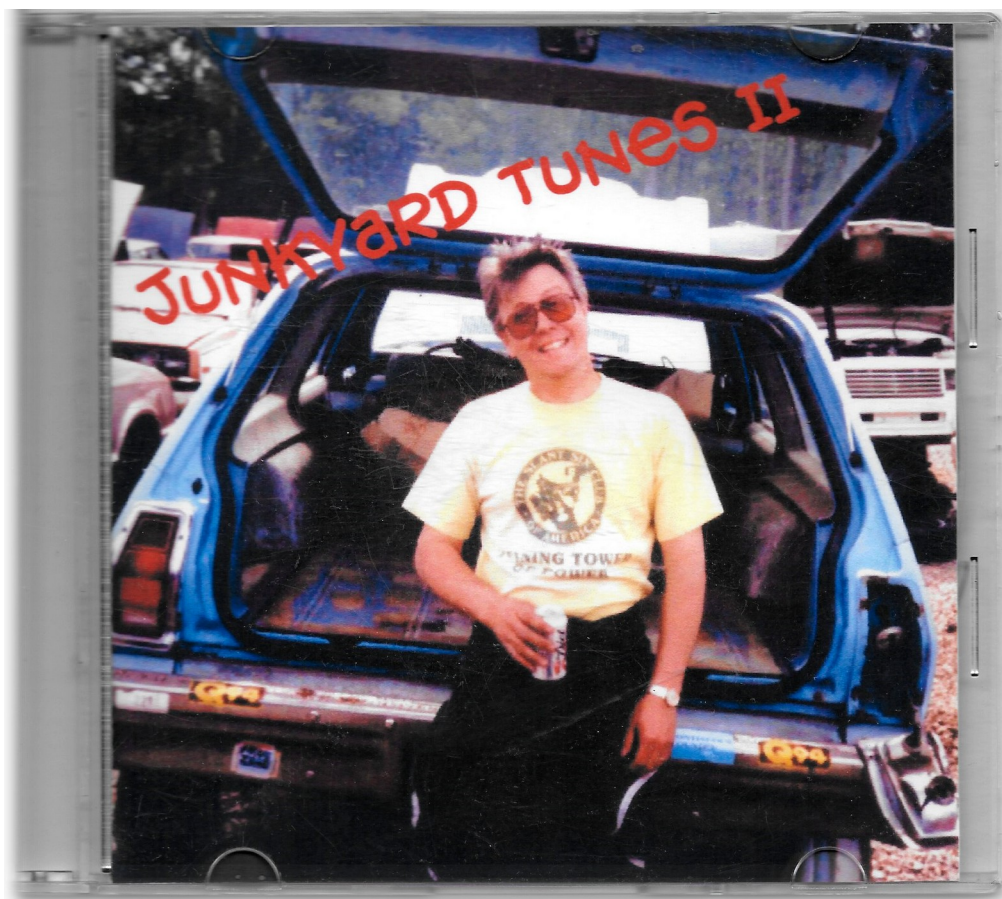
Know what? There were a heck of a lot more 225s made and a whole heck of a lot more of those are still around. You can't kill a Slant 6 with a hammer. Forged crankshaft, drop forged steel connecting rods, tri-metal bearings. Don't tell me about muscle car motors. Mine's beefier than just about anything else Detroit ever built.

That's why I'm still driving it almost 50 years later. Nobody in 1971 ever thought these A bodies would survive for five decades, but mine made it through just fine. You just need to look rust in the eye and stare it down. It's also currently valued at about \$15,000 which is five times the original sticker price.

Not a bad investment. And worth every can of rust proofing I've pumped into it.



Gary's Record Label



"CHRYSLER DISCONTINUES NECKBELTS" BY ONION RADIO NEWS
 "K CAR " BY RELIENT K
 "HOT ROD QUEEN" BY DEKE DICKERSON
 "AUTOMATIC" BY OMAR & THE HOWLERS
 "EL CAMINO" BY WEEN
 "BODY AND FENDER MAN" BY MICROWAVE DAVE AND THE NUKES
 "FORD WINDSTAR" BY WESLY WILLIS
 "SHADE TREE MECHANIC" BY JOE LOUIS WALKER
 "BUYING CAR " BY CHRIS ROCK
 "ARNOLD SCHWARZENEGGER CALLS CHRYSLER"
 "49 MERCURY BLUES" BY THE BRIAN SETZER ORCHESTRA
 "5-0 FORD" BY REVEREND HORTON HEAT
 "V-12 FORD" BY BLAZING HALEY
 "RAGGEDY RIDE" BY FLOYD MCDANIEL
 "KISS OF DEATH" BY SPLIT LIP RAYFIELD
 "THE NEXT CAR" BY HANS OLSON
 "CHEVY IMPALA " BY FOUR BITCHIN' BABES
 "FORD MUSTANG" BY MIKE PATTON
 "CROWN VIC " BY JOHN HAMMOND
 "PULLED OVER THE CAR" BY MORPHINE
 "HOT CARS" BY ANGRY SAMOANS
 "DRIVING IN MY CAR" BY MADNESS
 "STOLEN CAR" BY THE GREEN HORNETS
 "CAR HOPPIN' MAMA" BY HAWKSHAW HAWKINS
 "THAT LITTLE SPORTS CAR" BY THE 5H0005



\$200 Cheap Heap

by Gary Platz



Yes, it's me again with another vehicle that nearly succumbed to the crusher. This time it's a '79 Volare. While this car is definitely not one of Chrysler's best efforts, (rust, lock up torque converter and transverse torsion bars are just some of its maladies) it does have the ubiquitous, world-renowned Slant 6.

After working on "Rust Buster Duster" and "Fugly" (my '78 D 100,) this was almost like being with a lost friend, since Barbara and I once owned a '78 Volare, which gave 5 years of dependable service.

This '79 Volare coupe was purchased in 1995 after the engine in my Mitsubishi D50 decided to go south, which would have cost a small fortune to rebuild. I decided to sell the D50 (minus engine) and look for another daily driver, preferably a cheap one!

I'd noticed a rusty-looking Volare around the corner from my house and knew the owner. Looking closely for the first time, I discovered an one-owner, fully-loaded white '79 Volare Premier coupe with a black vinyl Landau roof, powered by a 2-bbl Super 6 with TorqueFlight automatic. Equipped with power steering and brakes, air conditioning and full tinted glass, it had 128,000 miles on the clock. It had received regular maintenance, plus a rebuilt transmission, new brakes and head work.

However, the car was a rust bucket with bad lower quarter panels, rust spots on the hood and roof. About half of an oak tree was residing in the cowl and trunk. The headliner hung down so low you couldn't see out the rear, the door moldings were rotten, the bumpers rusted and the carpet was rotted. Amazingly, the floor pans were still solid.

I asked if he was interested in selling. After debating a couple of weeks he said he'd sell, but only if I test drove the Volare and was then still sure I wanted it.

We did the test drive on the interstate. The car ran fine and everything worked to acceptable levels. While driving along with the A/C on, I figured he'd want about \$500 for this heap. He told me he was considering selling the car to Circle Auto Recyclers for \$40, so I jokingly offered the same. He then said what he wanted was \$250. I offered \$200 and he accepted. We went to an ATM and did the title transfer.

The first night I power-washed the car until all the grunge from years of aesthetic neglect was removed, and then vacuumed the cowl, trunk and interior.

Next I did the obligatory fluid changes and gave it a fresh tuneup. Then using some galvanized metal I rebuilt the inside, outside and splash pan of one lower quarter panel and patched the other.

I found an Aspen with the exact same interior at Circle and replaced the cloth headliner with a pegboard one. The door parts were fixed and I put covers on the split bench seat so it would be halfway decent for the winter.



For the outside, my sister-in-law's husband Bert came to my rescue by doing some quick Bondo work and laying on some nice acrylic enamel on a cold December evening, and it still looks good. I then found a suitable rear bumper at Circle Auto Recyclers as well as a repairable plastic grille. That grille was eventually replaced by a beautiful square-tube custom job made by club member Willie McLain.

Owing to Willie's thoroughness and skill, it bolted in with no modifications. I also lucked out finding a pristine front bumper from a fellow Volare owner for \$20.

Two Rallye wheels located at Circle were painted and mounted. Another club member, Richard Gabel, came to my rescue twice. First with two more Rallyes and then two new rubber door moldings.



Last Easter, I found a spoiler off a 76 Volare Road Runner that looked like a renegade from the movie Mad Max. I sanded and glued this mangled chunk of plastic until it was halfway decent and bolted it to the trunk. It now sports "Super Slant Six" script lettering on its rear.

New carpet from J.C. Whitney, two buckets from a Korean car (literally 99¢ each at a monster sale at Circle) and a console from an '81 LeBaron went to upgrade interior. To dress up the engine

compartment, red spark plug wires & a red distributor cap were installed along with a chrome valve cover. Throw in a Grant steering wheel, a 99¢ junkyard AM/FM radio and an oil gauge and we're talking nirvana.

The A/C went south last fall so I bought rebuild parts as well an alternator, a starter, a heater core, heat control buttons and other repair parts which brought the total expense to \$750 (including original \$200 purchase price). You'd need more than that for a down payment on a leased vehicle.

It's given us two years dependable service thus far. Our "Cheap Heap" is earning its name and keeping me from walking, very much unlike my D50 "money-pit" former daily driver.

Circle Auto Recyclers

Slant 6 Frequent Shopper Club



Cheap Heap, the Sequel

by Gary Platz



I bought the Cordoba on April 23, 2010. This was only one day after I sold my '79 Volare for \$1,500. The deal simply broke my heart. I barely had put 40 or 50 thousand miles on the trusty Volare when in a weak moment I sold it at close to a loss. I bought the car for \$200, so I only made 750% profit on that deal.

I tried to get the loss of the Volare out of my head by painting the roof of my metal garage with some paint I got for free and some cheap foam brushes that simply weren't cheap enough as far as I was concerned.

That was when I heard the distinct sound of a Slant Six pulling up to the curb. It was my neighbor from up the street driving an '80 Cordoba. I had known both him and his brother for many years. I knew the car, too. It was owned by their father and driven until he had turned 99 and quit driving. Their father made it all the way to 100 years old and his car sat in a garage when from when he decided to park it for good until a few days before it rolled up in front of my house.

He bought the car in Delaware, Ohio in late 1979. He had it rust proofed in preparation for a life in the rust belt, but then took it down south to Virginia. The car was kept in a garage for many years, preserving the paint and most of the interior. When it pulled into my driveway, it had 64,000 miles on the clock. And the brothers wanted to sell.

I test drove the car and found that the AC didn't work and the vent fan made a lot of noise. It also didn't have much power, but it did start and run. My neighbor asked me what it's worth and I told him between \$750 and \$1,000. He asked me if I wanted to buy it.

Well, I was down one Slant Six car in the fleet and I never had owned a Cordoba before. I told them that several things needed to be repaired before I'd buy it. They agreed on the spot to get it fixed and sell it to me for \$750.

After \$200 in repairs, I was the proud owner of a Cordoba just one day after the Volare went off to its new owner and also one day before my retirement. I mean, I needed a class ride for when I cruised by all the working stiffs on my way to Waffle House where I planned to take as long as I pleased to eat breakfast and read the paper whenever the heck I wanted to.



However, it needed to be up to Platz standards for prestigious duty like that. I immediately replaced the non-functioning door locks, re-rust proofed the car, did a tuneup and replaced all the vital fluids. I had the water pump replaced and painted everything under the car signature Platz Black. My machine has to be clean.

I had a shop tackle the exhaust system, which turned out to be culprit when it came to no power. The 'doba had two cat converters stuffed up under the hood next to the motor, a muffler and then a resonator. The poor ol' Slant 6 was like a fire hose hooked up to a drinking straw. Most of the leaning tower's power was eaten up trying to push the exhaust through all the stuff in the way. The muffler shop was able to open things up a bit and the Slant 6 was nice and perky on the way home.

The one barrel carb has been rebuilt and now sports a K&N air filter. I installed a chrome valve cover and chrome breather cap which added at least 25 horsepower to the engine. I also detailed the engine to enhance the aforementioned Platz Black treatment. The car now has a metallic light blue vinyl roof which replaced the old, tired white one. That was followed up with a new headliner and new carpet. I also repaired and covered the driver's seat.

Thanks to Rich Gable it now sports a Grant steering wheel, and an AM/FM radio that lets me blast Beach Boys tunes as I pass by the working masses on my way to whatever it is I care to go.

The fender/rear quarter extensions were toast, but they were easy to replace with fiberglass reproductions. Rich Gable retrieved a nice rear bumper from a boneyard in Michigan. He not only drove it down to my place in Virginia, but also helped me install it.

I built a speaker box and installed two speakers from a junk Stratus and had it covered with blue vinyl because I didn't think the proletariat were hearing Barbara Ann in full fidelity as I cruised by.



I replaced the tires not long after I bought it with ones that met my strict specifications (cheap, round, black.) As for the paint, it buffed it out and looks great. I did spot paint a couple of scratches, but for the most part, it's sporting its original Mopar factory finish.



I bought six baby Imperial wheel covers from a guy in upstate New York to give it that turbine car look. I also scored a nice chrome engine displacement emblem from a Buick Electra 225 at the junkyard. Once I cut off the Buick nonsense, it looks right at home.

The Cordoba has (no big surprise here) proven to be bullet-proof. It takes me to where I want to go and is clean to the point where I've come home with a few car show awards.

All in all, I still have about half of my Volare money in the bank, I'm driving Ricardo Montalban's dream car (sadly, no rich, Corinthian leather, though) and retirement has been a car-filled blast.

Life can be good if you find yourself a nice Cheap Heap.

'98 High Status Stratus

by Gary Platz



On September 24, 1998, I marched my self into the late, great Triangle Dodge dealership, walked right up to a brand new Viper, looked the salesman in the eye and said, "I'm lookin' for something cheap. Wat'cha got?"

What he had was a program car. And not just a never-titled, fleet dwelling minion of some former corporate or governmental master. This one had been a rental car that hit retirement when it suffered a fender bender. My kind of wheels.

As a Slant 6 aficionado, the drive train seemed a little fancy to me. For example, it has one two many camshafts. It's a 2.4 dual overhead cam four banger, but who knows? Maybe having a spare camshaft will come in handy one day. It's pretty spunky plus it delivers about 34 miles per gallon, making it a cheap car to drive.



The one thing that bugged me, though, was that it came with steelies and I really wanted some of those Cuisinart-looking Chrysler aluminum wheels. Fellow Slant 6 Club member, Ed Dreistadt, had a Stratus daily driver with those cool wheels, so I tried any number of parts swap proposals to get him to trade wheels with me.

Well, when Ed's Stratus turned over 300,000 miles, something broke inside the 5-speed and the shifter no longer moved anything around in there. He decided it was time for a Kidney Foundation donation tax writeoff, so before it got towed away, he gave me the wheels, right?



Heck no.

He took the snowflake wheels off his '85 Lebaron convertible and put them on the Stratus before it headed off to the wrecking yard.

The super-cool factory Chrysler rims were swapped on to the '85 where they resided for a while.

So, I made do with steelies until I finally got a call from Ed. The Stratus wheels had a different offset than the '85 snowflakes and never looked quite right on the K-car convertible.

He was kicking himself for letting the snowflakes go and was on the hunt for another set. Once he found some, the Stratus alloy wheels were mine as long as I thought the price was right.

The price by the way was free. I tried to negotiate a better deal, but all Ed did was look at me funny.



I had the whirley blade rims on the car for years, but as Chrysler alloy wheels tend to do, they built up corrosion around the bead and a couple of them started to refuse to hold air for more than a couple of weeks, so I reluctantly decided that they had to go.

That's when I headed to Pep Boys for some custom wheels. They have a computer there that lets you call up your car, tell it what color it is and then see what different custom wheels will look like on it. So, I'm trying out different rims going, "Oooooooooo and aaaahhhhhh," when the guy says to me, "Sir, you've been here for three hours and we need to close the store."



I reluctantly pried open my wallet, shooed the moths away and had them put on a set of my favorite.

Those rims add that one missing touch to the car. It has all the amenities available at the time, including air-conditioning, power steering, anti-lock power brakes, power windows, power mirrors and power locks. It's a sweet ride.

My late wife Barbara drove the car as her daily driver until 2004. Not too long after I bought it, I came home from work and Barbara said, “We need to talk about the Stratus.” Turned out, an open tube of lipstick had fallen out of her purse. It sat on the driver’s seat all day in a hot car, melting its way into the fabric. Well, if you ever have that problem, soak a rag in Simple Green and let it soak over the lipstick. Swap out rags until it’s all soaked out of the seat.

Barbara was thrilled to have her car back to pristine condition. In fact, she loved that car so much, she’d enter it at car shows. You could always tell it was hers because of the stuffed teddy bears waving to you from the trunk.



Just like in the song Hot Rod Lincoln, man alive, the transmission in this thing goes into overdrive. It’s also easy to service. The spark plugs, air filter and PCV valve are a breeze (wait, wasn’t that the Plymouth version?) to change. Changing oil is easy but the radiator petcock is a nightmare to access. You need to be able to see it, which you can’t and it helps to have a quarter inch drive extension with a petcock wrench to drain the coolant. To be honest with you, I just take the car to a local mechanic with a lift to change the coolant. Sometimes it’s just too much effort to be a total cheapskate.

To change the battery, you need to remove the driver side wheel and some inner panels to find it. It’s about a half hour job once your figure it out.

After about a year of ownership, the head gasket needed to be replaced – not uncommon with 2.0 and 2.4 Chrysler 4-bangers. Mother Mopar was kind enough to replace it under warranty. Two electric window motors and two rear electric locks had to be replaced not that long ago. Fortunately my friends at Circle Auto Recyclers maintain an excellent selection of parts for me over in the U-Pull-It Chrysler section. And, yes, they are cheap, cheap, cheap.

Like all my cars, I keep the Stratus in show condition. The engine compartment sports blue Mopar spark plug cables, a K&N air filter and a lot of other detailing touches. The car has a dealer installed rear spoiler and Platz-designed custom graphics.

The exhaust has the Platz signature poor man’s Flowmaster with dazzling chrome tip. It still sports its original green base coat/clearcoat paint. The front and rear bumper covers have been repainted. The interior has custom mats, and a steering wheel cover.

The High Status Stratus and our 2008 Toyota Yaris do daily driver duty while the other three in the fleet have collector car insurance and antique license plates.

My wife Judy likes to drive the Stratus to car shows and various events. It’s a nice driving, modern car that’s just old enough to create some interest at shows.

It's served us well for over 20 years so far. We'll have to see if it lasts another 20 or 30. Don't see why not to be honest with you. It's good lookin' and Chrysler tough.





Car Show vs. Family Vacation?

Can't understand why your spouse wants to take a family vacation instead of just going to car shows every weekend?

Well, frankly, neither can we, but in the interest of keeping your family happy while you're at a car show, the Southern Virginia Chapter presents the first annual Slant 6 Vacation Meet in Williamsburg, Virginia.

The Special \$225 Slant 6 Package

A couple gets three days of unlimited visits to Busch Gardens and Water Country

USA, Virginia's largest water theme park, two nights at a nice hotel and the awards dinner ... *for just \$225.*

And, if you are bringing the kids, your wallet won't blow a gasket: there are affordable packages available for any family size.

Cool Activities

* **A Fun-Run Caravan** from Jamestown Island to Yorktown Battlefield Park along the scenic Colonial Parkway.

* **Car Show and Judging** hosted at Water Country USA.

* **All-You-Can-Eat Dinner and Awards Ceremony** with trophies for the winners

also at Water Country USA.

Plan Your Trip In Minutes

Simply call the Williamsburg Hotel-Motel Association at 1-800-475-9999 and ask for the **\$225 Slant 6 Three Day Package.**

You can book your trip on the phone with your credit card or reserve it with a money order.

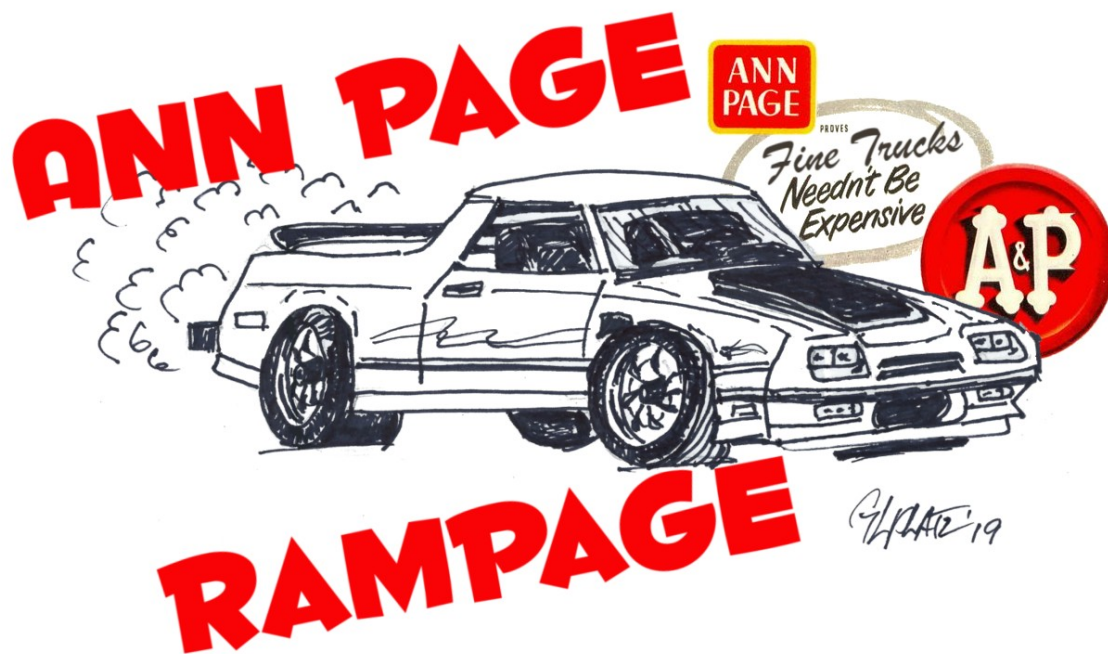
You also get free info on everything there is to see and do in the Williamsburg, Virginia area.

For specifics about the meet, call Gary Platz, Slant 6 Southern Virginia Regional Director at (804) 526-0520 after 5 p.m.

For those who wish to attend only the Meet on Sunday May 21st:

10 AM - 3 PM - Meet held in Water Country USA parking lot. Registration \$5/car.

5:30 - 7 PM - All-You-Can-Eat Dinner and Awards Ceremony at Water Country USA catering area.



- by Gary Platz

If you are older than dirt or knew dinosaurs when they were babies, then you know A&P. Their store brand was Ann Page. “Self,” you’re probably saying to yourself right now, “what the heck is Gary rambling about this time and what does A&P have to do with a Dodge Rampage?”

Well, when we bought our Dodge Rampage in July ‘85, A&P stores were still around and you went there to get Ann Page stuff because it was cheap. And I needed a cheap truck to get me to A&P, so there you are.

The Rampage was an ‘84 and it had been through a rough first year. It was covered in dings and dents and the paint was chipped, The owner just didn’t care, I guess. But I saw those bumps and bruises as something good. They meant the truck had a low, low price tag.

It took about a year to smooth out all the wrinkles. I touched up the paint and used professional body shop equipment (a toilet plunger) to pop out the dents.

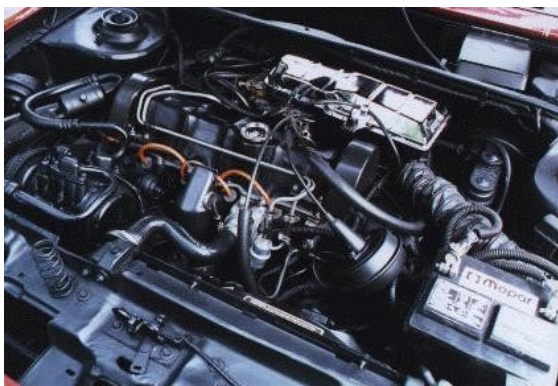
Next was the Platz-required rustproofing. All cars new to the fleet get a chassis wash and a big dose of rustproofing spray. The Rampage was made impervious to the elements and remains so to this day.



Wheels have come and gone over the years. Stock rallye wheels were on the Rampage when I bought it. Chrysler did a nice job on these, but those wheel wells just cried out for some bigger rubber. Enkei wheels replaced the stockers and later a set of chrome Mini-Lites nudged the Enkeis out of the way.



The call of Circle Auto Recyclers U-Pull-It brought me more goodies. My Mopar mini-truck now sports a factory hood scoop, and side scoops. I made a very heavy aluminum bed cover that turned out kind of OK, but then I found the factory one you'll see on it today. The bed has a rubber mat and the tailgate has a protector donated by a Mazda.



The engine compartment is, of course, painted signature Platz Black. This makes upkeep a breeze and touch-ups undetectable. To offset the flat black engine bay, lots of chrome has found its way under the hood. The 2.2 liter overhead cam Mopar motor (whose block was based on the Slant 6) sports a factory chrome valve cover, air cleaner cover, coil cover and bracket, plus not one, but two chrome dipstick handles. Against the mysterious darkness of the flat black engine bay, you'll also see screaming yellow Accel plug wires as well as a chrome transmission pan.

Walk around to the interior and you're amazed by the ease of entry when the big door swings open. Inside, you're greeted by a Grant steering wheel. The seats have cloth inserts for comfy summertime driving and the rear glass is graced with genuine J.C. Whitney louvers plus a custom third brake light.

To keep the BMWs at bay, the Rampage has a custom exhaust system that emanates a menacing growl, fair warning to those who dare to think of challenging it.

Riding down the road is a pleasure, with power steering, power brakes, automatic transmission, A/C and cruise control. And, to warm my cheapskate heart, it gets 30 – 34 mpg.

Back in the day, the Rampage was the answer to the Subaru Brat, VW's Rabbit-based truck and everything else that made up the mini-truck craze. Granted, it doesn't have much load capacity and with the A/C on, power is, well, mostly engaged in keeping you cool.

In my opinion, though, the Rampage is the best looking of the lot. Mine sports Chrysler Garnet Red and, although some of the clear coat has abandoned ship here and there, touch ups have been a perfect match and you'd be hard pressed to see anything other than a flawless factory paint job. The Rampage front end is from the '80s Dodge Charger and looks mean with its rectangular headlights.

I'm lucky to have found an old school mechanic who knows the computer controlled Holley 2-bbl backwards and forwards. When the carb and electric choke went wonky on the ol' Rampage, it couldn't pull a pissant out of a puddle. He did some blah blah blah computer blah blah blah and some blah blah blah choke adjustment something or other and now it's back to its old spunky self.

In my 34 years of ownership, I've seen the Rampage go from a truck you'd see once in a while to something super rare. It was only built for three years and didn't sell in big numbers, so survivors like mine are few and far between. People love it when I take it to car shows and I've got the trophies to prove it.



Which brings me back to Ann Page. The Rampage is from an era where Ann would put recipes in the paper telling you how to feed your family for only 17 cents a serving. She showed you could have a good life while spending next to nothing. You just had to listen to Ann, shop at A&P and find yourself a good, used Rampage.

Satisfy the "Inner Man"

Good and hearty Ann Page Beans are good for your budget too!

Among the 33 Fine Foods in the Famous Ann Page Family are such favorites as: Pineapple, Salad Dressing, Mayonnaise, Peanut Butter, Macaroni Products, Prepared Spaghetti, Sparkle Gelatin Desserts and Puddings, Tomato Soup, Ketchup, Syrup, Emergents, etc.

ANN PAGE

Fine Foods Needn't Be Expensive

A&P



The Slant 6 Zone

by Ed Dreistadt



Gary Platz and I were nearing the end of one of our Circle Auto Recyclers visits, having found a set of perfect 70 Duster taillights, four good small bolt pattern 10" brake drums, a power steering box for Gary's D100, and an assortment of smaller A-body parts.

All this during steady rain, I might add, showing either our dedication to things Chrysler or a complete lack of common sense.

As usual, we had no way to get our huge pile of bounty back to the office, so we scouted around for something we could stack all of our stuff on and carry. That was when I noticed Gary carrying a long hunk

of steel tubing that looked like a piece from the frame of a kid's swingset. I asked what it was and he said he thought was a hood brace from an Aspen or Volare, but he didn't remember pickling it up. I asked what he was going to do with it and he said he didn't know.

We finally located a deck lid from a Dodge Colt that looked about right and piled our parts and tool boxes on it; along with Gary's mystery part. We picked it up and it was heavy! We could only get a couple of yards toward the office before we had to put it down again.

During our second break, I looked at the deck lid and noticed a small latch hook on one corner. Then I looked at the mystery rod and noticed a slotted hole about the same size. I put the two together and we had a sled with a handle. The deck lid scooted over the gravel just fine and we made it to the office in minutes.

Which leads me to this speculation. Why did Gary go into a trance-like state and unconsciously pick up that hood brace? (Or did Gary go into a trance-like state? Come to think of it, he always has that look on his face.) Was it a message from the ghost of Walter P. Chrysler? Was it a premonition of a future time? Or was it just hypothermia brought on by lying in mud puddles for three or four hours?

We will probably never know: yet another unfathomable mystery from the Slant 6 Zone.

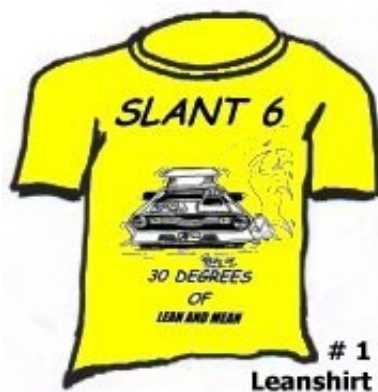


After extensive research (and a complete audit of Gary Platz's wardrobe,) CheeZee Enterprises decided what the world really needs is some high quality (but inexpensive) Slant 6 T-shirts.

What Gary needs is some clean T-shirts...

Long story short, for twelve measly bucks, you too can be a fashion leader.

Click on any T-shirt to go to the order form:



Ad for Gary Platz's CheeZee T's from the late, great Tailfins.com site, circa 1998.

Parts Car Fever

By Gary Platz

SLANT 6



I saw it every day on the way to work. A '71 Duster 2-door languishing in a front yard, never moving, weeds growing up where the lawnmower couldn't reach. One day I was running early for work so I figured, what the heck, I'll stop and see if the owner wants to sell it.

Did he ever.

The neighbors had done everything, including calling the police, to get the eyesore out of their neighborhood. He was figuring on paying a big towing bill, so when I showed up, he treated me like I was sent by fate to help him out. Without much haggling, we settled on \$40 for the car if I towed it away immediately. I could have gotten him down lower, but I felt like a thief already, so I handed over two twenties in exchange for the title.

Which of course lead to a slight problem on my part. How was I going to get the stupid thing out of there and where was I going to put it? I made

some calls that afternoon and cut a couple of deals:

Deal #1: For \$20, I made fellow club member Doug Walker a partner on the deal. Doug happens to have a pickup truck and a tow bar, not to mention a Duster in need of some parts.

Deal #2: The owner of Bold Alignment (and fellow Pentastar Club member) agreed to let me keep the Duster at his alignment shop for a maximum of five days while we stripped it, with the understanding that I now owe him a favor.

The very next day, Doug and I went over with a tank of compressed air and got the old bomb up on its tires again. We hooked it up to the truck and dragged it over to Bold's. That's when the real fun began.

That weekend we went into a scavenging frenzy, stripping the Duster to an empty shell. Doug went to work taking the windshield, front fenders and bumpers. I concentrated on the 225 Slant 6 and the 904 Torqueflight. While under the car, which was held up by only a hydraulic jack (I know it's not safe to do it that way, but I forgot my jackstands), Doug was jumping around inside the car ripping out the heating system. It's a bit disconcerting when you are flat on your back, looking up at 3,500 pounds of Mopar five inches in front of your face dancing around like a canoe in a windstorm. Luckily for me the car stayed on the jack and luckily for Doug I didn't kill him when I got out from under the car.

My buddy at Bold made yanking the engine pretty easy by firing up his forklift, plucking the hunk of iron out of the Duster and dropping it into the bed of Doug's truck.

And so it went all Saturday and all Sunday. Doug scored the wiper motor and I grabbed the taillights. I got the glass trim pieces and Doug snagged the seat tracks. By Sunday afternoon, the Duster was just a shell. We kept the front end intact so it could be towed. Besides, the drums were shot and neither of us wanted six cylinder torsion bars or 9" brakes.

We drove Doug's truck to my place with the engine and tranny teetering on the edge of the tailgate (for easy unloading) and the rest of the stuff piled high in the bed. Once in my garage, we put a come-along over the center beam of the garage and used it to ratchet the motor and tranny off the truck. Doug pulled the truck out from under the 225/904 and I eased them as a unit onto a couple of wooden pallets and slid them into a corner. Doug and I then divvied up the smaller pieces and said goodbye.

What about the hulk I left at Bold's? A quick call to one of those "Cash Paid For Junk Cars" ads in the paper yielded a guy with a tow truck who gave me \$20 for the remnants of the Duster. I gave the \$20 to Bold's and now only owe him a small favor.

So do we have a great hobby or what? For a net investment of \$20.00, I had a great time, got a spare motor and transmission, plus a ton of spare parts.

Try that sometime with your Hemi Cuda.

We have the best club (and best cars) in the world.



JUNKYARD DOGZ MOPAR PARTS

For Sale: Tons 'o Parts

Seller: Gary Platz

Tuesday, February 17, 1998

From the Amazing Platz Parts Stash

| Part | Price |
|---|--------------|
| 600 cfm Holley 4-bbl | \$100.00 |
| '65 Dart All-Transistor factory AM Radio (rectangular buttons) | \$35.00 |
| '64-'66 Dart/Valiant arm rests | \$6.00 each |
| '64 Valiant dash cluster with speedometer; gas, alternator, temperature gauges spare face plate | \$65.00 |
| Dart full wheel hubcaps; Valiant dog dish hubcaps | \$10.00 each |
| '63 Belvedere tail light assemblies with excellent lenses | \$40.00 |
| '63 Belvedere headlight bezels | \$60.00 pair |
| '60s-era louvered 1-bbl chrome air cleaner housing | \$15.00 |
| '64-'66 Dart/Valiant window cranks | \$8.00 each |
| '65 Dart headlight rings: excellent shape | \$40.00 pair |
| '65 Dart grille | \$75.00 |

(Vintage Platz parts ad from Tailfins.com. Sadly, both Tailfins and these parts are long gone.)

Dream Car Encounters of the Mopar Kind

by Gary Platz



I come by my Mopar bonifides honestly. Came home from the hospital in a '38 Plymouth listening to that old flathead six ticking away under the hood

When we lived on Mascher Street, my dad bought a black four door Dodge that I would start and warm up for him before he went to work.

Before we moved to South Jersey, he bought a black '49 Dodge.

Not long after we moved to Jersey, he traded in the Dodge for a nice two door '54 Plymouth Belvedere. All three of these cars were flathead six three speed manual cars.

My first Mopar was a '53 DeSoto powered by a flathead six with Fluid Drive. I loved oozin' and cruisin' down the street sitting on the big ol' living room sofa bench seat.

My next one was a '61 Plymouth Savoy powered by the wide block polysphere 318 and a three-on-a-tree manual transmission. Wrecked that one when an old dilapidated house jumped out and hit me. Gotta watch out for sneaky houses like that.



Several years later after I returned from Vietnam, I bought a '62 Plymouth Savoy wagon with my first Slant Six and push button trans. Then there was a VW bug whose main purpose turned out to be as a trade-in for the beloved Slant Six '71 Duster that we still own (see the *Rust Buster Duster* story for the details on that one.)

Mopars tend to run in the family. My cousin Raymond restores Mopars of all sorts. He lives somewhere near Homestead, Florida. My wife Judy owned a couple Mopars - a '71 Duster and a '75 Dodge van. The Duster had a Slant Six and the van a 318.

My sister never owned a Mopar but, I still love her anyway.

For me, though, I never would have seen the Mopar light if it hadn't been for my Uncle Buck. His real name was Raymond and he was the type of guy you

would say hello to and then wait fifteen minutes for an answer. Rather reclusive doesn't even begin to describe him.

Note that Uncle Buck's name was stolen by John Candy years later because it's a cool name. I'm sure I'm owed some royalty checks, but haven't seen them yet.

The coolest thing about Uncle Buck was that he worked for ChryCo as a service rep. All kinds of Pentastar rides came his way. I never knew what I'd see in his driveway when we'd go to visit. Sometimes an Imperial, sometimes a low buck Plymouth. Always something cool.



He lived in Rockledge, Pennsylvania, just outside of Philadelphia where we'd go on family trips to visit with him and my grandparents, aunt and cousins. On one occasion, we pulled up to his house and I was disappointed to see plain Jane '62 two door Savoy sitting in his driveway. I asked him about it and he replied that he had it for the weekend so he could tune it up for a customer. He then asked if I'd like to go for a ride so he could get a fresh pack of Pall Mall cigarettes and I said OK. He fired it up and I thought no

wonder the guy wants a tune up. It barely idled. What a terrible car.

Well, we bump and lump out of the neighborhood in this no-option, rubber floormat crummy car. I figured it's going to stall any second and we'll have to walk home. When we finally get to the main road, my uncle pulls out and nails it. Little did I know what was under the hood. It was a cross-ram, cammed-up 413 backed by a four speed. I was thrown back, buried in the bench seat, feeling all four gears toss me back again as the big block wound out. For a fourteen year old kid, this was a revelation. In that moment, I was hooked on Mopars. Total Nirvana. The return trip back was even more fun since Uncle Buck took the long way home, autographing the pavement with burnt rubber the whole way.

Another visit turned out to be the most memorable trip ever. My uncle had a bronze colored car sitting in front of his place. It looked like some kind of T-bird. I figured that it must be the new new model. Seemed a bit weird, though, to see Uncle Buck pouring a bottle of whiskey in the gas tank and smelling the exhaust.



He told me to hop in and go for a ride around the block. It didn't rumble or shake or

do anything other than make a whooshing sound. No vibrations, utterly smooth, moving along like it was powered by magic. Uncle Buck told me it was an experimental car he was delivering to a couple in upstate New York.

I asked him why it was so quiet and why it didn't move as quick as the other cars he drove. He popped the hood and showed me a turbine engine. It idled so smooth, he said, you balance a coin on it. Yup, I got to ride around in a jenny-o-whine Chrysler Turbine Car. After that visit, all the other cars he brought home paled in comparison.

In '64, my uncle, my dad, my cousin Raymond and I went to a football game in Maryland to see Navy play against the University of Pittsburgh (Navy won). My other uncle, Richard, got us tickets to the game through channels. Free tickets, are, of course, the best kind. This was when Roger Staubach was the quarterback for Navy. We went together in a brand new, optioned-out four door '64 Fury - white with a red interior.

A couple years later my Uncle Buck passed away from a heart attack. Smoking and worrying about my cousin going to Vietnam probably contributed to his demise. I miss him to this day. My life-long devotion to things Chrysler goes back to the legendary wheels he brought home and shared with me.

As the years went by, I made friends at car shows and got to go for rides now and again in muscle cars, which is always a blast, but not quite the same as seeing Ma Mopar's latest & greatest as we pulled into Uncle Buck's driveway.

The closest I ever got to those days was when I met a guy who owned a local pinstriping shop. He'd always show up at car shows behind the wheel of something interesting and do striping on cars while he was there.

One day, though, he rolled into a show with a brand new red Viper roadster. He asked if I wanted to go for a ride. Needless to say, he didn't have to ask twice. About scared me half to death, but it was still a ride in Chrysler's newest factory hot rod. Another time, he showed up in a blue Viper coupe and I got to go for another ride. After that, we never saw him again.

You know, I always wondered how a guy that young made enough money from a pinstriping business to afford one Viper, let alone two. Found out he was selling nose candy via his car striping business and was currently trying to cut a deal to keep out of free federal housing that came with with bars on the windows at no extra cost.

If he ever shows up again, needless to say, I'm not going on anymore rides. I guess my Mopar Dream Car days are pretty much over, but I feel lucky to have the memories of visits to Uncle Buck's.

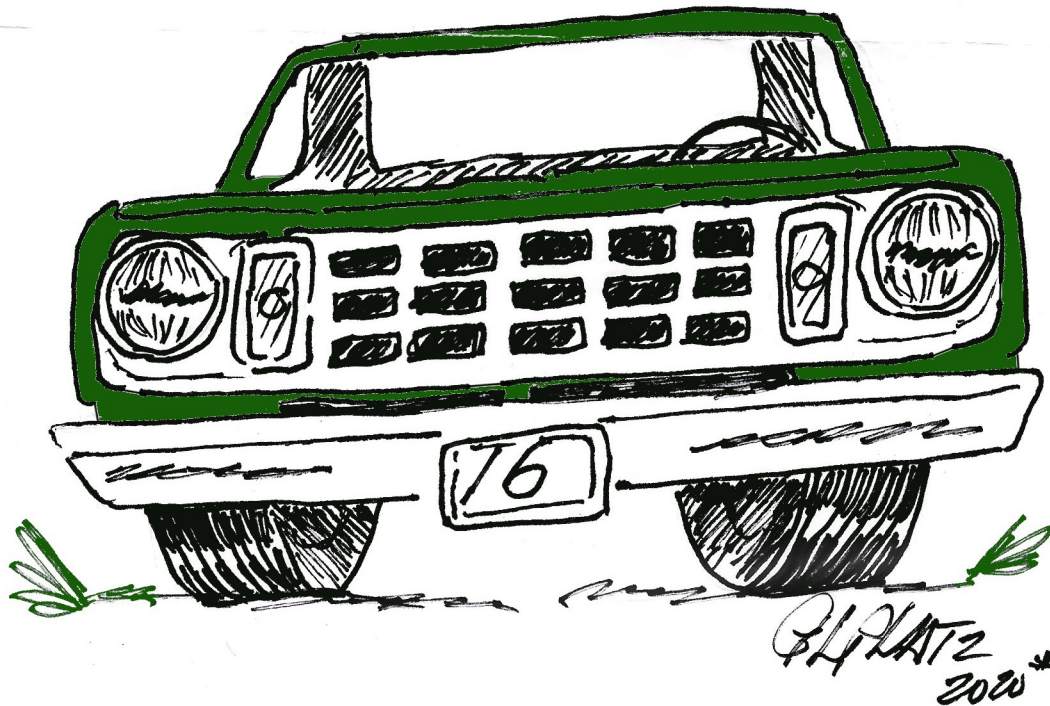
Uncle Buck, if you can read this from up there, thanks for showing me the straight and narrow: Mopar or no car.

Slant 6 Meets

When We Meet, We Eat (and Go Look for Cheap Parts)



Fugly



by Gary Platz

Having owned a '78 Dodge D100 in the '80s, it was only natural to buy another in the '90s. The first '78 was a 318 with a 727 automatic that I detailed and then had painted at a nearby Earl Scheib's for only \$150. I did all the prep work and had its silver/blue combo paint re-sprayed to French racing blue. Not only did it get the obligatory Platz Black engine compartment, it got the rater custom Platz Black interior treatment as well.

It came with white wagon-style wheels, which I really liked. The ol' truck served me well until I traded it in for the '85 Rampage we presently own.

Turned out that I loved the Rampage...maybe a little too much. It went, little by little, from daily driver to show car. Given how rare it was, I decided to relegate it to hobby status and get another daily driver truck. I decided I needed another full-size truck so I could do some serious parts hauling, so off I went to the late, great Triangle Dodge dealership to scope their used car lot. That's when I noticed a rather tattered, ugly, pea green D100. Further investigation showed it to be a Slant 6, three-speed manual truck. Ah, just what I wanted, with lots of reasons for it to be cheap. They wanted a princely sum of \$1,400. After letting them know how offended I was at their initial price, we dickered to \$1,200.

First order of business was fluid changes and a tuneup. The three-speed gearbox was making some noise, but a little manual transmission oil in the near-dry box made it happy again. The radiator was full of a suspicious looking brown liquid masquerading as coolant, so I flushed it until the water coming out ran clean. Nice, new green coolant was given a nice, clean home.

The body had several dents and rust spots which were tended to. I replace the bent front bumper with one found at Circle. A coworker had several quarts of Dupont metallic dark green he donated to the cause. My former sister-in-law's husband Burt and I did the bodywork and paint on a Labor Day weekend in his garage. He also painted the bed shell so that the whole truck look presentable, in a 4-wheeled pickle kind of way. We looked at each other after the last coat of paint and he said, "Fugly?" I said, "Yep."

But, hey, it's a truck, right? It's to get work done, not look pretty. Still, it had to be nice, so I painted the interior black and replaced the bench seat with bucket seats out of a Ramcharger. These were carefully selected in terms of color, style and being free. I built a center console which provided much needed storage for chips and Slim Jims. The bed was already equipped with two spares. I built two small storage boxes to compliment them, painted the inside of the bed black and added a rubber mat and tailgate protector. Later, I got a screamin' hot deal on a new bed shell and replaced the old one.

Your classic Mopar has got to have some chrome, no? I snagged some Chrysler wire wheel covers which gave Fugly a bit of much needed sparkle. However, the truck just cried out for something better. Well, heck I didn't care if it cried for a year. Those hubcaps were free and therefore good enough. That is, until I came across a set of free wagon wheel rims. They were only a little ratty, so I figured I could strip off the old paint and then rattle can them back to respectability. Soon as I got the paint off, though, I found out that the outer rim of each one was chrome plated. Bling! I painted the centers tan and had a truck with some nice looking wheels.

One of the things that made Fugly f&n ugly, was that he sat a little crooked and handled a little funny. Crawling around underneath it, I finally noticed that one of the springs had a broken leaf. A quick trip to Circle Auto Recyclers got me a cheap replacement spring. After that, while Fugly was still Fugly, at least he didn't look half drunk on top of it. I also added power steering since the manual box made it feel like I was piloting the Queen Mary, cranking the wheel and waiting for the stern to come around. I invested several dollars in getting the finest power box, pump and hoses available on a junker at Circle Auto Recyclers, of course.

I hate to admit it, but poor Fugly didn't have a totally happy time at my house. One day, while backing him out into the driveway, I didn't notice that the driver's door had swung open a little wide and caught it on the garage door frame. Bent it up pretty bad. After a long attempt to beat it back into shape, I finally gave up and headed off to Circle for another door. Got him patched back together and the door painted, but I always felt bad about that episode.



Fugly served me well over the two years he was in the fleet. If you ever need friends, just buy a truck. Everyone had me hauling everything everywhere in my big, green beast. Then, I had one of those brain-dead moments. My wife Barbara wanted a beater to drive to work at her employers Norfolk branch office, which was located in a rough part of town. I went on the lookout for a deal and found one that seemed to make sense. I ended up trading Fugly plus \$2,000 for a Dodge-badged Mitsubishi D50 and an '86 New Yorker. Barbara had a go-to-work beater no one would want to steal and I still had a truck.

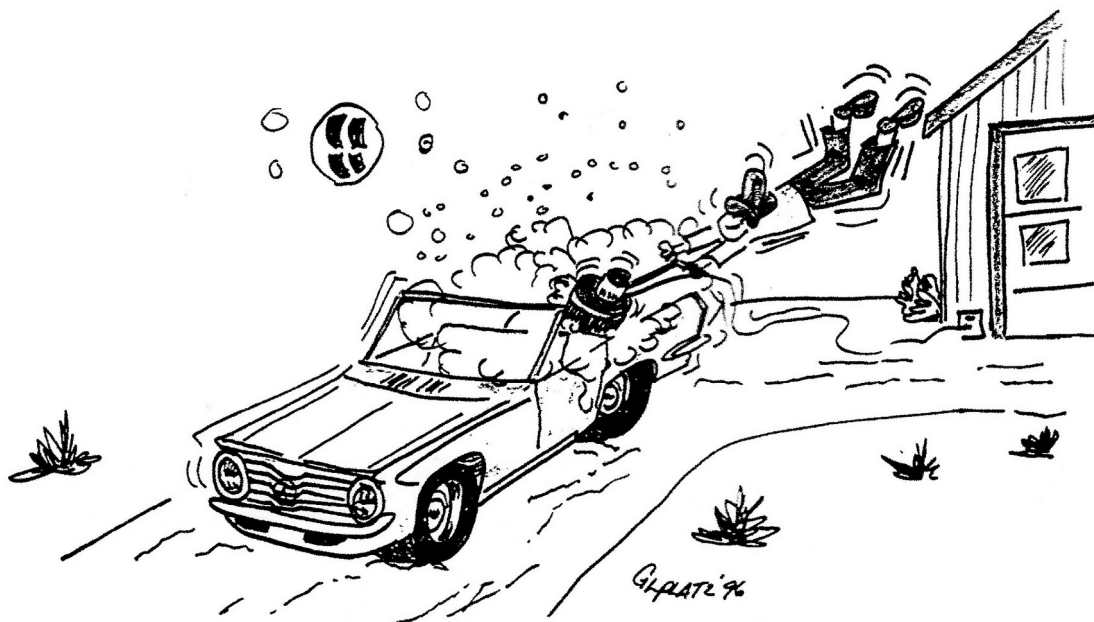
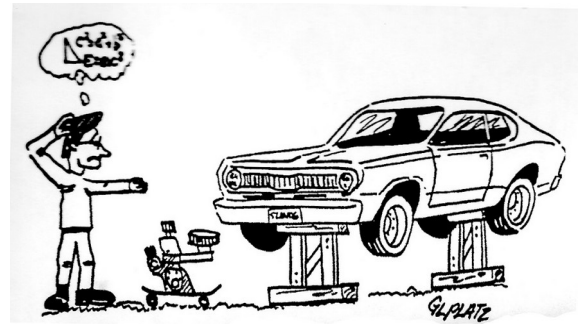
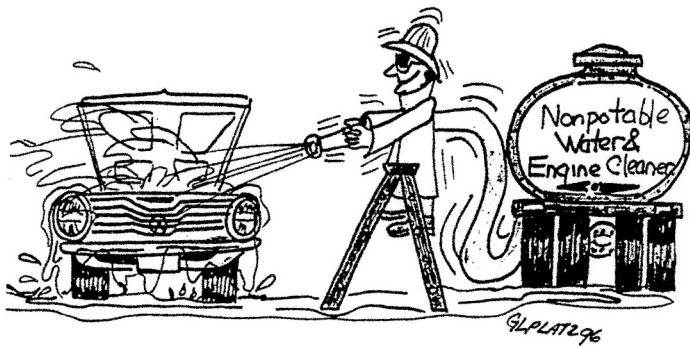
Both of these new acquisitions required work, like anything I ever buy, so I got to doing some Platz magic on them. The New Yorker required a little work and a couple of trips to Circle, but I got it nice and reliable pretty quick. The Mitsu, however, turned out to be a never-ending money pit, which is another story for another day when I feel like talking about the one project I never finished. Which I don't right now. I'm just glad I got rid of it before it cost me more than it did.

Except for my show car Rampage, I've been truckless ever since. However, I keep seeing siblings of Fugly pop up on the Slant Six club website. Guess I'm not the only one who likes big, ugly six-banger trucks. Recently, our club president said he's noticed that a lot of younger folks are buying Slant Six powered trucks. Cars, too. And why not? They are still cheap to buy and simple to work on. You don't have to plug scanners into them in and play electrical engineer to fix anything. You just make sure you have spark, compression and fuel. That's all it takes.

Can you dig it? I can. And a lot of younger folks are starting to also.



Slant 6 News Cartoons



Dart With a Heart

by Gary Platz



My late wife Barb had a thing for third generation Dodge Darts. I think it was that cool reverse-curve rear window and those nice, crisp body lines.

After watching me piece together my Duster and Rampage, she let it be known that it would be nice for me to put together something for her that she could take to cruise-ins and car shows.

I didn't go on the hunt this time, though. Barb said she'd find her car herself.

She announced that she found one locally in May of 1998 and we went to check it out. Turns out that it was owned by our city's building inspector and driven by his son.

Well, the son must have gone four wheeling in it because the K frame was damaged as well as the oil pan. Throw in a sloppy front suspension, suspect brakes, borderline tires and you start to get the picture. The windshield was delaminated, the carb top was loose, the front bumper bent in and it had a bouncy speedometer. Plus, the power steering box was leaking as well as the power steering pump.

In short, my kinda car. As the wheels were turning on my head on how cheap this thing was going to be, Barb took a test drive and came back with a more forgiving assessment than I gave it. She liked it and only had one complaint: the steering was just a little sloppy because it was an old car.

I told her that it was more like the whole car was abused and the front suspension was crap. Loudly. In front of the seller. I got to work negotiating and we finally settled on \$500, with me still whining about what it would cost to make it safe and driveable.

After getting it home, first order of business was to have the whole front suspension rebuilt with new parts. Second, was to have the steering box and pump rebuilt. Then, all the brakes were rebuilt with all new parts. What was left of the front drums were replaced with new ones. The windshield was replaced in our garage by a mobile unit.

The loose-topped carb had obviously been messed with by someone who didn't know what they were doing, so rather than deal with whatever mess was inside the thing, I just replaced it. A new fuel filter kept any crud from getting into it and it was topped off with a new chrome air filter.

The banged-up transmission pan was tossed and a new deeper pan went into its place, along with a new filter and fresh fluid. Oil and antifreeze were drained and replaced. I spun on a new oil filter, too.

Later, the car required a new radiator, new hard fuel and brake lines. They were all torn up and leaking.

The obligatory Platz black engine compartment treatment was the first of the cosmetic improvements, including a used chrome valve cover to go with the shiny new air cleaner. Accel spark plug wires dressed up the engine area and new plugs got all six cylinders hitting.

The interior received bucket seats from the finest junker available at Circle Auto Recyclers. So the rest of the interior didn't look shabby, I also sprung for a new headliner, custom package tray and custom door hardware.

The gauge cluster and speedometer cable were replaced from junkers. Believe or not, the car came with a killer sound system but, the radio hole looked like someone chewed it out.



An aftermarket console for a mini van was fitted between the bucket seats and an oil gauge. Later, new carpet was installed after I rustproofed the floor that, remarkably, had just two small holes. I went to the tire store and did exhaustive research on the proper tires for the Dart. After careful consideration, I demanded a set that met my specs: cheap, round, black.

Then, of course, a new exhaust system was put in place with a poor man's Flowmaster to give Barb's ride a nice, mellow tone.

Bodywork was done at Colonial Height's most prestigious auto restoration shop, also known as my driveway. All the dings, dents and scratches were massaged out. As I sanded the car, I discovered that it was originally tan outside with a puke green interior. That had all been mercifully changed to metallic blue outside and black inside by the previous owner. I got a screamin' hot off-season deal from Maaco (they don't do much business in the winter and that's the time to set up paint jobs) and had the smoothed-out body repainted metallic blue. The bumpers were rusted so, I painted them semi gloss black. The front-one was later replaced by a fine vintage piece acquired from collection at Circle Auto Recyclers. In the process, I also got rid of the early '70s knee-buster bumper guards.

The steel wheels were painted hammer finish metallic gray. Rear coil over shocks and new front shocks were installed by yours truly.

Barb loved that car. She's go with me to shows and come home with an occasional trophy. The Dart was always decked out with stuffed animals from her collection. She knew how to make a fun display and came home with more than one People's Choice award because of it.



She was also at the wheel of her Dart for the Slant 6 Club Virginia meets we used to stage at Circle Auto Recyclers. Barb made up all of the meet T-shirts on a transfer press, plus she came up with activities for the spouses who weren't interested in combing the junkyard for Mopar parts. The most fun were the junkyard scavenger hunts. She came up with prizes for the best hood ornament found, craziest thing found inside a car (on member won when she found a bowling pin in the trunk of a junker) and other wonderfully wacky and creative stuff.

After Barb passed away, though, the Dart just sat. I'd start it up once in a while and sit in it thinking about all the good times gone by, but it never really got back on the road. Then, one day a guy in a neighboring county came by to pick up a '73 Dart Sport grill I had. He needed it for his sons '73 Dart Sport project car. When he same by to get it, he saw the blue Dart and we got to talking. He said he was looking for a project car for his wife and would love to find something like it. I thought for a minute and told him it was for sale. After 14 1/2 years, it was time for it to make someone else happy.

After a quick test drive, he went to his bank and paid me what I had in the car. I would see the Dart roll in to our local Mopar Madness event every year with his wife at the helm. He told me he fixed the bouncy speedometer needle that I never got around to messing with and only had to do some other little repairs. He owned it for about five years before selling it. That's when it vanished, never to be seen again.

A couple of years after I bought the Dart, I found out why it was in such rough shape. The kid who got it from his dad tried to kill it so he could buy a Ranger pickup. He learned that you can't kill a Slant 6 with a hammer. But, he did get his Ranger in the end. And Barb got her Dart.



It made for a great project, a lot of fun for my wife, Barb and then a lots of fun for another guy's wife.

I bet it's still out there somewhere, putting a big grin on someone's face right now.

The Slant-Six Club

I want to make sure no one gets the idea that the fun is over and I'm telling a bunch of stories from the good old days. There is a healthy community of cheapskates with an attitude still out there. And their numbers are growing.

The present-day Slant 6 Club is headed up by Ben Deutschman in Metuchen, NJ. His full time gig is postal worker. He runs the club in his spare time, plus he's a railroad aficionado, which makes sense since Walter P. Chrysler started out as an engineer designing steam engines.

Currently, there's about 50 of us members from all over the U.S. in the club. The secretary is yours truly. Get in touch and I'll sign you up. <https://slantsixclub.com/>

Ben has get-togethers in northern NJ and hosts a show to help their local fire & rescue folks. He compiles and edits the club newsletter with pictures of regional meets as well as various articles submitted by members. I'm still putting together an annual Virginia Slant 6 Meet. As in the past, the current club assists with helpful tips, buy and sell ads for vehicles /parts.



Ben owns a '60 Plymouth Savoy that he inherited from his dad. It has one of those early record players under the dash that pre-dates 8 tracks and cassette players.

His car was featured in an article in one of the older club publications, which we can get for you when you become a member. Tell 'em Gary sent you.

Ben also owns a Dodge Dakota pick up. He has a Pontiac Trans Am, too, but we forgive him for that.

It's through his tireless efforts that the club still exists and grows.

- Gary Platz

Thanks

We want to say thank you to the people who made all this happen, Harry Aunes, founder of the Slant 6 Club of America and Jack Poehler, who took the club to a whole new level.



Harry had the inspiration to start the club. Jack had the vision that this wouldn't just be a club with a newsletter. He created a magazine and a community. The Slant 6 News was eagerly awaited by all of us because it was always chock full of how-to articles, reports on regional meets, stories and cartoons.

Jack was happy to share mailing lists, allowing those interested to get in touch, have regional get-togethers and start great friendships that continue to this day.

Harry & Jack, we miss you. We miss the Slant 6 News. Jack grumbled a little sometimes, but he always printed the lunacy we sent his way. What you both created was magic.

-Gary Platz & Ed Dreistadt