

THE BEE



Larry Jett's

1957 Chrysler 300C

The "Beautiful Brute"

See page 4



MEMBER'S MOPARS

Banker's Hot Rod



This fantastic milestone Mopar had your editor drooling with envy. Fortunately, owner Larry Jett provided his own story so I didn't wind up drowning my keyboard while ogling these gorgeous photos. The tale starts sometime in the 1990s... we'll let Larry tell it:

The phone rings at my Woodside office and my secretary says "Redwood Lease Company" followed by a pause and then, "Piper Cub? What? Oh, you want Mr. Jett," and I get a dialog with a clever gent that has started a pawn shop approach to cars and trucks in San Francisco where if you need instant cash for your payroll, you can hock your trucks or cars for a short term loan. He asks if a 1957 Chrysler rag is valuable and how much can he advance? What model? A 300C convertible. He wants to know if the \$12,000 requested is safe? Assurances abound and I guarantee the loan as I will be his safety net. I already own a 1955 300 (the first 300 — later bought back by

Chrysler Motors for use by auto writers for backstories on the newer 300's offered by the corporation), a 1965 300L (the most dependable lettered car) and a 300F coupe — in my humble opinion, the most beautiful and wonderful of them all. I have owned two of them and would buy a third if I wasn't 85 years old and haven't a garage any longer. The 1957 300C convertible was one of only 484 examples, and powered by 375 horsepower from its 392 c.i. Hemi — the banker's hot rod.

Months later I get a call that the loan is in default and will I still be the back buyer? I call my fellow Mopar nut, Gary, and arranged a ride to SF intending to drive my new purchase home. What with fees, interest dollars and whatever else loan sharks add on, the new cost is \$15k. Since the car is full of patina and special needs and will not start, I hesitate. Gary tells me if I

(continued on page 5)

MEMBER'S MOPARS (continued from page 4)

allow it, he will give me \$5k as an aside and write the check for the amount required to own the title. This all makes sense now as I found a duplicate car in Switzerland for him and he flies there to complete the purchase. San Francisco is a cheaper drive.

The car arrives in my backyard on a flatbed and my wife and daughter look it over. Wife queries, "What did you pay for this tired car?" Answer: \$15,000 dollars. "But it needs so much work," to which I respond, "But if it was so much nicer, I still would have to redo everything anyhow to make it perfect." When I eventually sold it for a significant increase in my net worth, my wisdom was acknowledged. It has lived in Pennsylvania for the past 15 years and recently won Best of Show at a Chrysler 300 National Meet as well as a First at Chrysler's at Carlisle. What has the car required in those years? A wax job and replacement wire wheels.



The paint had deteriorated to a light soft velvet pink and the underlying primer was prevalent, and I considered a black repaint as rust and dents were fortunately not part of the purchase price, but then a revelation!

Removing a tail light surround and the foam that protected the factory provided paint, showed the *Gauguin Red* hue that had never seen the damaging rays of the sun and I realized just how fifties the color was and must be replicated. The reputation of the 1957 Chrysler products for rusting quickly was not applicable to this car and I found several inches of dried pine needles in the right door basement that if exposed to rain, could have probably created trouble.

Gary Goers in Montana made a complete leather seating and door panels package and carpet, a Swedish firm makes me a non-tinted glass windshield (at extra

cost from a tinted one!) and I find that the engine needs nothing but attention to basics to start its new life in Newark, CA.



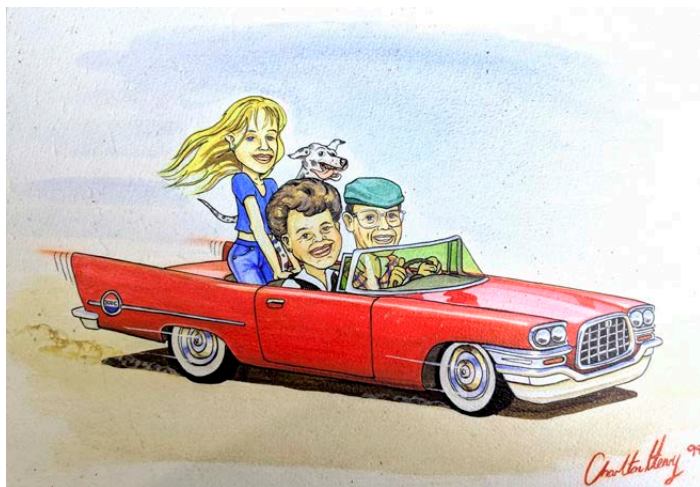
Who loved this car in a color my daughter called "Campbell's tomato soup red"? Everybody. Starting with the 1997 Hillsborough Concours d'Elegance with the Franklin-Templeton Perpetual Trophy for the most elegant post-war open car, followed by nationally recognized photographer Phil Toy wanting to shoot pictures at the Ritz-Carlton Car Show by the ocean for submission to *Collectible Automobile* — it made the cover for October 2006. Kodak (remember them?)... They hired it for a promotion on Market Street, San Francisco, for a new color scheme theme. Pacific Bell takes it to Las Vegas because a large budget allows the car to be a center piece in a bandwidth promotion. The car and the actors spoke out well at a very large gathering of IT people.



(continued on page 6)

MEMBER'S MOPARS (continued from page 5)

The most interesting request for the use of the car was from the office of the chairman of the board of Chrysler (Bob Lutz) wanting it to be a table decoration for a huge dinner at the Chrysler-sponsored Pebble Beach Concours in Monterey.



This painting was a gift from George Laurie, a.k.a. *De Soto George*. The inhabitants are Larry Jett, Sandy Jett, Holly Jett, and Lucky (the wonderdog) Jett.

The five cars in the picture below represent the first and last and the two best of the Letters. I took them all to Portland for a Chrysler 300 show and a trucker on the Citizen Band radio exclaimed, "Kenworth, look what's coming your way ...four sleeper-creepers and a firetruck."



From left to right: 1965 Plymouth Fury III, ordered by the city of Millbrae but never used by the fire department; 1965 Chrysler 300L; 1960 Chrysler 300F; 1957 Chrysler 300C; 1955 Chrysler C-300.



THE DRAG RACE BY LARRY JETT

This story first appeared in the Plymouth Owners Club Plymouth Bulletin, May/June 2022. Thanks to Larry for sharing a great story about "the good old days"...

This tale goes way back to 1968, a mere decade past the *Bulletin's* origin. The 1968 model year cars from the Chrysler Plymouth Division of Chrysler Motors had just started to arrive at the dealerships in Northern California, of which thirteen of its stores were under my care and control as The Factory Man.

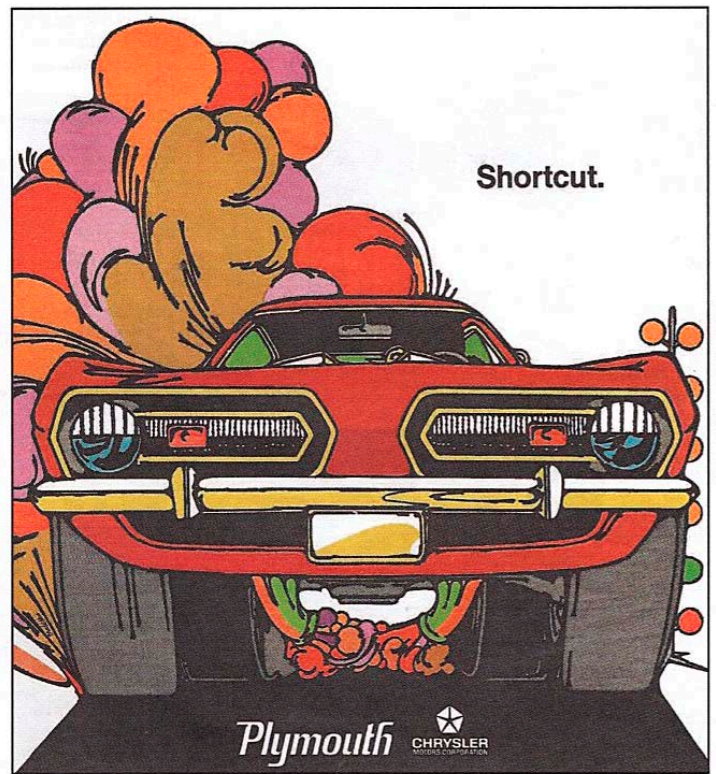
The nine District Managers of the Northern California Zone worked from their homes without, of course, cell phones, GPS gadgets, fax or email interferences or Big Brother schemes which might uncover our playing on the golf course when the regional boss called the dealership on a land line under the assumption, according to our prearranged itinerary, we should be working there.

Each fieldman got a new car whenever the odometer showed 2000-plus miles. Since I was the new hire with no connection skills, yet, I was mostly assigned Plymouth Fury Ills or Chrysler Newports. Yet because the distance from Corte Madera, near the Golden Gate Bridge, to the Oregon border, was a stretch, it was not uncommon for me to get a new car every six weeks.

My fourth car was a 1968 Barracuda Formula S four-speed with heavy duty suspension and air conditioning. As a 27-year-old suit-and-tie executive(?), I knew better than to engage in any foolishness, but that car was just sooo eager to please. Enthusiast magazines of the era spoke these cars pulling high 13-second quarter mile times right from the dealer floor.

As I was leaving Santa Rosa for Healdsburg one afternoon, a pair of yahoos in an early '60s Chevrolet wanted to street race from a green light. I ignored them for three lights because I knew better, but, at age 27, I never in my life had had a car worthy of a race. I caved in and the race was on.

I never saw the Chevrolet in my side glass but heard it being shifted three times and always behind the



B-pillar of my pony car. As we slowed down, the driver of the Chevy signaled me to stop and chat. The buddy of the owner exclaimed that neither of them had ever seen the 383 big-block V8 Mopar engine in an A-body (later an E-body), but they knew it existed.

As I lifted the hood, the significantly smaller 340 c.i. engine was in full view. The buddy said "What is that?" Sez I, "What just whupped you!"

The buddy doubled over in laughter exclaiming, "you just got your Four-Oh-Nine embarrassed by a mouse motor!"

PS: I was promoted from a boondock district manager in late 1967 to the San Francisco district guy just as the '68s were being delivered. In my last few weeks in Santa Rosa, the factory delivered four 1967 Barracudas to my home with instructions to put 2,000 miles on each one and then sell at a 20% reduction from invoice to any Chrysler Plymouth dealer. Several of my neighbors parked their own cars and drove Barracudas for weeks to help me out!

