

CAR OF THE QUARTER . . .

'69 Plymouth Barracuda 383 Formula S 4-Spd.... by Jim Moore



I grew up in southern West Virginia, in the mountains, with twisty windy roads. One of our neighbors was a mechanic at Mabe Cartwright Dodge, in the nearest town of Welch. He had the opportunity to drive cars off of the lot and liked to give "exciting test rides" to the kids in the neighborhood, including me. It didn't take many tire smoking, sideways-in-the-road test rides to get me hooked on Mopars.

Over the years I have owned several Mopars. I had a 1981 and a 1982 Dodge Challenger (yea, Mitsubishi built, but HUGGED the mountain roads better than the Brand X cars), a 1984 Daytona Turbo Z, and a 1996 Caravan (company car). My current fleet includes my 2001 Ram Quad Cab 360ci, my son's 1995 Jeep Grand Cherokee 318ci, my wife's 2007 Chrysler 300C Heritage Edition, and my first real muscle car 1969 Plymouth Barracuda 383 Formula S 4-Speed fastback (1 of 331 built).

My family and I were living in Palmetto, Florida in 2005 when I started looking for a second generation Barracuda. By June I had it narrowed down to a black 1969 340S in Ohio, and a blue 1969 383S in Pontiac, Michigan, both found on the internet. The blue 383S clearly had the better interior from the pictures, so I decided to fly to Michigan to look it over.

I flew into Detroit on a Friday morning, rented a car, and drove to Southern Motors in Pontiac. I spent about 8 hours looking over the car and had a short test drive. It was race weekend for the staff of Southern Motors, so I was invited to the pits at the Waterford Hills road course while the staff raced their five cars for the weekend. There just happened to be a Mopar car show at the track on Saturday morning as well. By Sunday morning, I had signed on

the dotted line and was on the way back to Florida.

Since we already knew that we were planning a move back to Texas, my wife Kathy suggested we have the car shipped to San Antonio and store it in her friend's garage until we moved. It made sense to me at the time, so that is what I did. I flew to San Antonio and unloaded the car from the hauler at the Home Depot parking lot in Helotes on July 31, 2005. I got to drive it a few miles, take 103 pictures of it, back it into the garage, and then head back to Florida. I spent the next two years in Florida looking at 103 pictures, trying to figure out just what I had bought, and trying to sell a house in a depressed housing market. In May of 2007, we sold the Florida house, and by June had bought a house in San Antonio. We arrived here on July 4, 2007 and started unpacking. I had to make enough room in the garage for it before I could go pick it up. By this time I wasn't even sure that I had bought a car. It was mid August before I took the trailer to pick up the car. Amazingly, when I went to start it, it fired right up. A quick fluid change later and it was on the road.

My Barracuda was built October 16, 1968 at the Hamtramck plant. It sold new at West Springfield Plymouth, West Springfield, Mass for \$3718.50. It evidently stayed in Mass until 2003 when it moved to Rochester Hills, Michigan. It still has the 2003 Mass inspection sticker on the window. I have the original window sticker, build sheet, and fender tag for the car. An original 383-S 4-Speed car, it is painted in the correct B5 Fire Blue Metallic, with the correct blue bucket seat interior. Options include the light group, sport group, A53 Formula S

package, 3.23 sure grip 8 ¾ rear, tinted windshield, tach, remote left mirror, fold down back seat, variable speed wipers, undercoating, bumper guards, AM radio, and deluxe deep dish wheel covers. It currently has an Edelbrock carb and electronic ignition. The 383 option didn't allow any power options, so it has manual steering and manual 10" drum brakes all around. The car evidently was restored in 1999, as some of the paperwork that came with the car would suggest.

The car is in good driver condition, but now enjoys being in the garage with the cover on it most of the time. I have found very little rust anywhere, including the underside. This winter's projects will include a rear end rebuild, new ceramic/metallic drum brakes, add bolt in sub-frame connectors, and lots of cleaning and repainting of parts. I hope to add new small bolt pattern Cragar S/S wheels and wide BF Goodrich Radial T/As as well. I am no stranger to turning wrenches and doing body work, so improvements will be made as I have time. My goal is to have a reliable cruiser that I can drive and take to shows when I want to.

