

FULL THROTTLE NEWS

News You Can Use

December, 2008

One again this Month, we've turned over the presses to one of our original members, Jim Brozynski, who continues with his racing history, both good and bad. In this installment, he tells us about some more of his experiences.

After reading last's month news letter you may ask how I got started in this sport? No? Well I'm going to tell you anyway, as long as Mike prints it.

As with most "gear heads", and I consider myself one, it started young. I used to draw pictures of cars in school instead of listening to the teacher. In high school I started to start thinking about what kind of car I'd want. Not to date me but I have a little magazine called "Ford Times" from 1970. We received it each month as my father bought a new Ford in 1966 and you received it automatically. We received the issue in late 1969 that listed all of the new 1970 Fords. They of course had the Mustang and I was able to price out my "Dream Car", a Boss 302 Mustang. Now you may say that's a logical choice but just a year before I lusted after the 1969 Mercury Marauder. For those to young to have been there this was a full size land yacht type car with a 429 V8, so it was a fast yacht anyway. Of course being in high school and no job my chances of buying one was nil.

A few years later while going to a local commuter college I found employment at a local grocery store. While working there some of my co-workers ended up driving some "fun" cars for that time. One had a Chevy Nova with a transplanted 396 V8; another owned in this order a 1968 AMC AMX with a 390 V8 then sold that for a 1969 MG Midget. He went from a 390 cubic inch V8 to a 1275 CC 4 cylinder. You might ask why? Well the time was 1973-1974, the time of the first big gas crisis and the Arab-Israel war which caused gas to be in short supply and much more expensive. This affected what would be the purchase of my first car.

I was driving my parents hand me down. A 1966 Ford Custom 4 Dr. sedan. Some of you may ask, what's that? Just think of a bare bones, striped down Ford Galaxy 500. The only options on the car were power steering, AM radio, tinted windshield, and a 289 2bbl V8 with auto trans. This lack of options turned out to be a plus as I found out after some time behind the wheel. Where else are you going to find a full size car, (6 passengers) a big trunk (20 cubic foot), and a decent suspension. On that last point you have to know that NASCAR used the geometry of that front suspension in their race cars for many years. Plus the car was light. It was weighed once when my father loaded it up with scrap copper & brass and took it to a scrapper. They weighed the car loaded and then empty and I remember to this day that the car weighted a bit over 3,600 lbs. With a engine rated at 195-200 HP it wasn't "Fast" but it was OK.



"The Beater"

What I did find out was that when street racing other kids in their parent's cars which had bigger engines I usually lost until we came to a turn. They had to slow way down and I found that I didn't. With this revelation a whole new world opened up; going fast all of the time and not just in a straight line. Up to then I had some interest in drag racing as well as circle track and road racing but after this it was only Road Racing for me.

This knowledge influenced the purchase of my first car, that and the high price of gas. It was a 1974 Mercury Capri 2.8L V6 4-speed. The only options it lacked were a radio, air, and a sunroof. I added the radio, an AM/FM cassette unit. This car re-enforced my belief that "light makes might" or you could say I "saw the light."

It was true then and it's true now; light cars are better than big heavy cars. And I can say to this day that I have never owned an everyday car that weighed more than 3200 lbs empty. Yes I owned 3 trucks but they don't count and one of them (Ranger PU) might have been at or just over that number.

A year after I purchased my Capri I entered my first Auto-X. It was at a go kart track near Utica, IL. Those of you of similar age as me may remember that little track. I also ran at the Nike missile base in Vernon Hills, IL, the Old Chicago mall parking lot and misc other parking lots around Chicago. I won my share of races but with newer cars always seeming to be faster my friends and I decided to build a track only Capri. We would all drive it and work on it. The donor car was a Capri that I bought the previous fall as a winter beater. Something to drive to work while I modified the engine on my first Capri with future plans to put twin turbo's on it. The car was given a name of "The Beater".

It was a 1973 Capri with a 2.0L 4 cylinder engine and a 4 speed trans. It was badly rusted and had a rod knock. We pulled the engine and found #1 rod bearing spun. I had driven it that way for 3-4 months with the knock slowly getting worse. By babying the engine and using 30W oil the engine stayed together until that point. We had the crank ground and installed new rod bearings. The mains were fine. We modified the carb & suspension using tricks we had learned working on our own cars over the years. One big help was our friendship with the owner of a small foreign car junk yard on the east side of Chicago. I don't remember how we found him but we started stopping by on a regular basis for bits & pieces for our race car as well as our street cars. There we found one important part for our race car. It was a 3.89 rear gear Capri axle. This gear came stock only in the 1.6L Capri and was a hard to find part here in the Midwest. We welded it up to make it a locked rear with the help of my father, a certified nuclear welder.

We ran this car for a number of years in local Auto-X's, we even ran it in some Blackhawk Auto-X's when they still used pylons on the track to form chicanes to keep the speeds down. The car met its maker not on track but on the road. I and a fellow Capri Club member had taken the car to an Auto-X at the go kart track in Utica, IL. Before the event started I took the car out for a spin on the road to warm it up. It was still street legal. And warm it up I did. About a mile down the road I suddenly felt a great deal of heat coming from the right side of the car. I looked over and saw great big flames licking up the right side of the car coming from underneath. I quickly pulled over and got out of the car and ran around to the passenger side to see what was burning. It was gasoline slowly dripping from a leak in the "plastic" fuel line. The fuel formed a puddle on the ground as the car sat and the flames got bigger. I had no fire extinguisher and the nearest home was a couple of hundred yards away.

By the time the fire dept got there the flames had worked themselves up into the car's interior. With the fire out we found the interior totally burnt up. It had gotten so hot that the ignition lock housing on the steering column had melted, the ignition key and tumblers were found on the floor next to a puddle of aluminum. I still have that key and tumbler as a reminder. However the drivetrain was still good. In fact, after changing the tires back to street tires we flat towed it home.

We took the car to my buddy's house as he had room to park the car on the side of his garage to await stripping. During this process we discovered the cause of the fire. We had installed a header on the engine and during that process we put a small hole in one of the pipes. No big deal, it made a bit of noise but so what! Hey it even caused the engine to back fire once in while with flames shooting out the exhaust pipe when it did. I guess the carb jetting and the extra air in the exhaust caused it. We ran the exhaust out the passenger side of the car just in front of the rear wheel just where the stock plastic fuel line ran. The line drooped down a bit there and the pipe got moved up somehow and they touched, Hot pipe, plastic fuel line, you figure it out. Add in the flames shooting out the exhaust when getting off the throttle after a hard run up through the gears. Just the thing you do to warm up a race car. Result - a fire. **TO BE CONTINUED.....**



The end of the line for "The Beater"

UNTIL NEXT MONTH, REMEMBER, RACING IS SUPPOSED TO BE FUN!