



www.coloradomopar.org

This Month's Meeting: February 5, 2010

**Colorado Mopar
1671 Tamarac St.
Denver, CO 80220**



Volume XIX, Number 1

February 5, 2010



Colorado Mopar Newsletter

**Next Month's Meeting Is
March 5, 2010**

Club Officers

President:

John Quinn

president@coloradomopar.org

Vice President:

Ken Bromley

vicepresident@coloradomopar.org

Treasurer:

Erik Larson

treasurer@coloradomopar.org

Membership Coordinator:

Rich Oliver

membership@coloradomopar.org

Event Coordinator:

Ken & Lou Ellen Bromley

events@coloradomopar.org

Newsletter Editor:

Keal Vigil

newsletter@coloradomopar.org

Letter From the President

This Friday's meeting will be the annual election meeting and hopefully we will also be able to get more info on our new car show location.

The days are getting a little longer with a tad more light every day. So hopefully we are thinking about this year's cruises, car shows and club events to start getting our cars ready.

Next Saturday and Sunday (Feb 6th & 7th) is the annual Tri-State Swap meet at the National Western Stock Show complex. Get you list's together on much needed parts and stop by the ATM for some cash to buy any needed parts for your Mopar.

See you at the Meeting at the Arvada Food Bank meeting room this Friday!

John Quinn
2009 Colorado Mopar Club President

Event Calendar

February 6	Colorado Mopar Monthly Club meeting 7:00 pm Arvada Food Bank 8555 W. 57th Avenue Arvada, CO 80002
March 26-28	Mopars at the Strip www.moparsatthestrip.com
May 2,	Great Machine Car Show 10 am – 3 pm 44th and Indiana (Arapahoe Park) Arvada, CO 80002
May 23	Mopar at Thunder Mountain
June 23-36	Mopar Mile High Nationals

ROSEMARY'S BABY

By Rich Kaup

Dwight Eisenhower was President, the FBI was looking under beds for communists, Jonas Salk introduced a vaccine to fight polio and Mt. Everest was first scaled. It was 1953, WW II was eight years history, the baby boom was well underway and Americans were becoming more prosperous. Houses could be bought for a national average \$9,500 and new cars for around \$2,000. Average annual wages were \$4,000 and the first color televisions were introduced at a cost of \$1,175.

American-made cars ruled the roads. General Motors, Ford, Chrysler, Studebaker and other auto manufacturers were bringing out longer and sleeker models to replace WW II vintage cars some thought stodgy. Dodge was generally the 7th place builder of cars in the early 50's, while Plymouth was 3rd. For the 1953 model year K. T. Keller, chairman of Chrysler Corporation, decided to downsize Dodge and Plymouth into more practical, economical cars, while leaving DeSoto and Chrysler pretty much untouched. Even though sales of the smaller cars exceeded the previous years, they did not respond as well as hoped and Keller received considerable criticism (Chevy and Ford each sold four times as many cars). Time would prove he was merely ahead of his time.

Regardless, it was a big year for Dodge with a completely new smaller body that predicted the compacts of the early 60's. Also available for the first time in a Dodge was a new smaller version of the Chrysler hemi that had been introduced in 1951, the famous Red Ram hemi. The Red Ram engine combined with the lighter body made the Dodge a strong performer and the most exciting car they had ever made to that date.

Despite competition from new models at Chevrolet and Ford, Dodge still sold nearly 300,000 units and retained 7th place in sales. So the cars still were popular and for good reason. In March 1953 Dodge topped all other American eight-cylinder cars in the Mobilgas Economy Run at 23.4 mpg. In September a Dodge V8 set 196 AAA stock car speed records at Bonneville Salt Flats. The 1953 Dodge proved itself to be both economical and powerful.

In 1964 at age 16 I bought my first car, a well-used 53 Dodge Coronet sedan equipped with the Red Ram engine and a three-on-the-tree. The previous owner was the son of a local Chrysler mechanic, who admitted that it was on its 5th engine & 6th transmission. (Last summer I ran into the previous owner's younger brother, who confirmed he had ridden in the car more than once at 120 mph, the same speed I had topped it out at – several times and on bald tires - when I owned it.)



Fast forward 45 years to October 2009 when I found and bought my second 1953 Dodge. Listed on Craigslist's Denver site only as a 1953 Dodge convertible (sic) and without a picture or other contact information several months earlier, a more descriptive ad eventually included both a photo and phone number. I made contact and found a Coronet V8 convertible with 1965 license plates parked outside a small house in Arvada. At first sight I thought it was a little rough, although totally original, a good 30-footer. Talking with the owner, I found out why. This little Dodge had developed a transmission problem in 1965, when it was just 12 years old but with 102k miles, and was permanently parked. It was hauled from garage to garage as the owners moved around Denver, and when the last original owner died several years ago, it became property of their son, who was too young to have ever ridden in the car. So I was looking at a car that had been protected in dry storage the last 44 years.

After some hard bargaining over the next week and enduring an "interview" to assure I was worthy of owning this family heirloom, money changed hands and I become third owner of my second 1953 Dodge, a time-capsule and my very first "barn-find". Not wanting to take chances, I had it trucked to a mechanic nearby who mostly works on Chryslers, where it awaits our combined efforts to reawaken it. At present we're going through the brakes (all fluid had evaporated but wheel & master cylinders are salvageable), fuel system (original 2bbl Stromberg carburetor & square-shaped fuel pump have been rebuilt) & ignition system (original Auto-Lite marked ignition harness & most wiring still pliable & in good shape). The cooling system shows a lot of mineral deposits & some corrosion, making me seriously consider pulling the engine for rebuild. But at this point we're still pressing forward to get it running, and then evaluate what more needs done.

Finding parts of any kind for these cars is proving a challenge, as pre-finned Mopars seem to be a forgotten breed. They must be popular in China, however, because most of what I've been able to find originates there. The only USA parts available anymore are mostly NOS or NORS and scarce.

A few neat things about this particular car: factory dual point ignition; factory power antenna; factory power electric top; windshield washer system w/ foot pump; first-year factory turn signals; driver's side spotlight; all original Solex tinted glass; and all the original bullet-eye lenses, including headlights, are intact (except both cracked parking lights). Oh, yeah - almost forgot about the optional, one-year only on Dodge Gyro-Torque transmission, with its combination torque converter and familiar M-6 semi-automatic four speed unit with clutch. Black crayon markings still exist on the firewall calling for this "M6" transmission (another marking "823X", probably referring to the optional heater, appears just behind the heater).

More on the condition of the car: The cloth & vinyl interior is intact and is indicative of its age when first stored. Front seat cover is worn, but rear seat & door panels are nearly perfect. Front rubber mat needs replaced (good luck finding one of those) and rear carpet does also. Dash paint has a couple scratches, but the instruments, radio & clock still look like new. The big ivory plastic steering wheel (no power steering) has a few hairline cracks at its base, but I'll try to learn to live with it. The original top needs replaced – it looks tan in photos, but I believe its sun-faded black.



The exterior will require some work. It does have a little rust, seemingly confined to a hand-sized area on the driver's side rear quarter where water would drain off the fabric top. The floor and trunk appear to be rust-free, which is remarkable as these cars were undercoated both inside and out. Any breach of the undercoating results in trapped moisture, exacerbated by the heavy jute padding under the mat/carpet. This is undoubtedly part of reason why so few Mopars of this vintage survive - especially convertibles. (4,100 convertibles were built in '53, but I've only found three others on the Internet - none are listed among the thousands of cars represented in the WPC roster & speculation among members is fewer than 12 survive.) Almost all of the stainless steel trim is dented to one degree or another, but can mostly be saved. Regardless, I'm on the lookout for NOS trim & so far found one wheel opening molding & one taillight bezel. Both bumpers need rechromed (and the trailer hitch removed). One other body problem is the front-edge of the passenger-side door binds when opening. I suspect the car took a slight hit in the front on that side & drove the front clip back - no other sheet metal damage & hopefully it won't need to go to a frame shop.

Well, that's basically where the car is at today. Once we get it running - or meet some insurmountable obstacle - I'll provide an update & some more pictures.

(Update: Finally received a response to my request to the Chrysler Historical Collection for a copy of the car's IBM card (basically an early form of build sheet). Because Chrysler is missing 1953 decode information, the card mostly just confirms what I already knew about the car, including VIN, body & motor numbers, and that it was shipped from the Detroit assembly plant to a dealer in Bowan (sic), probably Bowman, ND on October 1, 1952 (even though they weren't introduced to the public until October 23rd). Everything confirms the car is totally original & a very early build (the 778th Coronet V8 & 49th convertible off the line). For anyone wanting comparable information on their car, you can print out a request form by clicking on Archive at www.chryslerheritage.com. Build records are available for 1930-67 cars and 1930-50 trucks and might be nice to have if your car is missing its build sheet and/or fender tag.)

First there was Christine. Now there's Rosemary, named after the original owner. Wanted to call it Rosemary's Baby (baby Dodge, baby hemi), but wife objected - sounds too sinister for a cute car. See pictures of Rosemary below in as found condition.

Want Ads

Items will be listed for 2 issues of the newsletter and then will be dropped unless you call or email the editor to request an additional run of 2 more issues.

6 Pack original manifold and carburetor (no linkage) \$1,000 (neg)

Lee Shurtleff 303-284-1752

2 - 440 Short Blocks Brand new still in case. \$400 each (neg).

Lee Shurtleff 303-284-1752

If you have anything for sale or are looking for parts or services send requests to
newsletter@coloradompar.org