



## ROBYN'S RIDE

Ask any LRE owner and I am sure you will find there is a story to be told about that truck. Forty years ago it would likely be a story about a new truck and 35 years ago about a used truck. Today we are likely talking about a “life” experience, a facet of our personal history, maybe an heirloom story, a restoration or just about a long love story.

This story begins with one LRE and ends with another. I purchased my first LRE about 18 years ago. A '79 that was in the process of being restored when the owner unfortunately passed away. This was by no means my first restoration nor was it my first Mopar. I've not been without a Chrysler product since I started driving over 55 years ago. I had owned several Dodge pickup trucks from the 60's and early 70's and was comfortable with completing the restoration. I soon learned that there was much to be learned about these vehicles and continue that learning process today.

I was fortunate that what had been done was done correctly and after a year or so the truck was ready to roll. What I didn't expect was that the truck would be so much fun to drive.

One day I happened to be following one of the local high school buses down the road and noticed the students waving at me and I happily waved back and was soon submersed into the business of the day while I found my way to the office. I would drive my antiques to work occasionally just to give them a little exercise. When I returned home that evening, my youngest, named Robyn, ran into the kitchen and announced “DAD, I just got to have one of those trucks”.

I'm not sure to this day what precipitated all this but can only assume that today was the first time she really saw the truck from the outside instead of seeing it while riding in it. Like any good father my reply was "we'll see" and promptly asked her mother what was for supper.

I kicked the request around for a couple of days and then confided to her mother that I had more than enough trucks and spare parts at the shop to just build her a clone. It was bound to be cheaper than finding a real one and beside I knew it was likely going to be parked in the High School parking lot which can be a little dicey at best.

Spring turned to summer and then all too quickly to fall and I figured that building Robyn's truck would be a great winter project. October soon presented itself and I prepared for my annual week long hiatus in Hershey PA. I always enjoyed walking the flea market since I was certain there was sure to be a surprise laying on a table somewhere in the red or green field. On Thursday I came across at 1978 Lil Red with a for sale sign, and a phone # to call. I gave it a quick once over and continued down the row. After about 15 minutes it dawned on me that the truck appeared to be rust free and it wasn't all dinged up. I did an about face and went back for another peek. I took a good look underneath and saw the floors were intact and there was no rust in the doors or the rockers. The interior was complete, a bit worn but serviceable and the truck was all there. I knew it was air conditioned from seeing the vents but suspected it might have all been removed under the hood. I finally called the number and discovered the owner was over in the used car lot. I asked how it ran and was the original 360 engine still taking it down the road. He said to his knowledge the engine was original

and that it ran very well. So well in fact that this truck was towing his 20 ft. enclosed car trailer that brought down his 1960 Chrysler. I bought the truck the next day but he needed it to get his Chrysler home so I agreed to pick it up at his home after Hershey was over.

The seller lived a little over an hour away so we drove down to get it and I drove it home. It ran very well and I decided then to just leave the mechanical alone and just make it pretty.

The makeover was pretty straight forward and we gave it paint, redid the wood trim, replaced the wood floor in the bed, straightened the tail gate, recovered the seats and brightened up the dash. In the meantime #1 mom kept chanting to not restore this truck for show. It was to be our daughter's every day driver to school and then to work. Mom was right, of course, but it was turning out so nice I couldn't help myself. It got nicer and nicer as I went along.

Winter soon turned to spring and everyone knows that when spring comes so come the Senior Prom. I was happy to have the truck far enough along so that she could take her truck to the Prom if she wanted. And, yes, she wanted to go to the Prom in her truck. She also intended to drive it there and back and her prom date was going to have to live with that eventuality.

While all this was happening Robyn would come to the shop and give me a hand and we would talk about owning a truck and how terrible these trucks are on fuel. It didn't really sink in until she did the math and realized how much it would cost a week for her to get to high school and then over to the County college and then to work. Dad had the same rule his Dad had and that was "I don't buy gas for your cars"!!!!

I am so pleased we got the truck done and that she could take it to her prom. Memories..... It won a trophy the first time she took it to a show and has won a number of them over the years.

She soon learned that it was an expensive proposition to drive this truck regularly especially if she intended to attend college in Virginia. She asked me to take care of it for her and I bought her a nice little Dodge Shadow Convertible for everyday use. That car and my Robyn are another story!!!!

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