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"The Real **Starsky & Hutch** Gran Torinos! The Real **McCoys!**" Story and Photos by Doug Stevenson



Torino "number 1" with "number 2" in the background.

Here are the two 1976 Gran Torinos I recently purchased. They were actually used in the filming of the Series "Starsky and Hutch" and their story should make for some interesting reading.

Let's start with a brief history of the Torinos that were used in the show. The pilot movie used two identical Torinos. Both of them were actually 1975 Gran Torinos (as the film was made in the spring of 1975) and are identifiable as not being used in the TV series due to both of these cars having chrome mirrors, body side mouldings, no horizontal bumper mouldings and having the white stripe painted on so that the bottom of the stripe is above the body side moulding.

The first season of the series also used two identical 1975 Gran Torinos. (Filming started in summer of 1975, before production of the 1976 model year.) Both of those are identifiable by the following: color-keyed sport mirrors, no body side mouldings, black horizontal bumper mouldings, cloth bench seats, and the bottom of the white stripe runs along the body crease where the body side mouldings would normally be attached.

The second through fourth seasons used the two cars that I own, plus two or three others, according to my source at Spelling Productions. The cars used in the show were always in the body shop for repairs due to "accidents" during filming and they always liked to take two cars out with them for a day's filming just in case something would happen to one of them. These cars are 1976 Gran Torinos and are identifiable by the following: chrome mirrors, body side mouldings, black horizontal bumper mouldings, silver-colored bumper filler panels, vinyl bench and vinyl bucket seats and the bottom of the white stripe runs underneath the body side mouldings.

I do not know what happened to the two Torinos that were used in the pilot film or the two that were used in the first season. It is rumored that one of the first season Torinos is owned by a person in San Diego, California, but I have never been able to confirm this, and it is also rumored that one of the other Torinos used from the second through fourth seasons is in Arizona.



Side shot of "number 1"

Now, for the history of these two Torinos from the series which are now in my possession. Both were built at the Lorain, Ohio assembly plant on February 16, 1976, and came down the assembly line one behind the other. Consequently they have consecutive serial numbers. Both cars were built with the exact same options [a link to a letter listing them is at the bottom of this page].

After filming started on the second season, Paul [Michael] Glazer and David Soul both complained to the producer that they did not like the vinyl bench seat in these cars. The problem was that when Glazer made sharp turns with the cars, David Soul would slide around in the seat (Paul Glazer had the steering wheel to hold on to). Finally the producers agreed to change one of the Torinos to have bucket seats in it. This is the way Torino "number 2" still is today. The rear seat of the car was not changed, so the stitching pattern of the rear seat still matches the original bench seat. There are rumors flying around that these cars were 4-speed manual transmission cars - unfortunately this is not true. The cars were not modified in any way other than a better ratio rear end. The engines and transmissions were completely stock. A sound track was added for the "rumble" of the engine.

Both Torinos, as with the others used, were part of Ford Motor Company's Studio-TV car loan program that was a division of Ford Marketing. After the series ended, both of these Torinos were sent back to Ford. Ford then sent the cars to an auction that was held in Salt Lake City, Utah, where Ford dealers, just like today, would come and bid on vehicles that were used by Ford under special programs. Each Torino was purchased by one of two different dealers, both out of California. These cars were then taken back to California where they were then sold to private individuals. Torino "number 1" was sold to an individual that had it for a couple of years, then it was traded back to the dealer who in turn sold it to the gentleman that I bought it from.

Meanwhile, Torino "number 2" had a much rougher time. Things are a little more vague on this one, but what happened was that the dealer who purchased it sold it to an individual that was involved in a bad auto accident with the car. The Torino was damaged so badly that the insurance company "totaled" the car and had it sent to a junkyard for disposal. The junkyard in turn found out about the history of the car and put it back together using junkyard parts and completely repainted the car. Unfortunately, they painted it the wrong color of red and did not paint the stripe back on the way it should have been. The junkyard then sold the car to another individual who drove it for a while until a divorce prompted him to sell the Torino to the same gentleman that owned the other. Also, somewhere along the way, the original motor was pulled out from that car and a Mustang V-6 was installed along with its associated transmission and rear end.



Driver's side shot of "number 1." The "Gran" insignia that goes in front of the "Torino" insignia is in the glove box because it keeps falling off.

Unfortunately, both Torinos were not kept strictly as collector vehicles so they are in dire need of restoration work. Torino "number 2" needs a complete "frame off" restoration due to the accident and engine swap. Torino "number 1" needs mechanical work done to it along with body work to fix the rust, but this car has not been repainted since the show, so I am not planning to do too much with the body at this time. I want to keep it "original."