

The Forgotten 56

By Dick Stover

Many of you are familiar with my two tone green '48 Pontiac 2-door that I have had since 1973, but probably not the '56 Chieftain 870 4-door (2719D) I had in the mid-70's. I bought it when we lived in Douglassville, PA as a daily driver. It was dark green, 316 V-8 2barrel, Hydramatic, pretty bare bones except it had a radio. It was in decent shape, no rot. I gave it some regular maintenance TLC, belts, hoses, tune up, tires, and off we went.

I commuted daily from Douglassville (between Reading and Pottstown) to Devon, near King of Prussia, literally "over the river and through the woods" to avoid massive traffic tie ups. This was before Hy 422 was finished from Douglassville to KofP. Eventually I had a car pooling arrangement with a neighbor, so I only drove 3 days a week—we each drove ourselves on Fridays.

One Saturday I had it sitting in the driveway of our house and had been doing some maintenance on the car—I think I had just refilled the radiator, but had not put the radiator cap back on. I had put the hood down to the first latch point intending to come back and finish up. Jackie had said she need to run some errands and I said she could take the 56 when I was finished so I could flip over and work on our other car, an indestructible 69 Rambler American. I went in the house and when I came back out the car was gone, no radiator cap, Jackie and 2 kids on board. I grabbed the cap and chased Jackie down in the Rambler, popped the hood, put the cap on and sent her on her way.

The other more memorable adventure was our camping trip to Rickett's Glen State Park along the New York border to meet up with old neighbors from when we lived outside of Rochester, NY. The Rambler was too small, so, you guessed it, load up the 56, complete with roof rack (the old kind that had suction cups and straps hooked over the drip rails, remember those? See picture).; 2 kids minimally secured in the back seat. Tent, poles, and sleeping bags were on the roof rack, cooler between the kids, cook box, and clothes in that nice square trunk—off we went. Needless to say we

got some really strange looks when we pulled into the campground.



We had a great reunion with our old friends. On the way out of the park area there was a mile long hill (down) to a T intersection. Those 56 drum brakes did NOT like that hill even with pumping the brakes to breath them. I barely got the car stopped at the T. Yup, on the other side of the T was a nice stand of sizeable trees. Cheated disaster again!



Some where around 1977 the Rambler succumbed to Rochester and Douglassville winters and road salt. Would not pass inspection for unibody "frame" rot. Sold it to a truck repair mechanic. Next came the 77 Ventura, and for a brief time we were a 3 Pontiac family. Before the move to Langhorne we said good bye to the 56, good and faithful servant.