



GET YOUR KICKS ON... DEPT.

GROCERY

Plain Jane '70 Duster grocery-getter bags top honors at the Mopar Nats.



GOLD



By Bill Woods

Photos by Paul Stenquist

Jim Kennedy collects Plymouths. He has about a dozen or so. That in itself is not so surprising. What is surprising is that with the hobby's emphasis on horsepower, Jim's not into musclecars. He's into "transportation" Mopars. So keeping within prescribed speed limits, Jim will get where he's going just as fast as you would in your Hemacar. Now, some Mo'fans might consider Jim's rides as "mundane." Well, "mundane" doesn't score Gold in Mopar Nats OE Certification judging or rack up a judging score of 99.47%—the second highest in Nats history. But we're getting ahead of ourselves, as usual.

Unlike the trailer queen crowd, Jim is into driving. And there's something about the ambience of a '50s or '60s Plymouth that strikes a chord with him. Back in 2003, Jim bought a



Mike Mancini of American Muscle Car Restorations elevated a lowly 1970 318 Duster to a new high in restoration standards according to Mopar Nationals OE Certification judging. Lack of blackout paint is correct for black and dark blue cars (only).



NOS C78-14 tires are original spares that had never touched the ground. NOS Deluxe wheelcovers are out of the box.

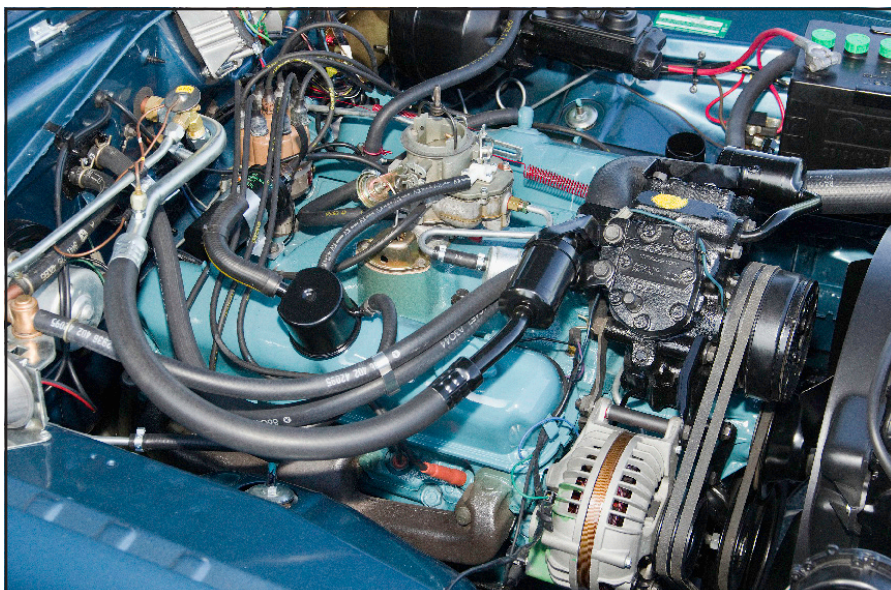
1969 Fury on eBay and drove it the length and breadth of Route 66. Five years later, Jim was looking to take to the tarmac for another motor hike. This time it would be the Lincoln Highway, which runs from San Francisco to New York City—the first transcontinental highway*. You know, like “Get Your Kicks on the Lincoln Highway.”

Returning to the well (the Internet), Jim surfed for an “old Plymouth” that would be suitable for the journey. “Ideally,” he says, “a Plymouth that had spent some of its life on or near the Lincoln Highway.” We guess if Jim got lost the car would know the way. A B7 blue '70 Duster popped up on the classiccars.com website, and it met all

*There will be a huge Lincoln Highway centennial cruise starting from both ends (NY, SF) on July 1, 2013. See <http://lh2013.com/> for info.



The Duster shows 98K miles—virtually untouched with just normal maintenance items replaced before the restoration. Options include light package, Basic Group (radio, variable-speed wipers, TorqueFlite, power brakes, rim-blow wheel, A/C and tinted glass). Duster totaled in at \$3,168.95 plus a \$137 destination charge.

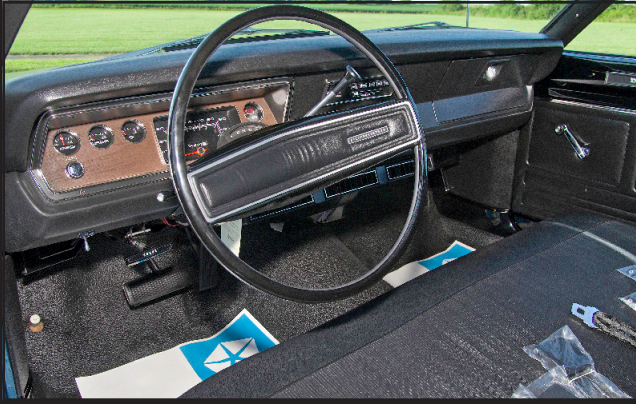


Underhood features either restored original components that the car came with down the assembly line or NOS. Original factory hoses have been restamped. Brake and fuel lines are the car's originals

of Jim's requirements: a Plymouth, it was being sold by a guy in San Francisco (where he'd be starting his trip). It had spent most of its life in Stockton, Calif., which is on the Lincoln Highway, plus, Jim had always wanted a Duster when he was a kid. So, he bought the car.

Now you'll probably think that the story turns into a nightmare here as most of our stories do when it comes to eBay cars. And of course, you'd be wrong (again). This Duster just happened to be an unmoled original in what seemed like great mechanical condition aside from some wear and a few dents and dings here and there. But it was just the ticket for getting one's kicks on Route, er, the Lincoln Highway.

The Duster was born in the Los Angeles Chrysler assembly plant in July of 1970. It was shipped to the Chrysler-Plymouth dealer in Stockton, and sold off the showroom floor to a local resident, Alfonso Martin, in September of 1970. The car stayed in the same family almost all of that time in Stockton. After Alfonso died, his wife Fern



Original dash is restored. The dash pad is redyed and the bezels rechromed. Mike rebuilds the gauges in house. Original vinyl seat covers are different from the repops due to a reflectivity in the original pattern. Original door panels are redyed as is the factory rubber mat with the molded-in part number.

drove it for several years. Then she died, too. Sounds like a "Christine" deal here and we'd be nervous. After her death, her son inherited the car and drove it for a while. The car had sentimental value to him, but not enough to hang onto it. Finding a place to park in SF is tough. I mean, you have folks paving over their front lawns to have a place to park. So the Duster was listed on the 'net. But the son wouldn't sell the car to just anyone. If you were a registered car abuser, forget it. No way would you be getting your sweaty hands on an innocent 318 Plymouth. He said his Mom had loved the car, and wouldn't want it

sold to some kid who was going to chop it or turn it into a "hot rod." Jim seemed to pass the test of not being a "kid" or a car molester. So a deal was reached, papers signed, and Jim slid in behind the wheel.

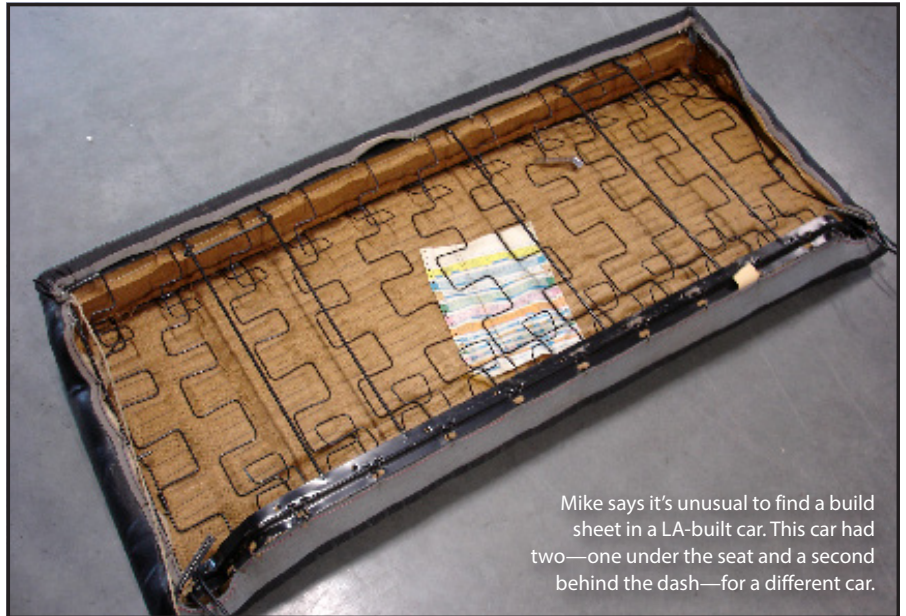
Topping off the Duster with a tankful of regular, Jim hit the highway in the Fall of '08 and headed for The Big Apple. The 318 just hummed along for mile after Lincoln Highway mile, but the tranny acted up in Dixon, IL, and required repair. Jim wasn't very specific as to what the actual trouble was, but the problem was fixed and Jim was back on his way. He enjoyed the ride so much that,

when he reached New York, he decided to do "the right thing" by the car and treat it to a first-class restoration. Hitting a Mobil station once again, Jim filled up and set his coordinates for N. Kingstown, RI, home to American Muscle Car Restorations. Mike Mancini, restomeister over at American, had the welcome mat out for Jim as Mike had previously restored Jim's '69 Fury.

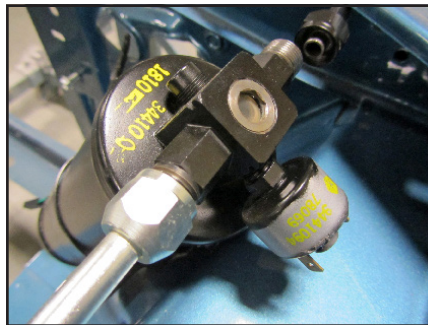
Opting for one of Mike's "no holds barred" OE style restos, Jim dropped off his Lincoln Highway veteran and didn't want to see it again until it looked like it did when it rolled out of the Stockton C-P dealer's

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AD



Mike says it's unusual to find a build sheet in a LA-built car. This car had two—one under the seat and a second behind the dash—for a different car.



To duplicate the factory markings on the air conditioning receiver/dryer, Mike took photos of the original, digitized them and then made a silk-screen that's impossible to discern from the factory stamp.

showroom. "No problema," said Mike, brushing up on his Spanish.

The restoration went fairly smoothly as restos go because there was no rust and the majority of the car's original assembly line parts could be refurbished as new. And, as essentially an unmolested survivor, the Duster had plenty of those. What couldn't be brought back as new was replaced with NOS. Repro parts? "Next to Nada" says Mike again practicing his Spanish. An assembly line battery did escape him, though.

Mike pointed out some of the interesting features of this low-option Duster. The seats still wear their OE black seat covers that he restored. The fabric contained a vertical line pattern that has some reflectivity to it, so the stripes stand out in certain light. The repro covers don't have this and just appear black. All other interior components are the originals from day one including the factory insulations and paddings. The exhaust is 100% NOS from manifold to tailpipe. The car still wears its original "born with" brake and fuel lines. Every single nut and bolt is the original assembly line piece re-plated, even the ones you don't

see. The Duster came with a rubber floor mat, no carpeting. Mike cleaned and dyed it. The wheelcovers are NOS, ditto for the tires. Mike searched around and found spares that had never hit the ground.

Mike duplicated the appearance of the original Chrysler paint process with all the dip primers and overspray. The dip line is inside and outside of the car just like factory. All entry and exit points were documented and duplicated during the restoration. (Guess he has a large bathtub). To get the original engine color, because any over the counter color isn't even close, Mike found a perfect original paint example on the untouched torque converter, and he spent several hours color-matching that. Same can be said for the difficult B7 exterior color which was done to a factory correct baked, orange peel finish. The Duster had several untouched areas with perfect samples to match exactly. What you see on the car is true Jamaica Blue. 'Course, Mike took a zillion photos documenting the car as he was taking it down and he recreated all the factory color codes and markings exactly. Now, you have to realize that restoring a 318 car can be just as expensive as restoring a Hemi, and the finished project would only be worth a fraction of the muscle machine. But that was of no consequence to Jim who drove a Duster when he was growing up and wanted to rekindle the spark of his youth, or maybe Jim's just into original factory rubber floor mats.

The restoration turned out so well that Mike entered the Duster in the 2011 Mopar Nats OE Certification judging. The car, as we mentioned earlier, copped the second highest score in Nats history and took home Best of Show—which really peeved one six-pack entrant. Not a bad showing for a little 318 car. Not bad at all. Check out more pix of the restoration details on our website.