

1974 Plymouth RoadRunner...OWNER: GORD MILLER

1995 brought a “new” vehicle into my life. A friend down the street thought I might be into muscle cars as he worked at SAIT in the automotive department and knew I had been to a couple of car shows earlier in the year to see what was on display. Also knowing that I was working at Crowfoot Dodge (and earlier at Varsity Chrysler) I would most likely be interested in a Mopar. He said he knew a guy in Lethbridge that had a car I might be interested in. So off to L.A. we went. When we arrived in the north end of Lethbridge a couple of

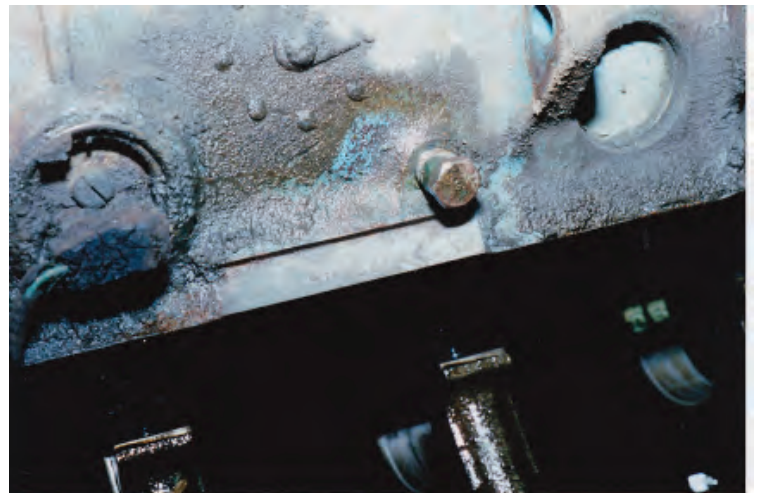


hours later, Tom pulled up opposite a white paint with black stripe 1974 Plymouth Road Runner that, to be honest, looked a little ratty at first glance as the rear quarters had the obligatory rust out, the driver's door had an interesting “Texas-shaped” surface rust spot in the middle of the door and the body stripe was badly weather checked to the point of having several large cracks in it. Upon closer inspection, the dash panel was badly cracked, kick panels had the usual Bass-48 5-1/4” speakers cut into them, the parcel shelf was stained, warped and had 6x9 speakers cut into it. The saving grace, however, was located between the two badly split front bucket seats: a four speed pistol grip shifter. Lifting the hood revealed a small block V8 with headers and an Offenhauser four barrel intake with a Holley four barrel carburetor. I asked the guy selling



if he still had the original manifolds to which he replied that he still had the intake, but wasn't sure where the exhaust manifolds were. I was to find out later that I wished it had been the other way around. I wasn't too put off by the small block, as it was the look of the car I was after and the 318 had the advantage of being not too hard on gas. The 318 and four speed combination I was to later find out is medium rare as only 1 in 212 Road Runners built in 1974 sported that drivetrain out of the 11,555 built. Some sources have production as low as just over 9,600. If you're not rowin', you're not drivin'!

Anyway, after a little bit of haggling, a deal was struck and we set off for Calgary. It was early evening and I pulled the light switch. Exterior lighting was adequate, but there was absolutely no dash lights with the exception of the high beam







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indicator. As Tom thought it would be a good idea to take the shortest distance home, it had been decided to go up route 23 and across to Granum. A few miles east of Granum everything appeared to be going well when all of a sudden the engine died. Coasting along I spotted a turn-off into a farmer's field and we managed to push and roll the car into it and button it up as the car would crank but not start. We stopped at the RCMP office in Claresholm just to let them know it was there and not an abandoned stolen car and would they please not tow it.



The next day we gathered up tools as well as a few items that could have caused the car to be "dead in the water" and set off south again. After changing the ballast resistor and checking the coil, we arrived at the conclusion that the control module was dead. Once replaced, the car roared to life and we set off to Calgary, again. Anxious to get home before something else went wrong, 70 MPH was judged to be a good speed. Upon arriving home, I was appalled to see the right front tire now had steel cords showing in a couple of places. I shudder to think what a blowout at 70 MPH might have wrought.

The next couple of months was spent researching what was required and of that what had to purchased new and what could be salvaged from other Mopars. The exhaust manifolds, it

turned out, are specific to the 1974 Road Runner 318 engine to help give it that all important extra twenty horsepower over the stock 318. After many dead ends, these were sourced at Flatla's in Tilley and an excellent bargain was had. A little later while pulling correct intake bolts from a 1974 Satellite at a salvage yard, I ducked inside the car to get out of the rain for a while. While sitting there, I went over my mental list of things required, and realized I was looking at a mint condition (but gold in colour) dash pad. All thoughts of the intake bolts flew as I turned my attention to pulling the dash assembly. One fabulous dye job later by Fibrenew and that item was checked off. The front seats skins were supplied by Legendary and installed by Dean Tilleman. The rad was rodded and tested and was found to be up to task. Finally the body work was done in 1998 as a "side job" at Varsity with a short side trip to the 1998 Northern Mopars car show at Race City for the "Birds and Bees" salute.

Along the way while all of this was going on, I was working one Saturday at Crowfoot Dodge when a fellow comes in requesting a battery for his car. After a little bit of chatting, it was revealed that the vehicle in question was a 1969 Charger R/T



and he was looking for a period correct battery as the car is an unrestored original. Walt Spanier then suggested as I have the Road Runner, I might find the folks in Northern Mopars car club helpful. I

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would dare say they were indeed helpful and I have helped many members over the years looking for parts for their vehicles.

Everything was going swimmingly until July 2001, when on the way to a show in Vulcan, the Northern Mopar convoy had to slow down for construction of the overpass over the Mazeppa road. Upon coming out of the construction zone, there was a low frequency vibration when putting a load on the engine that wasn't there before. No load = no vibration; load = vibration. After mulling this over on the side of the road for a few minutes, it was decided the this far and no farther would be a good policy. A tow truck was called and the Road Runner was flat decked back to Calgary for \$164.00. I don't think you could get flat decked to the end of your alley for \$164.00 now.



Dropped off and pushed into the garage, Darwin McAdoo came by and removed the engine and took it home to tear it down to see what ailed it. Along the way it was confirmed that the car is indeed "numbers matching" which made it even more imperative that the engine be saved. It turned out that the #7 connecting rod journal on the crankshaft was cracked and that if driven much farther might have resulted in a hole being punched in the block. Superior Machining bored the cylinders .020 oversize, fitted the bearings, pistons and crankshaft and returned it to Darwin for assembly. The assembled engine was installed and worked like a charm and sounded even better. Thank you Darwin.



Since then I have been doing my oil changes and other maintenance items. The car is starting to show it's age again and I'll have to start saving my nickels (seeing as we don't have pennies anymore) and have some bodywork done. Until then I plan on enjoying driving it to various car shows in Southern Alberta.