

“Stealth Brute”



When I was a child, I dreamt of owning a 300-F Letter Car. When I became a working adult, I did not have much time for dreaming. But, when I retired, I did what my wife called “a childish thing” and bought, the car of my dreams, a 300-F convertible in 1988.

The 300-F was first sold by Barish-Cherney Chrysler Plymouth, in LA, to a California cowboy actor. Bit parts became few and far between, for him, because cowboy movies were becoming less popular at the time. He eventually had the 300-F repossessed by his Bank because he could not keep up with the payments. His Banker and loan officer bought the car from the Bank. This goes a long way towards explaining why these cars also were called **“Banker’s Hot Rods.”**

Eventually he sold the car to Charles Cross, a Chrysler 300 Club, International, Inc. member from New York State, who owned a boat shop. His men did an amateur job of restoring the car and proceeded to replace the convertible top and the entire interior, using white nautical vinyl, along with stainless steel nuts and bolts and chrome air cleaners under the hood. My wife called the 300-F a big **“white elephant.”** But it still was my **“Dream Boat”** and I proceeded to have the **“Land Yacht”** restored back to an original **“Beautiful Brute.”** Later safety and drivability improvements were done to the car and I now call it my **“Stealth Brute”**

Over the years, George Riehl worked on my 300-F between cutting the grass, on his Farm, rebuilding various 300 parts and doing regular Club business with his wife Eleanor. My 300-F spent many a lonely Michigan Winter freezing in George's big red barn.

Getting parts for the 300-F was an adventure. I found an NOS center hub and grille emblem at Carlisle. An NOS anodized Chrysler hood script advertised in Hemmings. Various and sundry parts from Mopar "Bone Yards" such as Imperial Motors. George Riehl and the Club helped considerably with a cam, rear springs, air cleaners and correct leather interior, etc. When told that no one was reproducing the high pile black carpeting, for the 300-F, I spent one and a half years searching for a match. Finally, after finding the right manufacturer in Georgia, George Riehl and Bob Merritt stepped in and the Club purchased a run of carpeting for both the 300-F and the 300-H Letter Cars.

Gary Goers supplied so many of the otherwise impossible to get parts including a convertible top well and boot as well as all of those different rubber widgets and an anodized Chrysler script for the glove box door. He even supplied an oil pressure sending unit. I was told that I needed to rebuild my trunion. As a Dentist, I specialized in prosthodontics and full mouth rehabilitation, but I never rebuilt a trunion nor did I know what it was. I learned that it is a special type of front universal joint. Gary had a trunion rebuild kit, too, and a trunion boot to match.

NAPA helped a lot. You would be surprised how many replacement parts are still available. Check our web site for comprehensive lists maintained by Bob Merritt and Dan Reitz. Now I know why the Club plans all their meetings around cities and towns that have NAPA stores close by. Pep Boys even helped with a rebuilt alternator (the housing was stamped with a '60 date) to replace the shorted-out generator. I am almost sure that the alternator originally came from one of the 400 hp 300-F's, with a Pont-a-Mousson 4-speed manual transmission, and not from a 1960 Valiant.

After my car spent many years in Michigan, my Chrysler mechanic friend, John Dresher, and our friend Thom Snyder and I went to Jonesville to hurry up the work on my 300-F in order to get it done and avoid its having to hibernate for another cold Michigan Winter. Thanks to my friends John and Thom and with help from George Riehl and Michael Burke along with some parts from Andy Mikonis' "Mouse Car" (a 1960 New Yorker parts car, with a mouse nest in the dash board, parked at Michael Burke's "Mopar Ranch" just up the road from Jonesville) my 300-F was shipped back to Philadelphia just after Labor Day, 2000.

With some more help from John Dresher, Thom Snyder, Don Verity and John Hertog, my "Dream Boat" made its maiden voyage to the Club's Fall Meet, in Williamsburg, VA, and on to the Carolina Chrysler Club Fall Meet at the Charlotte "Loews" Motor Speedway.

I was so proud when Toby Murphy, of the American Muscle Car Show, chose my 300-F convertible to be videotaped using a "chase car" for the Speedvision special on 300 Letter Cars. Having my "Dream Boat" videotaped along with the other Club members' beautiful 300 Letter Cars was quite an honor and finally a dream come true.

Improving safety and reliability while maintaining originality

Converting the “Dream Boat” into a “Stealth Brute”

This 1960 Chrysler 300-F convertible (one of 248 manufactured) was restored and travelled 25,000 miles to many car shows and Chrysler 300 Club meets but the drivability for long trips needed to be upgraded while maintaining originality wherever possible, and improving safety and reliability.

These Chrysler Letter Cars represented the ultimate in styling, luxury and performance and were also known as “**Beautiful Brutes.**” They could get up and go to 150 mph but had brake-fading issues and required high-octane fuel.

There were leaking valve cover and exhaust manifold gasket problems with the original 413 engines, continually leaking Torqueflites with no Park, no alternator, and poor gas mileage.

When the 413 engine failed, I discussed these problems with my wife, and she said, “Why don’t you put in a new engine and transmission?” At first, I thought that was not possible but after researching the internet, I discovered that Mopar manufactures a new 440/426 racing block and that many classic car enthusiasts were mating 440s with newer Dodge A-518 (48RH) transmissions with overdrive and lock up converters improving gas mileage.

A new 440 Mopar engine block (bored 0.060” over & stroked for a total of 541 cu. In.), utilizing the original long cross rams, 1964 300-K exhaust headers and a full 3” exhaust with “X” pipe, was built by Ray Barton Racing Engines. The engine developed the same 375 HP, on their Dyno, as the original 413 cross ram engine but reached that HP at 3100 rpm rather than 5000 rpm. It also developed 610 ft/lbs of torque at 2900 rpm much more than the original 495 lb/ft of torque at 3600 rpm.

A Mopar electronic distributor coupled with an MSD box was used. Edelbrock carburetors, with electric chokes, replaced the troublesome original Carter AFB 2903 carburetors with thermal chokes. The choke pot area was used to water heat the areas under the carburetors like the original Gran Turismo 300-Fs. Colder range spark plugs were used to minimize pre ignition. Air/Fuel ratios were addressed with oxygen sensors, in the exhaust pipes, and a computer. The compression ratio was lowered improving engine performance on pump gas.

PATC rebuilt an A-518 Torqueflite to withstand up to 700 HP. The transmission’s strength was partially accomplished by incorporating stronger compatible parts from the A-618, a sister Torqueflite used with Cummins Diesel powered Dodge trucks. An Ultra Bell housing was used to adapt the small block transmission to the large block engine. The PATC vacuum control system flawlessly controls the engagement of overdrive and the lock up convertor for a surprising 15 mpg on the highway.

Imperial Services modified the original dash push button assembly with momentary switches to work in concert with the PCS GSM push button computer operated cable system to select gears and engage Park.

Front and rear disc brake conversions, from Wilwood Brakes, replaced the unreliable Chrysler Total Contact drum brakes. An electric vacuum pump, under the battery tray, was installed to compensate for the loss of vacuum from the aggressive cam for maximum power brake booster assist at idle and lower engine speeds.

Stockton Wheel provided 15" wheels, modified to accept the original 14" hubcaps and Diamondback Tires inserted the original 2" white walls on new 235/75R15 S rated Michelin tires.

An Antique Automobile Radio, Inc. dealer converted the 7-button Town and Country radio to AM/FM with iPod inputs without any change to the external appearance of the radio face. Hidden K-40 radar detector, alarm, cruise control and GPS locator finished off the "**Stealth Brute**" upgrades.

My 300-F convertible has finished with Best of Show Awards at two Meets and chosen to be displayed at the Concours d'Elegance Of The Eastern United States; Hemmings Concours d'Elegance in Vermont; Monmouth County Concours d'Elegance; Radnor Hunt Concours d'Elegance; and received the coveted Chairman's Choice Cup Keenland Concours d'Elegance.

Tech Articles Posted in the Tech Section of the Chrysler 300 Int'l website:

Modern Replacement Wheels for Radial Tires:

<https://chrysler300club.com/tech/Modern%20Replacement%20Wheels%20For%20Radial%20Tires.pdf>

Wilwood Disc Brake Install:

<https://chrysler300club.com/tech/Wilwood%20Brake%20Installations.pdf>

Cruise Control Installation for Cross Ram Engines:

<https://chrysler300club.com/tech/rinalcc/Cruise%20Control.pdf>

A488, A904, A727 Conversion to Overdrive A518 (46RH):

Part 1- Overview:

<https://chrysler300club.com/tech/rinalcc/A518%20Part%201.pdf>

Part 2- PCM GSM Push Button Shifter Utilizing A Motorized Shift Actuator:

<https://chrysler300club.com/tech/rinalcc/A518%20Part%202.pdf>

Part 3- Retaining Original Dash Push Button Functions Utilizing A Motorized Shift Actuator:

<https://chrysler300club.com/tech/rinalcc/A518%20Part%203.pdf>