

## HEMI HEADINESS

Spring of 1967. As a newly-minted District Sales Manager for the Chrysler-Plymouth division of Chrysler Corp. I was the dealer liaison between the factory and 13 dealers in Northern California stretching from the Golden Gate Bridge to the Oregon border. With a new field car every 2,000 miles and being only 27 years old plus the fact that cell phones and employer tracking devices were just dreams, life looked just fine. All those redwoods, brand new car every other month, and an expense account.....pretty cool for a young man already hooked on Chrysler products. The majority of the dealer body in this district had modest 'planning-potential' (dealer-speak for expected annual sales). The smallest sales number for any dealer I had, was not even achieved by half from a gent in a tiny community 100 miles North of S.F. but he survived by doing tune-ups and valve jobs. Since he was more comfortable selling grease jobs then selling cars, his dealership was a mess. I finally told him that he must get rid of everything in sight not related to the 1967 models he was supposed to sell or I would terminate his franchise. This excessive stuff was overwhelming because he never discarded much of anything. I pointed to a factory demo piece of a 1951 Hemi head that showed how special the engine was and he countered that we still made that kind of engine. Selling but 6 new cars a year suggested that none of them would be a 426 Elephant, I brought my wife up on a week end and we loaded 4 pickup trucks of dealer-junk into his 1960 Studebaker and took it to the dump, including the Hemi model. There was so much dealer stuff in the bed that the truck had power steering even though none had been fitted. End of story? Not quite.

Forty years later, I am in the auto leasing business after leaving Chrysler because they kept showing me Detroit's winters. Remaining in the S.F. Bay Area, I had acquired some restoration skills while owning up to 6 high performance Mopars at a time. My neighbor is a Ford guy and brings me over a gift he was given

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by his pal in Northern California. "Where did you get this?" exclaims my incredulous self and neighbor tells me his pal rescued it from a landfill in Northern CA about 100 miles north of our homes maybe 35-40 years ago. Hard to keep a Hemi, or even part of a Hemi, locked in a garage for long.

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